

THE BIBLE HERALD;

FOR THE EDIFICATION OF BELIEVERS, AND THE
SPREAD OF GOSPEL TRUTH.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”—2 Cor. iv. 6.

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THE LORD'S THINGS FIRST.

Notes of a Lecture on **Haggai**.

I READ this to look a little at some of the parts of it as connected with the grace of God, and there is only this remark I would make, and that is whether it be in good or in evil, we find the same characteristic running from the beginning. If God, it is His character we ever get. If Satan, it is his character. If it is God, it may flow forth in the work before the deluge, or it may flow forth in the work that followed the deluge; or with the Jews after law was established, but when you find *God* you will always find the character of God, *God is God Himself*. I cannot suppose under any circumstances God having to do with a people, and not being a *giver*!

Then again as to evil; there is only one master spirit of evil. He tries what he can do by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He tried it with the woman in the garden. He could turn then to Israel and say, Would not you like to be back in Egypt? Would not you like to have some of those leeks and cucumbers? That was the lust of the flesh.

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He could say at another time, "*Is God among you?*" He could puff up their heart by saying, "What a great big people you are."

"Ah, says God, I took you up for my own glory."

Well, when He comes to Christ it is the same, but tried in every way He was found perfect.

In Haggai, ch. ii. 8, 11, we get the remarkable way in which God sets Himself and man in contrast. His name be praised that there never was a more vivid contrast than between man and God. If it were not so, there would be no foundation for us, no continuance, no happy end for us.

Verses 12, 13. Man could not give out goodness, and a man's uncleanness spoilt everything that was near, v. 14-18. Now I'm here, says God, and you have recognised Me, there is nothing I won't do for you.

That was His way, and that is just what it was when Israel danced before the calf, they had spoilt everything in principle. What! the living God had taken them up to be their God, and they made the calf of gold and danced before it! But what does He say? "As I live, saith the Lord, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." "I'll have My own way—I defy you, Israel, with all your wickedness, hindering Me having My way in blessing and glory with all the earth."

Where is Israel now? Have they succeeded in hindering *Him*? Oh, no! And they will be gathered yet by the grace of Christ unto the land *because* God's word cannot fail. We get man coming up to mar everything, and God saying in spite of all, "I'll have My own way," "I'll have My Son reigning on earth, the knowledge of My glory covering the earth." The vivid contrast is between God's ways and man's ways.

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But this also comes in, man can't hold a blessing; but if God *will* give a blessing it will not be till man has got before him as his end—God. If you and I have got the Lord Jesus Christ before us as a living Person in heaven, who is so walking with us in our solitude that we are living by Christ, and for Christ, and to Christ, *then* the Lord Jesus can bless us individually, and let the blessing *appear* and show itself.

Everything turns individually to us on seeking the Lord's face. I ask, "Are you living Christ? Are the particular things around you individually occasions to bring in Christ?" If so, the Lord will bless you in a particular manner.

God had sold Israel into captivity. Well, He bethought Himself of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He could raise up prophets to speak of good things to come, first because *it is natural to God to bless*. He loves to bless. God was acting, and preparing things for the delivering of His people, and we find a remnant had gone back. Well, what was the proper thing for them to think of? It was Jehovah. It ought to have been, "Now that we have got back what would Jehovah have us to do?" But they were not thinking of Him. However, *He* did not cease to think of *them*. There is the contrast. He meant to have the altar built, the temple restored and the city built for their comfort, too. Some said the time is not come for the Lord's house to be built. "Well, how came you to be back in the land if the time is not come?" "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses and this house lie waste?" You have houses and have taken great trouble to finish them. Are you my people? Did I send you into captivity? Did I open the gates to let you out? Well, I have come back with you. Have you prospered while

forgetting My things?" It was no question as to whether He was thinking of them. It was as plain as possible that Jehovah had come back with them. He never could admit for a moment that if a people had got their glory because of their connection with Himself, that He and they could have separate interests. Nor have we.

Ch. i. 5, 6.—O how close He was to Israel at that time! "You have money, and I let it out of your bags. You have sown much and brought in little. You eat, but you have not enough. You would have better food in the barley loaves if God be with it."

