

The Prayers of the Apostles

Booklet Six
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“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen”
Jude :24, 25.

The prayer which is now to engage our attention is a particularly arresting one, but its beauty and blessedness appear even more conspicuously if it be examined in connection with its sombre *background*. It concludes the most solemn epistle in the New Testament, one which is to be put down with thanksgiving and praise. It contains a most awful description of graceless professors, of those who appeared to give much promise of fruit to God’s glory, but whose leaves soon dropped off and whose trees quickly withered away. Its theme is apostasy—or, more specifically, the corrupting and corruption of Christendom. It presents a picture which all-too-tragically depicts things as they now are in the religious realm—in the “churches” at large. It informs us how the process of declension began, how the evil leaven was introduced into the three measures of meal (the Roman church, the Greek church, and Protestantism), and will work until the whole thereof is corrupted. It delineates the characters of those who should be engaged in this vile work. It makes known the sure doom awaiting both leaders and those who are led. It closes with a glorious contrast.

The Lord Jesus gave warning that the sowing of the good seed by Himself and His apostles would be followed with the sowing of tares in the same field by Satan and his agents. Paul also announced that—notwithstanding the widespread successes of the Gospel during his lifetime—there would be “a falling away” before the man of sin was revealed (2 Thess. 2:3). That “falling away”—or the apostasy of Christendom corporately considered—is depicted by the

Spirit in some detail through the pen of Jude. As Christ Himself had intimated, the initial work of corruption would be done stealthily, “while men slept” (Matt. 13:25); and Jude represents the evil-doers as having “crept in unawares” (Jude :4). They are spoken of as men who were “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is to say, while pretending to *magnify* “free grace,” they *perverted* it by failing to enforce the balancing truth of holiness; and while professing to believe in Christ as a *Saviour*, they refused to surrender to His *Lordship*. Thus, they were lustful and lawless. In view of this horrible menace, the saints were exhorted to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (verse 3)—i.e. all the counsel of God.

That exhortation is enforced by a reminder of three fearful and solemn examples of the punishment visited by God upon those who had apostatized. The first was that of the children of Israel, whom the LORD saved out of Egypt, but who still lusted after its fleshpots; and because of their unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea, were destroyed in the wilderness (Jude :5). The second was the case of the angels, who apostatized from their privileged position, and are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (verse 6). The third was Sodom and Gomorrah, which, because of gross lasciviousness, were destroyed by fire from heaven (verse 7). To which the apostle added that the corruptors of Christendom “defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,” being less respectful to their superiors than the archangel was to his inferior (verse 8). He solemnly pronounced the divine “Woe unto them!;” and likened them and their works unto three characters of evil notoriety: By “the way of Cain,” we are to understand a natural religion which is acceptable to the unregenerate; by “the error of Baalam for reward,” a mercenary ministry; and by “the gainsaying of Core [Korah],” despising of authority and discipline (verse 11)—an effort to obliterate the distinctions which God has made (Num. 16:3-7).

Other characteristics of these religious evil-doers are given in figurative terms in Jude, verses 12 and 13; and it should be particularly noted that they are said to “feast *with you*” (the saints), which supplies further evidence that they are *inside* the churches. In

the second half of verse 13 to that of 15, their doom is pronounced: for backsliders, there is a way of recovery; but for apostates, none. Verse 16 details other features, which are sadly conspicuous in our own day. Then Jude bade God's people to remember that the apostles of Christ had predicted there should be "scoffers [or 'mockers'—Jude :18]" (2 Pet. 3:3) "in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (verses 17 and 18). By "the last time," this Christian or final dispensation is meant (see 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 John 2:18), with possibly a reference to the climacteric culmination of evil at its end. Next, Jude appeals to those unto whom he was writing, addressing to them a number of needful and salutary exhortations (verses 21 and 23). He ends with the prayer which we are now to ponder, concluding the most solemn of all the epistles with a more glorious outburst of praise than is elsewhere to be found in them.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (verses 24 and 25). We propose to attend to five things in our study of this prayer: First, its general *background*. Second, its more immediate *connection*. Third, its *nature*—a doxology. Fourth, its *Object*—"God our Saviour." Fifth, its *reasons* or motives—who is able to preserve, and who presents His people faultless before the Throne. We have already said something above, in a general way, upon the background of this prayer, and shall now add something more to the point.

