

THE PROGRESS OF DOCTRINE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By T. D. Bernard

A Review Article (Part II)

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Lecture VI: The Epistles (Part I)

As expected, Bernard sees continuity between the book of Acts and the Epistles. Acts gives us apostolic history; the Epistles give us apostolic doctrine. “The history gains significance from the doctrine, and the doctrine derives authority from the history.”¹ But, as Bernard asks, “*what* is that truth which they worked out?”² Bernard observes that in the book of Acts the recorded addresses are delivered, on the main, “to those who are *not yet Christians*. So Christ was preached to the world: but how was he taught to the *Church*?”³ This is the domain of the Epistles. The Epistles record what the Apostles taught those who had believed. Granted, the book of Acts contains glimpses of instruction for believers, such as the Jerusalem Council, Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders, and brief records of Paul revisiting and instructing the churches born through his missionary labors, but the content of his instruction is not recorded. Just the opposite occurs in the Epistles. In the book of Acts sinners become saints, are baptized, and formed into local churches and instructed. But we are not told of what this instruction consisted. Bernard says:

To this point the book of Acts conducts us, and at this point it leaves us.

It may be said, what more should follow? Christians exist. Christian communities are formed. Let them now be left to their ordinary and permanent resources.

So it might have been.—So in God’s mercy it was not.

A new life had begun, intellectual, moral, and social, teeming with elements, which could not but work and expand. It would have been hard to say with what force they would do so, or in what direction. *Now* the great ideas of the Gospel are old and familiar; and the very words which represent them have been sorely battered by controversy, and worn thin by use. But *then* the revelation of Christ had just broken, like an unexpected morning, on a weary and hopeless world. The stupendous events which had so lately passed on earth, the present actual relations with heaven which were witnessed to men by proofs within and around them, the prospect of things awful and glorious hastening on, and perhaps already near at hand, must have given a stimulus to thought and feeling, the first sensations of which it is not easy for us now to estimate. The Father revealed, the Son incarnate, the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—redemption wrought, salvation given, the resurrection of the body, the eternal judgment, the second death, the life eternal—new principles of thought, new standards of character, new grounds of duty, new motives, new powers, new bonds between man and man, new forms of human society, new language for human lips—all coming at once upon men’s minds, placed them, as it were, in a different world from that in which they had lived before. At the same time they carried into that world of thought all the tendencies, infirmities, and perversities of our nature, and revealed truth had to settle itself into lasting forms, to find its adequate expression, and to have its moral and social consequences deduced, under a variety of influences uncongenial to itself. So critical a period, on which the whole future of the Gospel hung, would seem to cry aloud for a continued

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¹ Thomas Dehany Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 143.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

action of the living word of God; such as might, with supreme authority, both judge and guide the thoughts of men, and translate the principles which they had received into life and practice. The Lord recognized this necessity. He met it by the living voice of his Apostles; and their Epistles remain as the permanent record of this part of their work. They are the voice of the Spirit, speaking within the Church to those who are themselves within it, certifying to them the true interpretations and applications of the principles of thought and life which as believers in Jesus they have received. This is the function in the scheme of divine instruction which belongs to these writings; and I propose now to note some particular aspects in which their designation and adaptation to it will appear. Without entering yet into the examination of their actual doctrine, we shall see that the Epistles are fitted to form a course of teaching of the kind described, by their form, their method, their authorship, and their relative character.⁴

Bernard first discusses the significance of *the form* (i.e., genre) in which apostolic teaching comes. He is, of course, referring to the fact that apostolic teaching comes to us in form of epistles or letters. Bernard contrasts this with the Prophets of the Old Testament. He says, “The Prophets delivered oracles to the people, but the Apostles wrote letters to the brethren.”⁵ This form of communication allowed the Apostles to “treat important subjects with accuracy and fullness, but ... in immediate connection with actual life.”⁶ The personality of each writer comes through and he is able to address particular issues that have arisen in light of the gospel and its application to believers under various circumstances. Bernard claims that this form allowed the Apostles to educate believers instead of merely informing them of abstract truths. He says:

Thus it is delivered in the Epistles. Christ has been received; Christian life has commenced; Christian communities have been formed; and men’s minds have been at work on the great principles which they have embraced. Some of these principles in one place, and others of them in another, have been imperfectly grasped, or positively perverted, or practically misapplied, so as to call for explanation or correction; or else they have been both apprehended and applied so worthily, that the teacher, filled with joy and praise, feels able to open out the mysteries of God, as one speaking wisdom among them that are perfect. These conditions of mind were not individual accidents. Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, supplied examples of different tendencies of the human mind in connection with the principles of the Gospel—tendencies which would ever recur, and on which it was requisite for the future guidance of the Church that the word of God should pronounce. It did pronounce in the most effectual way, by those letters which are addressed by the commissioners of Christ, not to possible but to actual cases, with that largeness of view which belongs to spectators at a certain distance from the scene, and with that closeness of application which personal acquaintance dictates and personal affection inspires.

Thus the fuller expositions of truth contained in the Epistles are based on what the first principles of the Gospel had already wrought in human hearts; and its doctrines are cleared and settled, developed and combined, in correspondence with the ascertained capacities and necessities of believers.⁷

The significance of the form in which apostolic teaching comes is seen in its elasticity of expression and content. Epistles allow their authors to instruct, exhort, correct, and encourage. They allow the author to articulate doctrine. They allow the author to address specific issues. They allow the author to personalize and instill affection and emotion in what is written. They allow for the articulation of the indicatives of the Christian gospel and the imperatives which naturally flow from them.

⁴ Ibid., 145-47.

⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁷ Ibid., 148-49.