Ver. 8, 11.—*I brought that drought about.* What a wondrous thing when God says, "You can't escape Me;" the first part of the blessing must be that you and I are understood to be in company together. How came you to think of ornamenting your own houses, carving those beautiful ceilings, and putting *Me* off to a more convenient time? What will the living God, that raised up those mighty Gentile powers as the scourge do? He has opened the prison doors and says, "I go out with you;" but He gets no thought whatever. Can they stop Him from blowing on all they did? Can they prevent the drought when He sends it? No. He is putting *His mark* on everything connected with them, not that they were not loved, but *loved so much* that He *must* put His name on all. "Let every household thing bear my mark, and I'll bless you." He would not let them know the comfort of their own houses till they could say the altar is made. They must begin with the altar and God. There is a great principle in that for us.

Now, how is it with us? Is the eye single? In our individual walk is there that stamp on us that people

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outside, and our own hearts inside, know that the journey we make is with the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He with us in all our ways? It is so beautiful that directly they have taken one step in the way, *all* the tender love of the Lord dwells on the people, and *directly*, He has a word to comfort them.

Ver. 13.—“I am going up the mountain with you. It is not *now* I'm there pulling holes in the bags, and blasting all the labour of your hands; but no, you have set your faces to do my will, and I am with you. How blessed to have it so!”

Ver. 14.—Have I to go the way all alone. Is the road all solitude? Are there none others treading it? If one is following the word of the Lord, the Lord knows His secret people, and can bring them out of their hiding places for the comfort of our hearts, and He does reveal them to us the moment we begin to act on His word (2 Tim. ii. 22).

Ch. ii. 3, 5.—Never mind: “You be strong. I have gone before you; and I have got a house to build. The Lord has gone out first in the path; it is not only that I have found a people on it who are living to Christ a great deal more than I am, but *He is with us* in the path.”

Ver. 5.—“You have forgotten all the promises. *I have not*. Because you walked contrary to me I took you out of the land, but I did not forget my word to you. The promise is as fresh in my memory as at the first. You had no capacity to take it in, while finishing that beautiful ceiled house for yourself; but now that you have taken those few steps, I tell you it is not a fresh coming in on my part, or that I have changed my mind, but I am acting just as at the beginning.

“Considering all opposed to you, you say, How can

you dare to go forward?" Well, God has gone forward, and if God has gone forward, the closer I am behind Him the safer I am. I find the Lord never ends a dispensation without giving a close worthy of Himself. How beautiful it is in Luke to find a widow with a heart brim full of God's thoughts, and looking out for the Messiah! "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." He would not let Mary and Elizabeth talk of Him without putting His ear down to hear.

If Christ acts now as He always acts, what shall I expect? A people with whom the Spirit can say, "Come!" "The Spirit and the Bride say come." All the churches fit only to be spued out of His mouth; but if the Spirit be in a poor sinner, saved by grace, He will with her invite the Lord Jesus to come. This is surely so.

Ver. 19.—What is the great thing in our day? Surely it is living to Christ. The love that was in Christ's heart so dwelt in the soul of the Apostle that he said, "I want Christ to be magnified in my body." Could God turn away from that? "Won't you, I ask, live for me?" "Well, I will live for Thee, if Thou, Lord Jesus, carest for my living for Thee down here. Christ shall be magnified in my body." Is that your earnest expectation? Well, if instead of living to Christ, I've been living for myself, those around would see that something marred the light shining out—they would say, "If all the light that shines out is the measure of Christ that shines in, he must have very little." This should not be so.

We shall not get away from His hand. It is impossible to go through the world without suffering. You may choose which kind you will have, you must

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suffer for Christ; or you may think, plan, and live for yourself, and have God with the rod close behind you. Lot had got God's mark as really as Abraham. He had not forgotten either. But which of the troubles was the better of the two? To have one's heart tried as Abraham's was, his son the centre of all the promises. Would he reckon that God was the keeper of the promises, not himself? Yes, he did. "Will you trust Me, Abraham, to make good My promises?" Which was the better trial of the two? God searching his heart, or poor Lot? O Lord Jesus, give me Abraham's trial and his lot, and not Lot's trial and his portion.

My conviction is that it is the mind and purpose of God to make as complete a split between flesh and spirit in these last days as He did in the day of Pentecost. The split is this, Who is *living Christ*, and *who is not*. If your heart is fresh on Christ, and Christ is coming to night, you'll have the enjoyment of Christ before He comes, and you'll meet His face with joy. The Father's thought is this, that as His Christ is on high absolutely for us, He will have us here *absolutely* for Him. Don't you then pick up all the things around you, but say, through His grace I'll work out what He has worked in. I'll live to the Christ whose eye is looking down from heaven on me, and I'll make manifest to others the One to whom I live.