It seems to us that, in view of what had been engaging the mind of the apostle in the previous verses, he could not restrain himself from giving vent to this paean [a fervent expression of joy or praise] of praise. After viewing the solemn case of a whole generation of Israel perishing in the wilderness because of their unbelief, he was moved to cry out in gladness, "Now unto him that is able to keep *you*" (verse 24). As he contemplated the experience of the sinless angels who fell from their first estate, he could not but tremble; but when he thought of the Saviour and Protector of His Church, he burst forth into a strain of adoration. Jude found great comfort and assurance in the blessed fact that the One who begins a work of

grace within those given unto Him by the Father will never cease it till He has perfected the same (compare Phil. 1:6). He knew that were it not for everlasting love and infinite power, *our case* would yet be the same as that of the angels who fell: that but for an Almighty Redeemer, we too must enter everlasting darkness and endure the suffering of eternal fire; and, realizing that, the apostle could not but bless the One whose protecting hand covers each of His blood-bought ones.

After making mention of those fearful examples of falling, it is highly probable that the thoughts of the penman of this epistle turned to another one much more recent, and which had come beneath his own immediate notice. It is surely of deep significance that, when our Lord sent forth the twelve, “Judas [Jude] the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor,” were paired together (Luke 6:16)—the arch-apostate with the one who was to write at length upon the great apostasy! It scarcely admits of doubt that as Jude’s mind reverted to the traitor, it made him exclaim with added emphasis: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,...be glory...both now and ever” (Jude :24, 25). Jude had probably respected Iscariot as his fellow apostles had done, and heard him, as he sat at the table with them, say, “Master, is it I?” (Matt. 26:25). Jude must have been very surprised when he saw him take the sop and dip it in the dish with the Saviour; and then when he [Judas Iscariot] went out, would scarcely believe his own ears when Christ announced that the one who should betray Him had gone forth. He could not but be aware that, in remorse, the traitor had hanged himself; and we believe that the shadow of his awful doom fell upon Jude as he penned this epistle.

But Jude did not suffer these sad contemplations to sink him into a state of dejection. He knew that his omniscient Master had foretold that a rising tide of evil would spread over the whole of Christendom, and that however mysterious such a phenomenon might be, there was a wise reason for it in the divine economy. He knew that however fiercely the storm might rage, there was no occasion to fear, for Christ Himself was in the ship, and had declared, “Lo, I am with you alway” (Matt. 28:20). He knew that the gates of hell could not and would not prevail against the Church; and therefore, he lifted up his eyes above this scene, and gazed by

faith upon its enthroned Head and Preserver, and offered worship unto Him. *That* is the all-important lesson to be drawn from the background of this prayer, and why we have dwelt the longer upon the same. Fellow Christians, let us duly *heed* it. Instead of being so much occupied with conditions in the world, with the menace of the atom bomb, and with the deepening apostasy, let our hearts be increasingly engaged with our beloved Lord, and find our peace and joy in Him.

A word next upon the more immediate *connection* of our prayer. On former occasions, we have seen how helpful it was to attend closely unto the context. It is necessary to do so here, if the balance of truth is to be maintained, and a proneness to antinomianism is to be checked. It is not honest to lay hold of this verse—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling" (verse 24)—unless we have first given heed to the "*Keep yourselves*" of verse 21! The precepts and promises may be distinguished, yet they are not to be separated. The former make known our duty; the latter are for encouragement, while genuinely and earnestly seeking to perform the same; but one who neglects his duty is entitled to no comfort. After describing at length the beginning, the course, and the end of the apostasy of Christendom, the apostle added seven brief exhortations to the saints in verses 20 to 23—which call for the exercise of faith, prayer, love, hope, compassion, fear, and godly hatred. Those exhortations are *means* to preserve from apostasy. John Calvin (1509-1564) began his comments on them by saying, "He shows the way in which they could overcome all the devices of Satan: that is, by having love connected with faith, and by standing on their guard as it were in the watch-tower, until the coming of Christ."