Bernard moves on to “the *method* which the apostolic writings employ in the completion of evangelical doctrine.”⁸ The apostolic writings are not dictations or announcements of successive revelations; they contain reasoning and arguments and conclusions and applications. They are interpretations and applications of former revelations – in the Old Testament or from the great redemptive accomplishments of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. There is, on the one hand, a deep personal element in the Epistles. Bernard references the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans. There is, on the other hand, as Bernard says:

everywhere present, in the lofty and unwavering testimony, the sense of an authority, which makes all things *sure*; and whenever occasions arise, as from Galatian perverseness or Corinthian disorder, it asserts its unhesitating and uncompromising claims. Again, when need so requires, there is a change in the common method; and the progress of doctrine is effected in the prophetic manner, by definite additions to former revelation: as when St. Paul informs the Thessalonians, “in the word of the Lord” (I Thess. 4:13-17), of some particulars not before made known, as to the manner in which the dead and the living will meet the Lord at his appearing. Thus apostolic authority and direct revelation diffuse over the Epistles their certainty and their majesty; but yet the presence of these more commanding elements is not suffered to overpower that general character of doctrine, which is proper for those who are of full age, and who have themselves “an unction from the Holy One, that they may know all things” (I John 2:20). The mind of the teacher still enters into a free companionship with the mind that is taught, so as to exercise and educate the spiritual faculties, at the same time conducting them with decisive authority to conclusions which they might else have failed to reach.⁹

Bernard next moves to consider *the authorship* of the Epistles. He views the apostolic testimony as two-fold: “first to the *facts* of the manifestation of Christ, secondly to its intended *consequences* in the spiritual life of man.”¹⁰ The facts are contained in the Gospels; the consequences are left to the Epistles. He acknowledges “Peter and John, the two chief Apostles; James and Jude, the brethren of the Lord”¹¹ and, of course, Paul as the apostolic authors of the Epistles. He makes this comment about the writings of the former group:

But the chief place in this system of teaching does not belong to any one of them, nor to all of them together. Their united writings form but a second volume, and that a very thin one, just one-fifth of the bulk of the first, to which moreover it bears in some degree a kind of supplementary relation.¹²

Bernard calls Paul “the great doctor of the Church.”¹³ The writings of the former Apostles contain personal “reference to the words and acts of our Lord Jesus.”¹⁴ This is expected since they were with him. The writings of Paul, however, contain no such reference. Bernard sees this distinction between their writings:

If the others were the Apostles of the manifestation of Christ, he [Paul] was the Apostle of its *results*; and, in the fact of passing under *his* teaching, we have sufficient warning that we are advancing from the lessons which the life, and the character, and the words of Jesus gave, into the distinct exposition of the redemption, the reconciliation, the salvation which result from his appearing. In this way it was provided that the two correlative kinds of teaching, which the Church received at the first, should be left to the Church forever in the distinctness of their respective

⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁹ Ibid., 151.

¹⁰ Ibid., 154.

¹¹ Ibid., 152.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 155.

¹⁴ Ibid.

developments; for this distinctness of development in the second kind of teaching is both announced and secured by its being confided to St. Paul.¹⁵

Paul, according to Bernard, is the Apostle who was commissioned to bring Christian doctrine to its fullness and maturity to a degree that the others weren't. Bernard argues that his unique call and initial commission perfectly suited him for such a task. Though Paul was not present for the manifestation of Christ as were the other Apostles, he experienced its effect in a most unusual manner and time. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, once a persecutor of the Church, instantly became its chief advocate. Bernard comments:

We can all perceive the active habit, the fervent spirit, the strong will, the warm affections, the tender sensibility, the exercised intellect, the subjective tendencies of thought, the vivid consciousness of his own inward history, the combination of Greek and Hebrew training, the thorough grounding of the mind in the Law and the Prophets, the profound experience of the false theory of Judaism, in its effects on his own heart, and in the practical consequences to which it once carried him; finally, the suddenness with which the Gospel came upon him, making him to know with a singular distinctness what is the contrast between salvation sought by law through works, and salvation found by grace through faith, and what is the change in the whole world within, when the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes a man free from the law of sin and death.¹⁶

Paul's sudden and immediate conversion to Christ was one of the chief qualifications for his unique calling. Bernard even says "that his being born out of due time *was itself one of his qualifications*."¹⁷ Unlike the other Apostles, who slowly came to the realization that God was manifested in the flesh, Paul came to it in an instant and the effects of understanding this bore immediate fruit. This, in part, suited Paul to become the "great doctor of the Church"¹⁸ who was called to articulate the consequences of the manifestation of Christ like none other.

Paul, however, is not to be viewed in competition with or as an antithesis to the teaching of the other Apostles and writers of the New Testament. He is not to be understood as one who "diverged from the track of the original doctrine."¹⁹ There are no competing theologies in the New Testament, in other words. Bernard acknowledges that some in his day were claiming that "the Gospel which he [*i.e.*, Paul] preached was not so much a stage of progress as an individual variety, and that in following it out we had diverged from the track of the original doctrine, and were no longer sustained by the authority of the Twelve."²⁰

Surely Bernard is alluding to the history of religions school of interpretation so prominent in Germany (and elsewhere) at the time of his lectures. It is not Paul versus the theologies of the other New Testament authors. Their theology was ultimately one and the same. Each author contributed in a unique way to the whole, but not in a contradictory fashion among themselves. Bernard acknowledges this with reference to the Epistles in the following words:

The Twelve, therefore, are joined with St. Paul, as authors together with him of the doctrinal canon of the Church, fulfilling this office through Peter and John, their natural leaders and original representatives, and in a more restricted measure through James and Jude, the brethren of the Lord, to the former of whom, in the second stage of the Church's history, so eminent and peculiar a position is assigned. Had we been permitted to choose our instructors from among "the glorious company," three of these names at least would have been uttered by every tongue; and besides our

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 153.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

desire to be taught by their lips, we should, as disciples of St. Paul, have felt a natural anxiety to know whether “James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars,” “added nothing to” (Gal. 2:9), and took nothing from, the substance of the doctrine which we had received through him. It was the will of God that this anxiety should be met. We have not been left to conjectures and surmises. We have words from these very Apostles, expressing the mind of their later life, words in which we recognize the mellow tone of age, the settled manner of an old experience, and the long habit of Christian thought. We not only meet the men whom we should wish to hear, but we meet them at the point where we should wish to hear them, now the venerated authorities in the Church which they had long since founded, and fully cognizant of its intervening history.