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THE gospel of Christ, as perfectly meeting man's nature, condition, and character, is comparatively little known, and less proclaimed. Hence, the numerous doubts, fears, and unsettled questions, which fill

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the hearts, and perplex the consciences, of many of God's dear children. Until the soul is led to see, that the entire question of sin, and the claims of divine holiness, were *all and for ever settled* on the cross, sweet, quiet rest of conscience will be but little known.

Nothing can meet the urgent cry of a troubled conscience, but the one perfect sacrifice of Christ; offered to God, *for us*, on the cross. "For even Christ *our* passover is sacrificed *for us*." There, and there alone, it will find a *perfect answer* to its every claim; because there it will find, through believing, all ground of doubt and fear removed, the whole question of sin eternally settled, every divine requirement fully met, and a solid foundation laid for present, settled peace, in the presence of divine holiness. Christ, "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," settles everything. The moment we believe the gospel, we *are* saved, and ought to be divinely happy. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (Rom. iv. 5; John iii.)

We see the greatness of God's love to the sinner, in His judgment of sin, in the Person of His own dear Son, on the cross. There God, in perfect grace to us, dealt with sin according to His infinite holiness and justice. He went down to the depths of our ruin, and all our sin, measured it, judged it, and put it for ever away, *root and branch*, by shedding the precious blood of the spotless victim. "He condemned sin in the flesh;" that is, He there condemned the evil root of sin which is in our flesh—our carnal nature. But He also "made an end of sins"—of the actual sins of every believer. Thus, between God and Christ alone, the entire question of sin was gone into, and finally settled on the cross. "Simon Peter said unto him,

Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered, Whither I go, *thou canst not follow me now.*" Just as Abraham and Isaac were alone on the top of the mountain in the land of Moriah, so were God and Christ alone, amidst the solemnities and solitudes of Calvary. The only part we had in the cross was, that our *sins* were there. Jesus *alone* bore the full weight of their judgment. (Comp. Dan. ix. 24; Rom. viii. 3; Cor. v. 21; Hebrew ix. 26, 28.)

Whenever this blessed truth is learnt from God's own word, and maintained in the soul by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost, all is peace, joy, and victory. It takes the believer completely away from himself, and his doubts, fears, and questions. And his eye now gazes on ONE, who, by his finished work, has laid the foundation of divine and everlasting righteousness, and who is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest, as the perfect definition of every true believer. With Him, with Him alone, the believer's heart is now to be occupied.

Faith is fully assured, that when *God* puts away sin, it must be put away entirely—that, when Jesus exclaimed, "IT IS FINISHED," the work was done, God was glorified, the sinner saved, the whole power of Satan completely destroyed, and peace established on the most solid basis. Hence, we find, "The God of *peace* brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." He was the God of *judgment* at the cross. He is the God of *peace* at the opening grave. Every enemy has been vanquished, and eternal peace proclaimed, through the blood of His cross. "He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." He rose "in the power of an endless

life," and associates every believer with Himself, in the power of that life in resurrection. Having been cleansed by His blood, they are accepted in His Person. (See Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10; 1 John v. 20.)

Jesus, having thus fully accomplished the work that was given Him to do, and gone up on high, the Holy Ghost came down as a witness to us that redemption was finished, the believer "perfected for ever," and Christ glorified in heaven.

The apostles then began to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the chief of sinners. The subject of their preaching was, "*Jesus and the resurrection.*" And all, who believed on Him as risen and glorified, were immediately and eternally saved. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 11, 12.) There is no blessing outside of, or apart from, the PERSON OF CHRIST—THE HEAVENLY MAN; "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Ever since that time, God has been placing before the sinner, in connexion with *His* gospel, a risen living Christ, as the ALONE object of faith, and "the end of the law for righteousness to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH." (Rom. x.)

When the eye is kept on this heavenly Christ, all is light, joy, and peace; but if it be turned in on self, and occupied with what it *finds* there, and what it *feels*, or with anything whatever that may come between the heart and Christ, all will be darkness, uncertainty, and unhappiness in the soul. Oh! how blessedly simple is the gospel of the grace of God.