"There is a one-sided and unscriptural forgetfulness of the actual position of the believer (or professing believer) as a man who is still on the road, in the battle; who has still the responsibility of trading with the talent entrusted, of watching for the return of the Master. Now there are many by-paths, dangers, precipices on the road; and we must persevere to the end. Only they who overcome and are faithful to death shall be crowned. It is not spiritual, but carnal, to take the blessed and solemn doctrines of our election in Christ and of the perseverance of the saints—given us as a cordial for fainting

hours, and as the inmost and ultimate secret of the soul in its dealings with God—and place them on the common and daily road of our duties and trials, *instead* of the precepts and warnings of the divine Word. It is not merely that God keeps us through these warnings and commandments, but the attitude of soul which neglects and hurries over these portions of Scripture is not childlike, humble, and sincere. The attempts to explain away the fearful warnings of Scripture against apostasy are rooted in a very morbid and dangerous state of mind. A precipice is a precipice, and it is folly to deny it. ‘If [we] live after the flesh,’ says the apostle, ‘[we] shall die’ (Rom. 8:13). Now, to keep people from falling over a precipice, we do not put up a slender and graceful hedge of flowers, but the strongest barrier we can; and piercing spikes on cutting pieces of glass to prevent calamities. But even this is only the surface of the matter. Our walk with God and our perseverance to the end are great and solemn realities. We are dealing with the living God, and only life with God, and in God, and unto God, can be of any avail here. He who brought us out of Egypt is now guiding us; and if we follow Him, and follow Him to the end, we shall enter into the final rest”—Adolph Saphir (1831-1891).

It is outside our present scope to give here a full exposition of the precepts found in Jude :20-23, yet a few remarks are needed if we are to be faithful in observing the inseparable link between them and our text. Duty and privilege must not be divorced, nor the latter allowed to oust the former. If it be the Christian’s privilege to have his heart engaged with Christ in glory, it must be while treading the path He has appointed, and while engaged in those tasks He has assigned him. Though Christ be the One who keeps him from making shipwreck of the faith, it is not apart from his own earnest endeavours that He does so. Christ deals with His redeemed as responsible creatures, and requires them to conduct themselves as moral agents, putting forth every effort to overcome the evils which menace them. Though entirely dependent upon Him, they are not to remain passive. Man is of an active nature, and therefore, must grow either better or worse. Before regeneration, he is indeed spiritually dead; but at the new birth, he receives divine life; and motion and exercise follow life—and those motions are to be *directed* by the divine precepts.

“But ye, beloved [in contrast with the apostates of the previous verse], building up yourselves on your most holy faith” (verse 20). The foundation of God indeed stands sure; nevertheless, we are called upon to the concurrence of our own endeavours. We are to be solicitous about our growth, and exercise care both over ourselves and our fellow believers. It is not sufficient to be grounded in the faith; we must daily increase therein more and more. To grow in faith is one of the appointed *means* of our preservation. We “[build] up [ourselves] on [our] most holy faith” by a deepened knowledge thereof: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning” (Prov. 1:5). We “[build] up [ourselves] on [our] most holy faith” by meditating upon its substance or contents (Psa. 1:2; Luke 2:19), by believing and appropriating it, by applying it unto ourselves, by being governed by it. Observe that it is a “most holy faith,” for it both requires and promotes personal holiness; and thereby do we distinguish ourselves from carnal professors and apostates. “Praying in the Holy Ghost” (verse 20)—fervently and constantly seeking His assistance for and in complying with these precepts.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (verse 21). See to it that your love for Him be preserved in a pure, healthy, and vigorous condition. See to it that your love to Christ be in constant exercise, by rendering obedience to Him: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23), for if your affections wane, your communion with Him will deteriorate, and your witness for Him be marred. Only as you keep yourselves in the love of God will you be distinguished from the carnal professors all around you. This exhortation is no needless one. The Christian is living in a world whose icy blasts will soon chill his love for God, unless he guards it as the apple of his eye. A malicious devil will do all he can to pour cold water upon it. Remember the solemn warning of Revelation 2:4. Oh that Christ may never have to complain of you, of me, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left* thy first love.” Rather, may our love “abound yet more and more” (Phil. 1:9). In order thereto, *hope* must be in exercise “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (verse 21). Verses 22 and 23 make known our duty and attitude unto those of our brethren who have fallen by the way: some we