Thus, if the collection of Epistles be intended to exhibit the fulness and maturity of Christian doctrine, the selection of its authors corresponds to the end in view; the man who is best fitted to conduct, being associated with the men who are best fitted to confirm, the exposition and development of the Gospel of Christ.²¹

Bernard finally discusses *the relative characters* of the Epistles. He sees them as “complementary one to another, and constituent parts of one body of teaching.”²² He begins by discussing the Pauline Epistles in their canonical order. He views Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians as having “a corrective and decisive character.”²³ This corrective and decisive character is present “to decide the uncertainties, and correct the divergences, which will always characterize every second stage in the history of truth.”²⁴

Romans, of course, stands at the head and functions “as the first step in the epistolary course.”²⁵ The subject matter of Romans is “the need, the nature, and the effects of the justification for individual souls which the Gospel preaches and which faith receives.”²⁶ The special place of Romans in the context of the New Testament, according to Bernard, is described as follows:

Moreover, if the Gospel of St. Matthew fitly opens the whole evangelical record by connecting it with the former Scriptures, so also for the same reason does this great Epistle fitly open the doctrinal series: for what the one does in respect of fact, the other does in respect of doctrine, justifying throughout the intimation with which it opens that the Gospel will here be treated as that “which God had promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” In the constant references, and in the whole line of argument, we see the illustrious genealogy and lineal descent of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, traced, like that of Jesus himself, from Abraham and David, and vindicated by the witness of the Law and the Prophets; so that we enter on the final exposition of the truth with a settled sense that in all the successive stages of its revelation the truth has still been one.²⁷

Both Corinthian epistles are written to the world of “the Greeks who seek after wisdom” and thus confront “the essential spirit of the world.” The authority of the Gospel is brought to bear on this mindset, claiming the subjection of the mind and regulating the life of the Church.²⁸

Galatians confronts “the spirit of a willful bondage, which returns after its own stubborn and insensate fashion to the elements of the world and of the flesh.”²⁹ Paul’s apostolic doctrine in

²¹ Ibid., 155-56.

²² Ibid., 157.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 158.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 158-59.

²⁹ Ibid., 159.

Galatians “asserts more strongly than ever its character as a revelation of Jesus Christ, and shines out more clearly as a dispensation of spirit and of liberty.”³⁰

Bernard sees the rest of Paul’s epistles differing “from the first group in the comparative absence of the controversial attitude and of the judicial tone.”³¹ In Ephesians and Colossians “we hear, not as before, the doctor of the Church expounding, confuting, and deciding, but rather a prophet of truth speaking as ‘one borne along by the Holy Ghost,’”³² “of the eternal purposes of God, and of the ideal perfections of the Church in Christ.”³³ Philippians contains “the plainest counsels” from “the voice...not that of a prophet, but of a friend.”³⁴ The Thessalonian letters, “though first in the date of production, may fitly be read last in the permanent order” due to their eschatological element.³⁵ And finally, the Pastoral Epistles provide for “the outer circle of ministerial provision for the care of the Church and the stewardship of the truth.”³⁶

Bernard then discusses the character of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He sees its permanent office as settling the issues connected to the relationship between the old and new covenants in light of the coming of Christ.³⁷ Though he does not argue for Pauline authorship, he does admit that it is “confessedly Pauline, and, apparently on account of its uncertified authorship, has usually taken its place in succession to his acknowledged writings.”³⁸

After stating that Hebrews offers “a comprehensive exposition of the advancing course of revelation, and of the relation between its two great stages,”³⁹ Bernard offers these final, important words:

But more particularly is it to be noticed here, that this Epistle throws a stronger light than other writings had done upon the progress of doctrine during the Christian period itself. For, first, it expressly recognizes the fact that “the word of the beginning of Christ” [Heb. 6:1] had been enlarged by intervening teaching into a “perfection,” which many of those who are here addressed had sinfully and shamefully failed to receive; the teachers sent from God having wrought out for them full expositions of truth, to which their old prepossessions had closed their hearts. And, secondly, it exhibits the further fact, that this perfecting of the truth, by the full and definite interpretation of the principles of the Gospels, had been accomplished by means of the true reading of the Old Testament in the light of the knowledge of Christ.⁴⁰

These words afford us with two vital observations concerning Bernard’s understanding of the nature and interpretation of redemptive history. Here he (1) clearly acknowledges that redemptive history is progressive (*i.e.*, “the advancing course of revelation”); and (2) clearly acknowledges that the Old Testament is to be read and interpreted in light of the coming of Christ (*i.e.*, “the true reading of the Old Testament in the light of the knowledge of Christ”).

Finally, Bernard briefly discusses the character of the Catholic Epistles. He views them as confirmatory and supplemental to Paul’s doctrine, though “the aspects of the truth are different, but the substance and the features are the same.”⁴¹ He acknowledges that James may appear at first sight “to belong to an earlier, or rather a retrograde stage.”⁴² But he is quick to state (granted in an endnote)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 159-60.

³³ Ibid., 159.

³⁴ Ibid., 160. Bernard makes no mention of Philemon.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 161-62.

³⁸ Ibid., 161.

³⁹ Ibid., 161-62.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 162.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 163.

that a considerate examination of the Epistle shows that the whole doctrine of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and of the mystery of redemption and salvation, is *pre-supposed as already known and accepted* both by the writer and by those to whom he writes. It is this pre-supposition which justifies the place which is assigned to the Epistle in the course of divine instruction.⁴³

He sees Peter's and John's epistles in harmony with Paul as well, citing 1 Pet. 5:12 and 2 Pet. 3:16 to support his assertion. He further comments on the relationship between Paul and Peter and John in these words:

On the Gospel doctrine itself, which is thus confirmed, a fresh light seems to be thrown by the spirit of these precious Epistles, the *faith* expounded by St. Paul kindling in fervent *hope* in the words of St. Peter, and expanding into sublime *love* in those of St. John. At the same time the reader cannot fail to note how these writings of the original Apostles, *by* express references, by borrowed language, and their whole spirit, seem to bind the doctrine which the Epistles have developed to the Gospels in which it first began to be opened.⁴⁴

Jude closes the Catholic Epistles with an appropriate exhortation to contend for the faith, a warning against relapse, an entreaty to keep ourselves in the love of God, and a commendation to him who is able to keep us from falling.⁴⁵

Bernard closes this lecture with a recapitulation and two practical questions.