The burden of its message to the *lost sinner* is, "Come, for all things are now ready;" the question

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of sin is not raised—" *Grace reigns* through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ, having perfectly satisfied God about sin, the only question now, between God and your heart, is this, *Are you perfectly satisfied with His Christ as the alone portion of your soul?* This is the one grand question of the gospel. Christ has settled every other to the glory of God; and, now, the Father is going to "make a marriage for his Son," to honour, exalt, and glorify Him. Is your heart in full harmony with God's on this point? Work is not required at your hands—strength is not needed—fruit is not demanded—God has provided everything, and prepared everything. It is all grace—the pure grace of God—"only believe," "Come, for all things are now ready," the marriage supper—the wedding garment—royal honours—the Father's presence—fulness of joy—and pleasures for evermore—all are ready,—ready now—"ready to be revealed." Dear reader, are you ready? Oh! solemn question. Are you ready? Have you believed the message? Have you embraced the Son? Are you ready to "Crown him Lord of all?" The table is spread—the house is filling fast—"yet there is room." Already you have heard the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," "and they that were READY went in *with him* to the marriage, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT." "Be ye therefore ready also: for the son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Matt. xxii., xxv.; Luke xii., xiv.)

THE MAN OF SIN, THE ANTICHRIST, AND BABYLON.—(*Concluded.*)

WE have had before us the history of Babylon. Now what will be the end of all this wickedness of man? Well; the destruction of Babylon will be dreadful; for the ten kings and the beast, "these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly *with fire*." "In one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly *burned with fire*; for strong is the Lord God which judgeth her." She will then have "received of the Lord's hand *double* for all her sins" (Is. xl. 2) even as Jehovah had threatened:—"I will recompence their iniquity and their sin *double*" (Jer. xvi. 17); and as he says in the Apocalypse:—"Render unto her even as she rendered, and *double* unto her the *double* according to her works." Immediately after the tribulation of those days, even while these ten kings and the beast are gathered together against this city to war, called the battle of Har-Magedon [place of troops, *i.e.*, valley of Jehoshaphat], "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

"Then shall the Lord go forth,
And fight against those nations,
As when He fought in the day of battle.
And His feet shall stand in that day
Upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east
And the Lord my God shall come,
And all the saints (holy ones, *i.e.*, angels) with Him."

"Then I will remove far off from you the northern army,
And will drive him into a land barren and desolate,
With his face towards the east sea,
And his hinder part toward the utmost sea."

For a full account read second and third chapters of Joel, and the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of Zechariah. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet; they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth."

Now when this city Babylon, the corrupt Jerusalem, has been thus judged and overthrown, the royal marriage will take place between "the Lamb, the King of kings and Lord of lords," and "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," "the holy city Jerusalem." This holy city (beautifully described in Rev. xxi. 9, to xxii. 5), will be composed of all the redeemed, who have tasted the sweets of grace and mercy by faith. We are already espoused to Christ, but wait to be married as Paul says, I *espoused* you to one husband, that I might *present* you as a pure virgin to Christ. When we are married to Him then shall the great mystery be unveiled of how Christ and the Church are one flesh, and how "we are members of his body." Then also the world shall know that God the Father sent Christ, and loved us even as He loved Christ, when they behold us in the same glory with Him; as it is said, "When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also with him be manifested in glory." "And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white

horse, and he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. . . . And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken," &c. Then also Christ will "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous *shine forth* as the sun in the *kingdom* of their Father." There Christ will sit upon His throne reigning with His "fellows (*i.e.*, associates with Him in His kingdom (Psalm, xlv.) viz: (1) "the Queen," "the king's (Pharaoh's) daughter," at His right hand, clothed in gold of Ophir, *i.e.*, the Church; (2) "The virgins," the Queen's companions, *i.e.*, the Old Testament saints, such as Enoch, Job, and Abraham. (3) "Thy sons," (comp. Heb. ii. 10), *i.e.*, New Testament saints, both of Jews and Gentiles, who live in the period *after* the Church is caught up, subdivided into: (1) "Those that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God" (Rev. vi. 9), and (2) "such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand."

After Christ has executed His terrible judgments on the nations, He will build up again the earthly Jerusalem, as it is written:—

"When the Lord shall *build up* Zion,
He shall appear in His glory."

"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem;
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel."
"Again I will build thee,
And thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel."

And it will be called "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (see Isaiah lx.), and "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (it is called "heavenly," not because it is in heaven, but because it is heavenly in character and origin, the builder and maker thereof being God).

"And Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth,
And the mountain of the Lord of Hosts the holy mountain."

It will have a grand temple, as described in chaps. 40th to 47th v. 12 of Ezekiel.