must pity; others deliver with fear, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling” (Jude :24). Who *are* the ones that the Lord Jesus thus preserves? Not every one who professes to believe and be a follower of His, as is clear from the case of Judas Iscariot! Then whom? Why, those who make a genuine effort to respond to the exhortations found in the verses immediately preceding. Those who—so far from being content with their present knowledge and spiritual attainments—sincerely endeavour to build up themselves “on [their] most holy faith” (Jude :20). Those who—so far from being indifferent to the state of their hearts—jealously watch their affections, that their love of God be preserved pure, healthy, vigorous, and in regular exercise. Those who—so far from taking pleasure in flirting with the world and indulging their carnal lusts—are “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude :23) Those who pray fervently for the assistance of the Holy Spirit therein, and who are deeply solicitous about the welfare of their brethren and sisters in Christ. *Such* are the ones who will be preserved from apostasy—despite all their weakness and frailties.

It is of vital importance to a sound knowledge of Scripture that we observe the *order* in which truth is therein set forth. For example, we find David saying, “Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God” *before* he prayed, “Uphold me according unto thy word” (Psa. 119:115, 116). There had been no sincerity in praying God to support him, unless he had resolved to obey the divine precepts—it would be horrible mockery for anyone to ask God to sustain him in a course of self-will. First, a holy purpose and resolution on our part, and *then* the seeking of enabling grace. It is of equal importance to a right understanding of Scripture that we do not separate what God has joined together, and detach a sentence from its qualifying context. We often read the quotation, “My sheep...shall never perish,” but while that is substantially correct, they are not the precise words Christ used. Rather, did He say, “And *they* shall never perish,” previously declaring, “My sheep hear [heed!] my voice, and I know [approve] them, and they *follow me* [not their natural inclinations]: And I give unto them eternal life; and *they* [the heedful and obedient ones]

shall never perish” (John 10:27, 28).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” The discerning reader will perceive in the above remarks that we have anticipated and answered the question of *how* Christ preserves His people. He does so in a manner very different from that in which He “keeps” the planets in their courses—by physical energy, namely, by the effectual operations of His grace within their souls. Christ preserves His people not in a course of reckless self-pleasing, but in one of self-denial. He preserves by moving them to heed His warnings and admonitions, to practice His precepts and follow the example which He has left them. He preserves them by enabling them to persevere in faith and holiness. We are “kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1 Pet. 1:5); and faith respects His commandments (Psa. 119:66; Heb. 11:8), as well as His promises. Christ indeed does all, yet in us and by us—causing us to concur and respond. He works in us “both to will and *to do* of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Not that He preserves His people because of, or as the result of, *their* perseverance—nor irrespective of the same—but rather, *through* or by means of it.

After exhorting the saints as he had done in verses 20-23, the apostle then intimated *where* they must look for their enablement and for the divine blessing on their endeavours: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” His readers must place the whole of their dependence for preservation on the Lord Jesus. That was not said to check their industry, but to encourage hope. It is a great relief unto faith to know that “God is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4). John Gill (1697-1771) began his comments on Jude :24 by saying, “The people of God are *liable* to fall into temptation, into sin, into errors...and even into final and *total apostasy*, were it not for divine power.” Yea, they are painfully sensible both of their evil proclivities and their frailty, and therefore, do they frequently cry unto the LORD, “Hold thou me up” (Psa. 119:117). As they read of Adam in a state of innocency being unable to keep himself from falling, and likewise the angels in heaven, they know full well that an imperfect and sinful creature cannot do so of himself. The way to heaven is a “narrow” one (Matt. 7:14), and there are precipices on either side. There are foes within and without seeking his destruction; and he has no more

strength of his own than had poor Peter when put to the proof by a maid.