With such charges, warnings, and commendatory prayers is the didactic portion of the New Testament left in our hands. We have now observed its function in the whole scheme of instruction, as addressed to those who have believed the Gospel, for the furtherance and perfecting of their education in Christ. We have seen that it is adapted to this work by the epistolary *form*, which contemplates those who are addressed as partakers in the same life with those who address them, and as brethren in the family of God. Secondly, by the *method* adopted, in which the teacher, putting forth all the varieties of his own mental energies, exercises and trains the spiritual faculties of those who are taught, while conducting them to definite and ascertained conclusions. Thirdly, by the appointment of the chief *author*, whose proper work only commences at the point where the testimony of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh is finished, and passes into the testimony of his present relations with men in the spirit. Lastly, by the relative characters of the collected writings, whereby the exigencies of the spiritual life are met at every point and provided for in natural though informal succession.⁴⁶

Bernard's practical questions are: (1) "What is our own experience of the exigencies provided for?"⁴⁷ and (2) "If the exigencies which are thus supposed are really felt by us, what use do we make of the word which is given to meet them?"⁴⁸

Lecture VII: The Epistles (Part II)

In this lecture, Bernard considers the specific character of the doctrinal content of the Epistles, "as compared with the preceding parts of the New Testament."⁴⁹ He does so under two main

⁴³ Ibid., 244.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 163-64.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 164-65.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 165.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 168.

headings: (1) the general character of the progress of doctrine contained in the Epistles and (2) the particular doctrines affected by and expounded in light of this general character.

Bernard takes as his text for this lecture, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). His claim is that this fundamental thought is "in every page"⁵⁰ of the Epistles. Linking the Epistles with the Gospels and the book of Acts, he says:

As the manifestation of Christ when it was finished [*i.e.*, the Gospels] made way for the preaching of Christ [*i.e.*, Acts], so the preaching of Christ when it has been received opens into the *life in Christ*. The Epistles presuppose the existence of this life, both in the community and in the individual, and their doctrine is directed to educate and develop it. The fundamental thought in every page is that expressed in my text, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus."⁵¹

Bernard views union with Christ as the presupposition of and overarching theme expounded by and, especially, applied in the Epistles. He says, "But it is assumed in the Epistles, that believers in Jesus are no longer living a life that is only external, and, as it were, parallel to *his* life. They are *in* Christ Jesus, and he also is *in* them."⁵² He goes on to show the relationship between the Epistles' doctrine of union with Christ and a promise contained in the Gospel of John.

At the close of his manifestation he [*i.e.*, Christ] foretold a state of consciousness which his disciples had not attained while he was with them in the flesh, but which would be enjoyed by them under the succeeding dispensation. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). *The language of the Epistles is the echo of this promise*. It is the voice of those who have entered on the predicted knowledge, and who view all subjects in the light of it.⁵³

He adds that union with Christ "breathes in every page"⁵⁴ of the Epistles. Union with Christ for Bernard includes believers being in Christ and Christ in believers. "*Believers are in Christ and Christ in them*."⁵⁵ It involves believers being in Christ and "the correlative fact that *Christ is in those who believe*."⁵⁶ He says that "this idea underlies all that is said, gives the point of view from which every subject is regarded, and supplies the standard of character and the rules of conduct."⁵⁷ Indeed, he calls union with Christ the "pervading characteristic of the Apostolic writings."⁵⁸ He clearly identifies the essence of the progress of doctrine in the Epistles in these words: "the progress of doctrine in the Epistles is constituted, not in the first place by the communication of new information, but by the recognition of a spiritual state which has been attained, and by the education of the spiritual life pertaining to it."⁵⁹

With the presupposition of union with Christ in mind, Bernard then selects four doctrines contained in the Epistles. He states his purpose at this point as follows:

It now remains for me to point out that this fundamental character does of itself constitute a visible advance in the *several parts* of doctrine, both changing their aspect and enlarging their bounds;

⁵⁰ Ibid., 169.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 170.

⁵³ Ibid., 170-71. Emphases added.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 172.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 173.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 174.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 175.

and for this purpose it is necessary to select some particular subjects in which this change may be studied.⁶⁰

Bernard selects the doctrine of salvation, adoption, worship, and Christian ethics.

Concerning “the primary doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ,”⁶¹ Bernard first reminds us of how this doctrine was revealed in the Gospels. He claims that it “appears in its most general form.”⁶² He states that “it is typically represented, through the bodily healing or saving which points to the like work in the world of spirit.”⁶³ He adds that faith is on occasion said to be the means whereby forgiveness of sins is obtained. He goes on to say:

To these intimations, definite invitations and assertions are added. He who speaks is “come to save the world”; “to seek and to save that which is lost”; men are called to “come to him that they may have life”; “he that believeth on him is not condemned”; “he shall never perish, but have everlasting life”: and from time to time some words are spoken which suggest the method in which the salvation is wrought—words which tell of “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world”; of being “lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness,” that those who look may live; of “life given as a ransom for many”; and of “the blood of a new covenant shed for the remission of sins.”⁶⁴

This, according to Bernard, is the doctrine of salvation revealed in the Gospels according to its most general form.