Before concluding, I would ask my reader a solemn question—Which of these two religions and reigns are you helping on? The world has not only crucified Christ as *Saviour* but also as *King*. Do you own Him as *your* Saviour and King? Are you at all linked up with the politics of this world; or do you mind earthly things to the exclusion of heavenly? If so, beware: your end is *destruction*. And you, my Christian readers, beware lest, "being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye *fall* from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto *eternal life*. And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

"Now unto him that is *able* to guard you from *stumbling*, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen."

S. C.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

I MAY consider Luke i. ii. together. But here I would observe, that this Gospel does not naturally distribute itself into parts, like the others, because the design of the Spirit is a *moral* design. Our Lord in it being eminently the Teacher, dealing with men as disciples, we shall find in the progress of it, great truths and principles considered in detached portions. It is not accuracy in mere circumstantial detail, or in the order of time and place, that we get here, but varied themes for meditation under the hand of our great Master. And as much that belongs to interpretation of general matter, may be found in the previous papers, I would principally notice here what may strike one as being characteristic of St. Luke.

Now in the opening, I observe at once something which is thus characteristic. St. Luke addresses his friend Theophilus. No doubt he was his friend in a divine sense, his beloved in the Lord, his fellow in the love of God, and he addresses him in the hope that through this Gospel which he was about to publish, this his Christian friend and brother might be established. and advanced in all that which had bound him and St Luke together. But this was all in a style peculiar to Luke. It was according to the grace of human affection, for he would thus draw Theophilus with the bonds of a man. And moreover he tells him of his own personal acquaintance with the things he was about to write, which none of the other Evangelists do, thus bringing something of the human style into his holy task. He appears himself before us, as hav-

ing the faculties and affections of a man exercised about the things which were engaging him, and addressing another upon them in the same strain.

But though his words take this tone, and seem to flow in this channel, as the communications of one friend to another, yet the Holy Ghost is just as simply and fully in every thought and word of our Evangelist, as though he had been giving out what he had no personal knowledge of whatever. David knew that God had promised to raise up Christ to sit on his throne. yet he spake of the resurrection by inspiration as a prophet (Acts ii.) So though even though the Lord Himself delivered commandments to His Apostles, yet we are told He did so, *through the Holy Ghost* (Acts i. 2). And all this helps to let us know and be assured of the equal and full inspiration of the whole scripture of God. Whether it be the Lord commanding His Apostles, or Luke communicating with his friend, the one is not done merely in the personal authority of the Lord, nor the other in the personal authority of Luke, but both come to us under the seal of the Holy Ghost.

After this address to his friend by way of introduction, our Evangelist enters on his subject, great and blessed as it is, with all possible simplicity. Nothing can be more perfect in its season. The elevated tone in which the divine John begins his holy task of delineating the Son of God is quite in character with so high a purpose. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It gives notice at once of what manner of revelation was coming. But here we have something different altogether in style, but just as perfect in its place. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest." It is like a simple

tale-telling, a tale of other days when truth was wont to be simple and unvarnished. The mind is held for a moment, charmed with the artlessness of this, and yet with the skill of the divine hand which thus leads the thoughts, though into the deepest and most wondrous scenes, so gently by these cords, the strength of which the human heart knows so well. Little might we judge to what this is to lead, but the Spirit of revelation has us surely and firmly by the hand, to take us where His grace and wisdom may please.

And the immediate scene is much of this character also, being laid in the midst of human sympathies and domestic affections. We are told of the circumstances attendant on the birth of the Baptist, and his parentage. But simple as all this is, there are secrets in it.

Zacharias and Elizabeth appear before us as Abraham and Sarah, the Isaac and Rebekah, the Elkanah and Hannah of other days. They were in the place of righteousness, but they were childless. They were in the very place where the last prophet of Israel had put the righteous remnant, remembering the law of Moses, or walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless (Mal. iv.) But withal, they were childless, and thus witnesses to themselves that all their strength must be found in God, who by the same prophet had promised a Restorer. And all this righteousness in ordinances was as much a preparation for the promised messenger, as the acceptance of the messenger afterwards would have been a preparation for the Lord of the temple. To such, accordingly, is Elijah, the promised messenger, now given; and his birth leads, as we find here, to the birth of the promised Lord of the temple (Mal. iii.), before whose face He was now to go as the dawn before the day-spring.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

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And we notice a difference in the manner of these two births which is according to this. John comes forth, a child of promise, born by a special gift of God enduing the mother with a natural faculty. But Jesus comes forth, a Son of God, born not through any endowment of nature, but by the Holy Ghost, beyond nature altogether. The one is the child of a barren wife, the other of a virgin. But this was a wondrous difference. Elizabeth was the mother of the saved, Mary of the Saviour. Elizabeth's child was the sanctified, Mary's the Sanctifier. This was a mighty distance. The child of a barren wife has always been the symbol of the saved, or of the family of God, for it tells us of grace and gift of God towards those who had been found impotent and wanting (Is. liv. 1, John i. 13, Rom. ix. 8), but this was the first and only child of a virgin, and he tells us, that though partaking of flesh and blood because of children, in the fulness of His person He was altogether above nature.