Every figure used in the Bible to set forth a child of God emphasizes his weakness and helplessness: a sheep, a branch of the vine, a bruised reed, and a smoking flax. It is only as we experientially discover our weakness that we learn to prize more highly the One who is able to keep us from falling. Does a reader tremblingly say, "I fear that I too may perish in the wilderness?" Not so, if your prayer be sincere when you cry, "Hold up my goings in thy paths" (Psa. 17:5). Christ is able to protect you, because His power is limitless and His grace boundless. What strength this should give the wearied warrior! David comforted himself therewith when he declared, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psa. 23:4). There is a twofold safeguarding of the elect spoken of in this epistle: the one before regeneration; and the other, after. In the opening verse, they are spoken of as "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude :1). They were set apart unto salvation by the Father in His eternal decree (2 Thess. 2:13), and "preserved" *before* they were effectually called. Wonderful and blessed fact is that. Even while wandering from the fold, yea, when hating Him, His love watched over them (Jer. 31:3); and His power delivered them from an untimely grave. Death cannot seize an elect soul, until it has been born again!

What has just been pointed out should make it very evident that there is no question whatever about the Lord's *willingness* to preserve His people: if He kept them from natural death while in a state of unregeneracy, much more will He deliver them from spiritual death, now that He has made them new creatures (compare Rom. 5:9, 10). If Christ were not willing to "make all grace abound" unto His people (2 Cor. 9:8), to "keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12), "to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18), and to "save them to the uttermost [or 'for evermore']" (Heb. 7:25), He most certainly would tantalize them by affirming in each passage that "he is able" to do these things. When Christ asked the question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Matt. 9:28) of the two blind men who besought Him to have mercy upon them, He was not raising a doubt in their minds as to His readiness to give them sight, but was challenging their

faith—as the next verse makes evident. Let the reader compare our remarks on Ephesians 3:20, at the close of previous articles. “Unto him that is *able* to keep you from falling” was a general term to include not only His might and willingness, but His goodness and munificence.

It is indeed true that the power of Christ is far greater than what He actually exercises, for it is infinite; and were He so disposed, He could keep His people altogether from sin—but for wise and holy reasons, He does not. As His forerunner reminded the Pharisees, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Matt. 3:9), so Christ could have commanded legions of angels to deliver Him from His enemies (Matt. 26:53)—but He would not. The exercise of His power was and is regulated by God’s eternal purpose: He puts it forth only so far as He has stipulated to do so by covenant engagement. Thus, “Unto him that is able to keep you *from falling*” has reference not to every kind of falling, but to the fatal errors of those mentioned in Jude :4, from being led astray by the sophistries and examples of heretical teachers. As the Shepherd of God’s sheep, Christ has received a charge to preserve them—not from straying, but from destruction. It is the gross sins spoken of in the context, when joined with obstinacy and impenitence, from which Christ delivers His people—the “presumptuous sins” of Psalm 19:13, unpardonable sins, such as suicide. In other words, it is from total and final apostasy that Christ keeps all of “his own.”

It is His office and work thus to keep His people. They were given to Him by the Father with that end in view. He is in every way qualified for the same, both considering His deity and His humanity (Heb. 2:18). All power has been given to Him in heaven and earth. He is as willing as He is competent, for it is the Father’s will that He should lose none of them (John 6:39), and therein He delights. He has a personal interest in them, for He has bought them for Himself. He is accountable for their custody. He therefore preserves them from being devoured by sin. No feeble Saviour is ours, but rather One that is clothed with omnipotence. That was manifest even during the days of His humiliation, when He cast out demons, healed the sick, and stilled the tempest by His authoritative fiat. It was evidenced when, by a single utterance, He caused those

who came to arrest Him to fall backward to the ground (John 18:6). It was supremely demonstrated in His personal victory over death and the grave. That almighty power is exercised in ordering all the affairs of His people, and continually directing their wills and actions throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Of His vineyard, He declares, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa. 27:3).