But what of the Epistles? Bernard answers, “But, in reaching the Epistles, who is not struck with the definiteness and development which the whole doctrine, especially this last part of it, has obtained?”⁶⁵ He argues that the Epistles assume that their readers have received “the great truth in its first aspect, and have believed on the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.”⁶⁶ The Epistles seek to elaborate upon the grounds and means of this great salvation. “In every variety of expression the reality of the atoning work of Christ is made sure; in every connection of thought it is made present.”⁶⁷ In this context, Bernard references Rom. 3:25; 5:9,10; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12,26,28; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:24; 1 John 1:7; 2:2. He follows these quotations with this comment:

Such is the constant voice of the apostolic teaching, and such also is the constant voice of the Christian consciousness which the apostolic teaching forms and certifies. Those who are in Christ are already inmates of the “holy temple” which we see reared in the Gospels and opened in the Acts; and for them the altar of the cross is the one central object, visible from the remotest precincts, and sanctifying all around it, while the one sacrifice thereon completed is the ever-present condition of all which is celebrated or enjoyed within....we find a firm unsparing use of various but kindred forms of speech, each supplementing and confirming the other, and having in the minds of those who use them a recognized and settled force, derived from ordinances which they have always held to be divine, and which they now understand to have been pre-ordained for the very purpose of preparing the ideas and the language in which they are here expressing the things of Christ.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 176.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 177.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 177-78.

Bernard does not discount the fact that mysteries yet remain. But what is no mystery is the ground of this salvation, its nature, and the means whereby we lay hold of it. Bernard concludes his discussion of the progress of the doctrine of salvation in the Epistles with these words:

I only observe that these central parts of the truth of our salvation become more distinct and clear as we advance beyond the threshold of the Gospel; and that in the Epistles, as standing amongst those who are in Christ, we receive a fuller interpretation of the things which he spake with his lips concerning the salvation which we were to find in him.⁶⁹

Bernard then considers the doctrine of adoption. As with the doctrine of salvation, he goes back to the foundation of adoption as revealed in the Gospels. Here he notes that “one chief feature of the teaching in the Gospels is found in the word ‘Father’.”⁷⁰ Not only is Jesus revealed as Son of the Father, but those who receive him also have God as their Father. He continues discussing this theme in the Gospels as follows:

In right of this relationship [of the Son to the Father] he straightway associates in it those who receive him... So the whole course of his teaching tends to that intertwining of his own relation to God with theirs, which is finally expressed on the eve of his departure: “My Father and your Father, my God and your God” (John 20:17). And this language is not a mere general declaration of the universal fatherhood of God; for it is always addressed to his disciples *as such*, to the little flock whom the world will persecute, and to whom “it is their Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).⁷¹

Bernard then moves from the doctrine of adoption in the Gospels to that of the Epistles. He states three aspects of this doctrine’s advance: the ground of adoption in the work of Christ, the means whereby we obtain this adopted status, and the consciousness of being adopted. He argues, not that the doctrine itself is new, but that it “appears there [*i.e.*, in the Epistles] in a fuller form.”⁷² He quotes Gal. 4:4, “made under the law to redeem those under the law, in order that we might receive the adoption as sons” as an example of a “plainer statement of its [*i.e.*, adoption’s] ground in the work of Christ.”⁷³ He references 1 John 5:1 and Gal. 3:26 as examples of “stronger assertions of the means, on our part, through which the sonship is enjoyed.”⁷⁴ Then he adds these closing comments on the advance in the doctrine of adoption in the Epistles:

But the substantive addition made to the doctrine lies in the region of *consciousness*, and in the experience of the inward life. Believers are in Christ, and so are sons of God, but, having become so, they find that Christ also is in them, giving them the *mind* of sons and the *sense* of their sonship. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:5). “The Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16, 17). This revelation is not only seen in the particular passages which assert it, but its presence is felt in all parts of the Apostolic writings, and as we read we become more and more sensible that Christ in the Spirit has perfected his teaching in the flesh, and that those who are in him now learned all that was meant by his word “Your Father.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid., 178-79.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 179.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 180.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 180-81.

Next comes what Bernard labels “the department of duties,” focusing upon “the first of them—the personal approach to God in worship, prayer, and praise.”⁷⁶ Bernard reminds us of some of the teachings of Jesus on this subject.

...our Lord instructs us to come to God as a Father, and as one who seeth in secret (Matt. 6:8); to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); to pray always, and not to faint (Luke 18:1); to pray as sinners who need mercy (Luke 18:13); as children who are sure to be heard (Luke 11:11-13)... In his last discourse words are dropped, which seem to place the whole subject on a fresh basis: “No man cometh unto the Father *but by me*,” “If ye shall ask anything *in my name*, I will do it. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 14:6, 14 and 16:23, 24).⁷⁷

How do the Epistles develop this teaching of Jesus? Bernard views the words of Jesus above as “(at the time) anticipatory words”⁷⁸ which find their explanation in the Epistles. Toward the end of presenting his case that the teaching of Jesus above “is fully realized”⁷⁹ in the Epistles, he says:

Furthermore, this access, which is through the Son, is also “by one Spirit.” To those who are in Christ the Holy Ghost is given, as the consequence of their union with him, and thus there is the Divine presence in the soul of the worshipper; and so, in the highest and most perfect sense, he worships the Father in spirit and in truth, and prays in the Holy Ghost, “the Spirit itself helping his infirmities, when he knows not what he should pray for as he ought, and making intercession for him with groanings that cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26). Passing into the midst of such discoveries as these, we feel that the doctrine of prayer has attained its perfect form, by combination with the doctrine of the Trinity, and that the highest fulfilment of all which had been enjoined upon those who were *with* Jesus has become possible for those who now are *in* him.⁸⁰

Bernard takes up “the ethical teaching of the New Testament”⁸¹ as his last example of the progress of doctrine in the Epistles. He sees the moral system of Jesus shine “most brightly in those points where other systems fail, namely, the truthfulness of inward cleansing, the majesty of lowliness, and the glory of love.”⁸² He advocates what he calls “a momentous change”⁸³ in the Epistles, though admits the “standard is the same in its general elevation and in the proportions of its several parts.”⁸⁴ What momentous change does Bernard see in the Epistles? He explains:

Where then is the change? I answer, in the *position* of those who are to use it, in the *relations* of which they are now conscious, and therefore in the *motives* by which they are to be influenced, and in the *powers* which they are supposed to possess. “Our duties,” as Bishop Butler observes, “arise out of our relations.” Therefore every revelation of unknown relations must affect in some way the character of our duties. This truth comes strikingly into view as we follow the unfolding of the spiritual relations of believers to their Lord.⁸⁵

He then chronicles aspects of the spiritual relationship of believers to Christ in the teachings of Jesus. He argues that the relation to Jesus that believers have entered by the Spirit of God is

⁷⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 183.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

where “they [find] both the motives of duty and the power for its fulfillment.”⁸⁶ “The Epistles first unfold the fullness of the grace in Christ, then beseech us ‘by the mercies of God’ that we ‘present our bodies a living sacrifice...’ (Rom. 12:1)”⁸⁷ They base their “practical instructions on the consciousness of being redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18), of being risen with Christ (Col. 3:1), of having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9,13).”⁸⁸ Motive for duty is based on what Christ did for us and the fact that we are in him. Bernard argues that 1 John best exemplifies this character of ethical teaching “where the sense of fellowship with God is the ground for walking in the light.”⁸⁹ He concludes this discussion on the advance in Christian ethics as follows:

We recognize then the advance of ethical doctrine, not only or chiefly in its more various and detailed practical development, but in the fact that the principles, motives, and conduct of life are habitually drawn from the ever-present consciousness of the great salvation. It is a habit of thought, up to which, but not into which, the moral teaching of Jesus had led us; a habit of thought, which corresponds with those relations towards himself, into which men fully entered only when his voice on earth had ceased. If there is this visible progress of doctrine in the department of Christian ethics; if, in respect of distinct exhibition of principles and motives, the teaching of the Apostles surpasses that of their Lord; it is plain that this fact is a necessity from the nature of the case. Till Jesus was glorified, his spiritual relations with believers could not be fully unfolded; and till those relations were apprehended, the motives arising out of them could not be called into action, nor the life resulting from them be clearly brought to light.⁹⁰

So, according to Bernard, the advance in Christian ethics is seen by way of development and, more so, in the fact that ethical principles, motives and conduct of life are now based on the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Bernard closes this lecture by reminding us of what he has sought to do. He has tried to display the progress of doctrine from the Gospels to the Epistles. Four doctrines were used to display the fact and type of progress contained in the latter parts of the New Testament. Bernard claims that other doctrines could have been traced with the same results.

If we multiplied these examples to the utmost, our comparison of the aspect which every separate doctrine bears in the Gospels with that which it presents in the Epistles would still have the same result. We should still see that the later doctrine differs from the earlier only as being its completion and fulfillment... The Lord himself was perfected and glorified, not in the days of his flesh, but after they were ended. So also was his doctrine; but as in the later stage he is still the same Lord, so it is still the same doctrine. Its meaning is defined, its extent is disclosed, its consequences are deduced. Parable and proverb are changed into great plainness of speech. What seemed a figure is shown as a fact. What was intimation of something future is become assertion of something present. Motives are supplied, powers are assured, by which that which was enjoined is realized, and a life which had seemed impossible is now become simply natural. Revelation has only enlarged itself to meet necessities and fill capacities which its former words had purposely created. The earlier teaching contemplated the coming of a day for its disciples, in which many things should be said to them which they could not bear then. In the later teaching that day is come.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Ibid., 184.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 185.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 185-86.

⁹¹ Ibid., 186-87.

Bernard is once again clear that the doctrinal advance is not in essence but in explanation, in development, in maturity. The Epistles are the completion and fulfillment of things already revealed in the Gospels. Bernard properly goes back farther in redemptive history than the Gospels while tracing where the advanced form of doctrine in the Epistles found its redemptive-historical roots. After claiming that the Epistles contain the highest stage of divine teaching, he says:

After slowly moving on, through the simple thoughts of patriarchal piety, through the system and covenant of the Law, and through the higher spirituality of the Prophets, it [*i.e.*, divine teaching] rose suddenly to a lofty elevation when God spake to us in his Son; and even higher yet when the Son ascended back into glory, and sent down the Holy Ghost to take up his unfinished work, and open the mysteries which had been hid from ages and generations. Each stage of progress based itself on the facts and instructions of that which went before. The Law was given to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Prophets spake to those who were under the Law; Jesus Christ came to those who had been taught by the Prophets; the Holy Ghost instructed those who had received Christ.⁹²

Lecture VIII: The Apocalypse

Bernard opens this lecture by placing the Apocalypse in biblical context. He relates the Epistles to the words of Jesus in John 16:13, “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” and the Apocalypse to the final words of that text, “and He will tell you things to come.” According to Bernard, this statement finds

its distinct fulfillment in the Apocalypse. That book continues the line of predictive history running through the New Testament, and is the consummation of the sure word of prophecy which pervades the Bible as a whole.⁹³

Bernard reminds us that he has already shown us “that the words spoken by our Lord in the flesh give the substance of all the later doctrine” and form “the heads and summaries of chapters which were to be written afterwards.”⁹⁴ Then he makes a transition to the Apocalypse as follows:

As all the great doctrinal features of the Epistles are found in germ in separate sayings of the Lord, so also the main outlines of the Apocalypse are given us in parables and sayings, which trace the future history of his kingdom. And more particularly it is to be noticed, that this book bears the same relation to the last discourse in St. Matthew which the Epistles bear to the last discourse in St. John. In the upper room where the last Passover and the first Eucharist had been celebrated, and in the midst of the little company which then represented the Christian Church, the Lord spoke the words which opened the mystery of the spiritual life, a mystery afterwards to be fully unfolded by the Holy Ghost, in the day when they would know that he was in the Father, and they in him and he in them. Sitting on the Mount of Olives with Jerusalem spread before him, and questioned as to the sign of his coming and of the winding up of the age, he gave the outlines of a prophetic history, which contained the substance, bore the character, and must rule the interpretation, of the later and larger revelation.⁹⁵

Bernard reminds us that just as the unity of the doctrinal teaching (*i.e.*, the Epistles) was assured us because the teacher was to be the same, so also with the prophetic teaching. This is supported by the words of Revelation 1:1, “The revelation of Jesus Christ *which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants* the things which must come to pass.” The book of Revelation,

⁹² Ibid., 187-88.