Such is the dawn, and such the day-spring here. These are the prophet of the Highest, and the Highest Himself, the messenger, and the God of Israel. Till now all had been but darkness. The dispensation of the law (as a covenant of works), had but proved man to be darkness, and had left him so ; and (as a witness of good things to come), it had but dispensed the shadows of them, which, while they acted as stars in the night, told that night was still overhanging the earth. But another season is now approaching—a season in which God, and not man, was to appear, and “God is light.”

Such a season is here introduced, and introduced, too, with all due solemnities—solemnities full of gladness and liberty. Such ever wait on the blessed God,

when He comes forth. The foundations of the first creation were laid with shouts of joy (Job xxxviii. 7). And that joy was the pledge from heaven that it was God's purpose to make His creatures happy. And this indeed is His *necessary* purpose, for "God is love." And so in these chapters. The foundations of another creation are here laid in the infant of Bethlehem, and again all is gladness, both in heaven and earth. God is reappearing, and there must be joy, for sorrow cannot stay where He is. "Glory and honour are in His presence—strength and gladness in His place." The bread of mourners must not be eaten in His sanctuary, for joy as well as holiness must dwell there. So here all is joy. Hosts of angels celebrate praise—the shepherds repeat the glad tidings of good things—the lips of Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth are unsealed to tell out wonders of grace—the expectation of old Simeon is answered—the widowhood of Anna is over, and the very babe in the womb leaps for joy. Old men and maidens, young men and children, all have their share in that moment of richer joy, than when the morning stars sang together. The joy of creation, it is true, soon ceased, and groans were heard instead for man quickly defiled God's handy-work. But still its foundations were laid with singing. So here, this joy may soon be hushed in this evil world, and the daughter of Zion prove herself unready for it, and we may have to learn that the songs of heaven fall on a heavy heart, and get no response from earth. But still the foundations of this, as of the former work of God, are laid in holy gladness.*

* I pass by the temporary check with unbelief put upon the joy of Zacharias. But I believe that it is significant.

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON PSALM CIII. 1-5.

WHAT a cluster of blessings is here ! It is the millennial song of Israel. Restored to their land, all their iniquities blotted out as a thick cloud, clean water sprinkled upon them, a new heart given them, they look back upon their national history, their sin, their diseases. The enemy's power, Jehovah's mercy, and their present joy, fill the scene before them, and they praise Him who did all for them.

“ Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,

Who healeth all thy diseases,

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction,

Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies,

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”

Every blessing is contained in these five distinct classes. They are not the blessings common to all, for the first is forgiveness of all iniquity, which is the pledge of all others. No lasting blessing without forgiveness, but all other blessing is joined to it, and follows as a natural sequence. The iniquity which declared itself from the first, and reached its climax at the cross, is all now forgiven. Their sin had brought diseases into the land, according to the word of Jehovah in Deut. xxviii., wonderful plagues, Egypt's diseases, and what they feared. Now they sing that Jehovah hath healed them all. The Lord Jesus gave a sample of the coming time for Israel when He was

here, for He healed all manner of diseases. The lepers, the palsied, the blind, yea, even the dead felt the healing power of His presence. In the millennial time the healing will be universal. But there are other features of Jehovah's mercy and benefits. Their life is redeemed from destruction. Plainly manifest all through their history is the interposition of God in preserving care, when every engine of the enemy was at work to accomplish their destruction. They are brought out of all their trouble; the last great tribulation will be past when they raise this song, which is not only joy in deliverance from destruction, but praise to Him who redeemed them. The stripes had been laid upon Another. Christ died for that nation. And no sooner is redemption mentioned than not only is there deliverance from destruction, but the crown of lovingkindness and tender mercies.