“And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude :24). Here is the second reason which prompted this outburst of adoration. Christ not only protects His people here, but has provided for their felicity hereafter. Such is His grace and power that He makes good unto them all that God has purposed, and whatsoever He has promised. The “presentation” of them unto Himself includes both an individual and a corporate one. The former is at death, when He takes the believer unto Himself. Inexpressibly blessed is this: that upon its dismissal from the body, the soul is conducted into the immediate presence of God, and that the Saviour Himself has the admitting of it into heaven and the actual presenting of it. The disembodied soul, rid of all corruption and defilement, is received by Christ to the glory of God. He will set that redeemed soul before Himself with great complacency of heart, so that it will reflect His own perfections. He will advance it to the highest honour, fill it with glory, express to it the uttermost of His love, and behold it with delight. Christ receives each blood-washed soul at death to His everlasting embraces, and presents it before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Our present passage also looks forward to the time when Christ will publicly present His people corporately unto Himself, when the Head and Saviour who “loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25) will “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This will be the certain and triumphant result of His love, as it will be the consummation of our redemption. The Greek word for “present” means “to set alongside of.” Having cleansed the Church from all her natural pollution, and prepared and adorned her for her destined place as the companion of His glory, He will—formally and officially—take her unto Himself; and it will be announced, “The marriage of the Lamb is

come” (Rev. 19:7). Christ will have made the Church comely with His own perfections; and she will be full of beauty and splendour, like a bride adorned for her husband. He will then say, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7). She will be “all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold;” and of her, it is said, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty” (Psa. 45:11, 13); and He will be for ever the satisfying Portion of her joy.

In addition, 2 Corinthians 4:14 indicates that Christ will also “present” the Church unto God on the resurrection morn, and will then exultantly say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb. 2:13)—not one lost, all perfectly conformed to His holy image. He will present us before God for His inspection, acceptance, and approbation. “He will present us in the court of heaven, before the Throne of the eternal Father, as His ransomed people, as recovered from the ruins of the fall, as saved by the merits of His blood. They shall not only be raised from the dead by Him, but publicly and solemnly presented to God as His, as recovered to His service, and as having a title in the covenant of grace to the blessedness of heaven”—Albert Barnes (1798-1870). It is Christ taking His place before God as the triumphant Mediator, owning the “children” as God’s gift to Him, confessing His oneness with them, delighting in the fruits of His work. He presents them “faultless”—justified, sanctified, and glorified. The manner in which He does so will be “with exceeding joy,” for He shall then see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. In Jude :15, we learn of the doom awaiting the apostates; here, the bliss appointed the redeemed—they will for ever shine in Christ’s righteousness; and He will find His complacency in the Church as the partner of His blessedness.

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude :25). Seeing that the LORD is arrayed with glory and beauty (Job 40:10), we should continually ascribe these excellencies unto Him (Exod. 15:11; 1 Chron. 29:11). The saints are to publish and proclaim the perfections of their God: “Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psa. 66:2). This is what the apostles did, and we should emulate them. Here, He is adored for His wisdom. This may present a difficulty to young theologians who have learned to

distinguish between the incommunicable attributes of God (such as His infinity and immutability), and His communicable—i.e. mercy, wisdom, etc. Seeing that God has endowed some of His creatures with wisdom, how can He be said to be “*only wise?*” First, He is so, *superlatively*. His wisdom is so vastly superior to that of men and angels; theirs is naught. Second, He is so, *essentially*. God’s wisdom is not a quality separate from Himself as ours is—many are men who are far from being wise men, but God would not be God if He were not omniscient. Third, He is so, *originally*—without derivation. All wisdom is *from* God, but He has all *in* Himself. All the wisdom of creatures is but a ray from His light.