⁹³ Ibid., 190.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 190-91.

then, is the last word of Christ to his people and completes the promise of John 16:13, “and He will tell you things to come.” Bernard sees continuity between what he calls the line of prophecy and the line of doctrine in the following manner: “Thus the continuity of the line of prophecy within the canonical books is made as clear as that of the line of doctrine; both commencing in the words of Jesus in the flesh, both perfected by the words of Jesus in the Spirit.”⁹⁶

One may wonder how the book of Revelation (*i.e.*, prophecy as predicted fact) fits in a discussion of the progress of doctrine. Bernard says that “it will stand in the same relation to doctrine as is held by history or recorded fact.”⁹⁷ Just as the historical facts of the Gospels “enter the region of doctrine (as we commonly use the term) through their consequences to ourselves, through their effect on our own inward consciousness, through the uses and applications which may be made of them,”⁹⁸ so the same applies to prophecy. And just as with history, so also with prophecy—not all prophetic material has the same connection with doctrine.⁹⁹ This conviction helps pave the way for the rest of Bernard’s discussion of the Apocalypse. He will seek to identify a few main prophetic lines that further develop broad doctrinal elements already revealed in antecedent revelation. Bernard himself says:

I am free then from all necessities of detailed apocalyptic interpretation; having only to render some account of the general doctrinal bearing of the revelation of things to come, and to point out what additions of that kind are made in the last book, to the treasures which the preceding documents have accumulated for our use. The separate accessions of information it would take long to gather, but their general character is visible at once.¹⁰⁰

Bernard first discusses the “state of mind which the book presupposes.”¹⁰¹ He views the book of Revelation as further developing the corporate and future aspects of the church. He sees the Gospels as presenting the kingdom of God as a dynamic force, “having its own life and end, its own history and destiny.”¹⁰² He sees the Epistles as further developing various corporate aspects of the church, *i.e.*, house of God, habitation of God, body of Christ, glorious church, etc. These descriptions of the church leave us anticipating a day coming when it is perfected. Yet that day is not realized during the days of the New Testament. Bernard points out the many defections from the faith and tendency toward apostasy recorded in the Epistles. In fact, as Bernard observes, the end of the latter Epistles (2 Timothy, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, and Jude) “breathe the language of a time in which the tendencies of that history had distinctly shown themselves.”¹⁰³ What he means is that Paul, Peter, John, and Jude warn us against the tendencies recorded in the Epistles toward apostasy and encourage us to contend for the faith. He then offers these transitional words:

Thus we arrive at this book with wants which it is meant to supply; we come to it as men who not only personally are in Christ, and who know what as individuals they have in him: but who also, as members of his body, share in a corporate life, in the perfection of which they are to be made perfect, and in the glory of which their Lord is to be glorified. For this perfection and glory we wait in vain, among the confusions of the world and the ever-active, ever-changing forms of evil. What is the meaning of this wild scene? what is to be its issue? and what prospect is there of the realization of that which we desire? To such a state of mind as this, and to the wants which it involves, this last part of the teaching of God is addressed, in accordance with that system of progressive doctrine which I have endeavored to illustrate, wherein each stage of advance ensues

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 198-99. The discussion of this heading occurs on pages 193-99.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 198.

in the way of natural sequence from the effect of that which preceded it.¹⁰⁴

Having identified the state of mind the book presupposes, Bernard next takes up the leading characteristics of its doctrine. He states clearly, “The doctrine of the book is a doctrine of *consummation*.”¹⁰⁵ The bulk of the rest of the lecture takes up various aspects of the Apocalypse as a book dealing with the doctrine of consummation.

First, Bernard discusses the cause of the consummation. He identifies this cause as “the atoning death of Jesus.”¹⁰⁶

...that the place which the sacrifice of the death of Christ holds in the consciousness of the believer, is the same which it also occupies in the history of the Church, and that he conquers for us, and reigns among us, and achieves the restoration of all things, *because* he has first offered himself for us, and is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.¹⁰⁷

Bernard points out *next* a doctrine of the history of the consummation in terms of “an exposition of the *nature* of the history.”¹⁰⁸ Bernard sees the Apocalypse as “a revelation of the connection between things that are seen and things that are not seen.”¹⁰⁹ He gives eloquent expression to this as follows:

We are borne to the courts above, and the temple of God is opened in heaven, and we behold the events on earth as originating in what passes there. There seals are broken, trumpets are sounded, and vials are poured out, which rule the changes of the Church and of the nations. While we are looking down through the rolling mists on things that pass below, we are all the time before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and among the four and twenty elders, the four living beings, and the innumerable company of angels; and we hear voices proceeding out of the throne, the cries of disembodied spirits, and hallelujahs that roll through the universe. We see further, that there is cause for this participation of the world above in the events of the world below, for it becomes every moment more plain that the earth is the battle-field of the kingdoms of light and darkness. There is a far bolder revelation than we have had before of the presence and action of the powers of evil. The old Serpent is on one side as the Lamb is on the other, and the same light which shows the movements of the Head and Redeemer of our race, falls also upon those of the enemy and destroyer. In the sense of this connection between things seen and things not seen, lies the secret of that awe and elevation of mind which we felt as children when we first turned these pages; and the assurance of it has an ever-increasing value to him who has painfully sought to test the mingled forms of good and ill, and to discern some plan and purpose in the confused scene around him.¹¹⁰

Third, Bernard views the book as “a doctrine of the power and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹¹ It is toward this hope that the previous apostolic writings “steadily directed”¹¹² our eyes. But the book of Revelation has as its “first voice, and the keynote of the whole”¹¹³ the expectation of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. “It is a history of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 199.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 201-202.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 202.