These had been shown them in all the past; their deep ingratitude did not turn away God's mercy, until He said there was no remedy. Now the full flow of love and mercy has set in, not as a call to wean them from their sin, but as the expression of God's delight in them, so they are *crowned* with lovingkindness and tender mercies. The Gentile will hear and seek to serve them. All that is suited for the highly favoured nation on the earth will be given; the new temple, the city where Jehovah dwells, will be theirs; peace and enjoyment of their possessions, each one under his own vine and fig-tree: in a word, their mouth filled with good things, and the vigour of youth restored, renewed like the eagle's. But all these flow from, and are the result of, forgiveness of iniquity. Earthly blessings can only be truly appreciated after forgiveness is known.

Forgiveness can only be known through Christ. The poor worldling who rejects Christ as a Saviour may still say to himself, "God is merciful, and He will forgive." But God never forgives out of Christ. In Christ, and in Him alone, "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." We know forgiveness now, and have not to wait like Israel for all the resultant blessing. Ours is a present salvation. Forgiveness is but the first step in the pathway to heaven and glory, And for us these blessings follow immediately, for which Israel must wait till redemption comes in by power. One whose sins are now forgiven has the privilege to count all things good which God, in His Fatherly care, brings to him, adversity as well as things pleasant. Alas! many a soul seems to remain on the threshold to their own great loss. Forgiveness of sins is not the sum of Christianity. We are called to follow on to know the Lord. There is not only the "Peace I leave with you," but also "My peace I give unto you." The soul that is content to remain with the bare knowledge of sins forgiven will never enjoy the peace which Christ *gives, His peace*, and is in danger of losing the assurance of forgiveness. To retain what we have there must be a going on to know the Lord. Every blessing follows for him whose constant prayer is to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

"Who healeth all thy diseases." Forgiveness is an act for us; healing our diseases represents the Spirit's work in us. Not that the old nature is healed, or made better, but a new nature is given, on which the Holy Spirit works to produce good works for God, judging the old and denying it in all its desires. We are not in the flesh as to our standing before God, but the flesh is in us as to our condition here below. Chris-

tian holiness is not in having no old nature, but its daily mortification. Hence the need of untiring watchfulness, of constant prayer and of unintermittent warfare. We are weak, and of ourselves utterly incompetent, even as saints to overcome evil. But God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Whatever there is in us which in any way meets His mind, it is His grace, and we say, "Who healeth all thy diseases."

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." This tells of God's care for us. The new life He has given us, is the object of His unceasing care; His power is engaged on our behalf. It is the daily redemption of our life, or the daily preserving care which is in constant exercise through the redemption once made on the cross. We may not be sufficiently conscious of the fact that the whole power of the enemy is active against us. The devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour. Is it our faithfulness that bars him from us? Is there not such dishonour done to the name of Christ that we can put forward no claim of our own why we should not be devoured? There is but one reason why we should not be cast off through our unfaithfulness, that is, that Christ died for us, and the efficacy of His death cannot be rendered inefficient by our failure. But that is grace which brings us to glory, but does not supersede chastening for the time present. The fact remains, spite of all, that He redeemeth our life from destruction. Unrestrained and unkept by God even saints would rush into the paths of destruction. But He keeps, nor will He suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. He always provides a way of escape. By grace we are saved, not merely forgiven by grace, but every

step of the way is marked by the preserving power of grace.

“Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.” When Israel is thus crowned, all the world will see it. But we are now crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies, and the world does not see it: not yet the golden crown of glory which each saint will have when he is manifested with Christ—the world will see that, and will know then how great the love of the Father is toward us. The crown we have now is only visible to faith, yet it is a brighter crown than Israel’s in that day. We are children of God, and have a Father’s love, which love has reference not only to what we shall be as destined for glory, but to our bodily condition here. That is a sweet word for confidence in Him as to our bodily wants: “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” *Tender mercies* implies the thought of suffering, and, whatever the nature of our suffering, our Father watches over us with tenderest care. We are in this life crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” It is the expression of fulness of blessing—to Israel of temporal and earthly blessing, together with their recognition that all is the gift of Jehovah. What are the good things that fill our mouth? Far more excellent than millennial blessings for Israel; ours are heavenly. They will truly be the greatest nation upon earth, and the Gentiles will be subject to them. We are now kings and priests, though not yet manifested as such. They will be the most honoured subjects in the kingdom of Christ’s glory, we shall reign with Christ. We

are now joint-heirs with Him. Israel must wait till He come, our mouths are now filled with good things. And, being heavenly, things are not hindered by our condition here; nay, every trial and sorrow here is but an occasion for the greater enjoyment of those good things which come straight down from heaven. Communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; what earthly blessing can compare with that? And if our path here exposes us to the scorn and hatred of the world, what greater honour than to follow in the same pathway which was trodden by our Lord and Master? What happier portion than to know that the Father's love rests upon us as upon Christ? Faith leads us into the apprehension of this infinite love. A love which turns every sorrow into joy, makes every trial an occasion of gladness, and every seeming evil the means of greater and ever-increasing blessing. Where this is realised, our youth is renewed like the eagle's; this is the wine that gives us giant strength, which makes us victors over the world.