Three things call for our careful attention here: the Person praised, the motives prompting the same, and the substance of the adoration or the praise itself. The One here worshipped is the Mediator. The reasons for so honouring Him are the omnipotence and omniscience with which He is possessed, and which are gloriously displayed in His saving of the Church. In view of what is predicated of Him in Jude :24, there should not be the slightest doubt in our minds that “the only wise God” of verse 25 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is His particular province as the Shepherd to preserve His Church from destruction and to present it in glory to the Father. Furthermore, the added epithet, “God our Saviour,” clinches the matter. Here, absolute deity is ascribed to Him: “the only wise *God*,” as it also is in Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1, etc. Christ the Son is “the only wise God,” though not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit (compare John 17:3; Rev. 15:4). Probably He is here designated such in designed contrast with the false and foolish “gods” of the heretical corruptors of the context: the “God” of the Unitarians, the Arminians, the “Modernists,” is fictitious and puerile.

It is the strength and sufficiency of Christ for all the concerns of His mediation which is here magnified. He is adored as the One who will triumphantly complete the work given Him to do: something which no mere creature—no, not the archangel—could accomplish. None but one who is both God and man could act as mediator. None but a divine person could offer an adequate satisfaction unto divine justice. None but one possessed of infinite merits could provide a sacrifice of infinite value. None but God

could preserve the sheep in the midst of wolves. In Proverbs, Christ is denominated “wisdom” and is heard speaking as a distinct person (Prov. 8:11, 12, 14, 32, 33). He was heralded as the “Wonderful, Counsellor” (Isa. 9:6). He designated Himself “wisdom” in Luke 7:35. He is expressly called “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24), for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). His wisdom appears in His creating all things (John 1:3), in His governing all things (Heb. 1:3), and in that the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

The consummate wisdom of Christ was manifested during the days of His flesh. He opened unto men the secrets of God (Matt. 13:11). He declared, “The Son can do nothing of himself [which, in the light of verse 30, means He does nothing independently of the Father’s will], but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever *he* doeth, these also doeth *the Son* likewise” (John 5:19)—thereby affirming an equality of competency. He “needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (John 2:25). Those who heard Him teach “were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (Matt 13:54). Christ’s unique wisdom appeared in answering and silencing His enemies: “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46) testified those sent to arrest Him. He so confounded His critics that at the end, “neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Matt. 22:46). Since, then, He is endowed with omniscience, let us find no fault with any of His dealings with us, let us take to Him all our problems, and let us confide absolutely in Him—putting ourselves and all our affairs into His hands.

Since He *is* “the only wise God our Saviour”—the sole, sufficient, and successful Saviour—let us laud Him as such. As those in heaven cast their crowns before the Lamb and extol His peerless perfections, so should we who are still upon earth. Since Christ subjected Himself to such unspeakable dishonour and abasement for our sakes, yea, unto death itself—and that the death of the Cross—how readily and heartily should we honour and magnify Him, crying with the apostle unto Him, “Be glory and majesty, dominion and power” (Jude :25)! “Glory” is excellence displayed, with an approbation of the same, and signifies the high honour and esteem which is due unto Christ because of His

perfections, whereby He infinitely surpasses all creatures and things. “Majesty” refers to His exalted dignity and greatness, which make Him to be honoured and preferred beyond all, having received a name which is above every name. “Dominion” imports the right of government, because of His imperial authority as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16). “Power” is that might by which He does whatsoever He pleases, so that “none can stay his hand” (Dan. 4:35).

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, *both now* and ever. Amen.” Note well the two words which we have placed in italics. Radically different was the inspired concept of Jude from that of so many “students of prophecy” who postpone Christ’s reign to some future “millennial” era. It is both the present and the endless dignities of the Mediator which are here in view. He has already been “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:9). “Majesty” is His today, for He is exalted “far above all principality, and power,” for God “*hath* [not ‘will!'] put all things under his feet” (Eph. 1:21, 22). “Dominion” is also exercised by Him now, for all power has been given Him “in heaven *and in earth*” (Matt. 28:18). “Power,” too, is put forth by Him in the present, for He is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3) and “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Pet. 3:22). So shall He reign, not merely for a thousand years, but *for ever*. Amen. Thus, does Jude conclude the most solemn of all epistles with this paean of holy exultation to the glory of the Lamb.

The sixth of seven booklets.