¹¹² Ibid., 203.

¹¹³ Ibid., 202.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 203.

Bernard *then* discusses the doctrine of the coming as “a doctrine of *victory*”¹¹⁵ and “a doctrine of judgment.”¹¹⁶ A visible victory is depicted “both for the Lord and for his people.”¹¹⁷ Bernard references Rev. 19:11-16 at this point. But, as Bernard reminds us, “victory for one side is overthrow and condemnation for the other.”¹¹⁸ The book also includes the wrath and judgment upon all rebellion.

Finally, Bernard sees the Apocalypse as a book of restoration. After referencing Revelation 21:1-2, he says:

In taking these words for my text [*i.e.*, referenced at the beginning of this lecture] I place myself at the point where the whole teaching of Scripture culminates. Here, at the last step, we have a definite and satisfactory completion of the former doctrine of the future. There is to be a perfect humanity; not only perfect individually, but perfect in society. There is to be a city of God. “The Holy City!”—there is the realization of the true tendencies of man. “New Jerusalem!”—there is the fulfillment of the ancient promises of God.¹¹⁹

Later he adds, “The Bible opens the prospect of which history had led us to despair.”¹²⁰ The Bible, for Bernard, is “one long account of the preparation of the city of God.”¹²¹ It is not merely concerned with personal salvation. Bernard acknowledges that “it is, but it is more than this.”¹²² He comments:

It places before us the restoration, not only of the personal, but of the social life; the creation, not only of the man of God, but of the city of God; and it presents the society or city, not as a mere name for the congregation of individuals, but as having a being and life of its own, in which the Lord finds his satisfaction and man his perfection. The “Jerusalem which is above” is, in relation to the Lord, “the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife” (Rev. 21:9), and, in relation to man, it is “the Mother of us all” (Gal. 4:26). In its appearance the revealed course of redemption culminates, and the history of man is closed: and thus *the last chapters of the Bible declare the unity of the whole book, by completing the design which has been developed in its pages, and disclosing the result to which all preceding steps have tended.*¹²³

Bernard understands the final vision of the Bible as “a conclusion by which all that went before is interpreted and justified.”¹²⁴ He further says that “a Bible that did not end by building for us a city of God would appear to leave much in man unprovided for, and much in itself unaccounted for.”¹²⁵ Thankfully, as Bernard acknowledges, “neither of these deficiencies exist.”¹²⁶ Bernard sees the consummation as something that “from the first, the desires of men and the preparations of God have been alike directed towards it.”¹²⁷ In other words, the eschatology at the end of the Bible has been there from the beginning. Indeed, Bernard gives this brief history of redemption to illustrate his point:

At the beginning of the sacred story, the Father of the faithful comes forth into view, followed by

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 205.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 204.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 205.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 206.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 208.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid. Emphases added.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 209.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

those who are heirs with him of the same promise; and they separate themselves to the life of strangers, because they are “looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” In due time solid pledges of the divine purpose follow. We behold a peculiar people, a divinely-framed polity, a holy city, a house of God. It is a wonderful spectacle—this system of earthly types, thus consecrated and glorified by miraculous interventions and inspired panegyrics. Do we look on the fulfilment of patriarchal hopes or on the types of their fulfilment? on the final form of human society or on the figures of the true? The answer was given by Prophets and Psalmists, and then by the word of the Gospel, finally by the hand of God, which swept that whole system from the earth. It was gone when the words of the text were written, and when the closing scene of the Bible presented the new Jerusalem, not as the restoration, but as the antitype of the old.¹²⁸

The redemptive-historical types give way to their eschatological anti-types. Old Jerusalem was a type of the new Jerusalem, the city of God.

Bernard states very clearly that man is brought to this city and this eternal state of perfection by Jesus Christ, the Mediator.¹²⁹ But, as he says, now “is the day of preparation.”¹³⁰ The members of that future society are being “sorted and collected out of the mass of mankind.”¹³¹ They are being trained and prepared for that great day.

And according to Bernard, that great day is not merely a restoration to Eden. Bernard does not view individual salvation as the goal of redemption. He reminds us that the final destination of redeemed humanity is a city.

If we think only of our individual portion, we miss the completeness of Scripture in its provision for the completeness of man. If individual blessedness were the highest thought of humanity, it might have been sufficient to have restored the lost garden of Eden, and to have left the inhabitants of the new earth to dwell safely in its wildernesses and sleep in its woods (Ezek. 34:25).¹³²

Not so does the revelation of God inform the expectations of those who receive it. Other systems evade the demands of the highest tendencies of man: this provides that they shall be realized. It decrees not only the individual happiness, but the corporate perfection of man; and closes the book of its prophecy by assuring the children of the living God that “*he hath prepared for them a city.*”¹³³

Bernard closes this final lecture with a recapitulation of his explanation of the progress of doctrine in the New Testament. He closes with these penetrating, encouraging, and doxological words:

Only the written word of God, confidently followed in the progressive steps of its advance, can lead the weakest or the wisest into the deep blessedness of the life that is in Christ, and into the final glory of the city of God.

Perhaps in some minds this needful confidence may be strengthened by a review of the books of the New Testament in the light in which they have now been placed. When it is felt that these narratives, letters, and visions do in fact fulfil the several functions, and sustain the mutual relations, which would belong to the parts of one design, coalescing into a doctrinal scheme which is orderly, progressive, and complete, then is the mind of the reader in conscious contact with the mind of God; then the superficial diversity of the parts is lost in the essential unity of the whole:

¹²⁸ Ibid., 209-210.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 210.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 212.

¹³³ Ibid., 213.

the many writings have become one Book; the many writers have become one Author. From the position of students, who address themselves with critical interest to the works of Matthew, of Paul, or of John, we have risen to the higher level of believers, who open with holy joy “the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and, while we receive from his own hand the book of life eternal, we hear him saying still, “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.”¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Ibid.