In presence of such good things it becomes us to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Alas! we too often forget the benefits of our God and Father, and then forget to praise. And when we do remember them, there is still the danger of forgetting the Giver. When we remember Him in the gifts, praise invariably follows; and looking away from the gift, fixing the eye upon Him who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, we take up the words of this Psalm, and sing in our hearts, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

R. B.

A WARNING WORD FOR TO-DAY.

THERE is a Man, a glorified Man, sitting now on the throne of God in heaven; that Man is Jehovah's Fellow. To Him, God, the Holy Spirit, has borne testimony in the Scripture; to Him He calls the sinner's attention; to Him He guides the eye of faith of each believer, and there He will fix it. For He, the only-begotten Son of the Father, is the sole One on whom and on whose life and works as Saviour, God, even the Father, can rest in complacency.

In Him, and through His life and death, resurrection and ascension, the sinner can now, through faith, find rest with God in His glory, and receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit, and grace to be full thereof and walk therein.

Men and brethren, permit one whose name is not worth naming (save as found *in* Him) to beseech you to think of Him—for His sake who has claims over you, and for God's sake who is a jealous God, and who insists on the claims which He has recognised in the Son of His love being recognised by you. Own Him *alone* as worthy. He is the only Man worthy of God's thinking about. But He is worthy; for His name of Jesus means "Jehovah-a-saving."

Do not, I beseech you, go on setting one fallen man's name against another fallen man's name, sinners' names against sinners' names, as you have done in your intercourse about questions in which the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit alone should be cared for, and the honour due to God. You have done so till you seem to me to have well nigh forgotten the Sinless Man, the One who, because He knew no sin, could be made a sin-offering, and who

was made and did make Himself such, that so, through faith, we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Unconsciously, it may have been at first, you have been setting one merely human name against another merely human name, until the name of "Jesus," and the revelation in it, have been forgotten amid talk about men and their doings and claims, which are of as little worth and meaning as would be any letter from the alphabet (as an M, or a D, or a W), in comparison with that blessed person (Jesus) and His works.

The Spirit has thus been grieved and quenched among you; and blindness, and the fervour of party spirit has got sway among you, and a heavy fog of mystification broods over your actings; humbling is it to think of!

It is a poor sinner in himself, and not a prophet who writes to you; but, in the light of the sinless Man (peerless, and without equal, He!); 'tis one who fears lest—*under that cloud of mystification* which rests upon you as a company—there be another spirit (not man's) far more subtle than Ahitophel's of old—far less scrupulous than he, and at his rear, dangers as to the *honour* of Christ. For if His name be used by any as a cover for darkness and evil, and the name of "the church" be used as the name of a place where those on earth who are indifferent to Christ's honour and to holiness, in faith, doctrine, morality, or walk, may congregate, His name is put to shame and the Holy Spirit dishonoured.

Would that I were mistaken as to your danger. If not, may God give you deliverance, and victory over every lie and delusion of the wicked one. So prays
yours, in brokenness of spirit, G. V. W.

NOT ORGANISATION, BUT CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN THE MIDST:

THE RESOURCE OF FAITH IN A DAY OF RUIN.

I.

I BELIEVE that the churches have been merged in the mass of ecclesiastical popular hierarchism and lost; but I believe also that the invisible church, as it is called, has been merged there too.

Still there is a difference, because churches were the administrative form, while the church, as a body on the earth, was the vital unity.

What I felt from the beginning, and began with, was this: the Holy Ghost remains, and, therefore, the essential principle of unity with this presence; for (the fact is all we are now concerned in) *wherever* "two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

When this is really sought, there will certainly be blessing by His presence; we have found it so, most sweetly and graciously, who have met separately.

When there is an attempt at displaying the position and the unity, there will always be a mess and a failure: God will not take such a place with us.

We must get into the place of His mind, to get His strength. That is now the failure of the church; but there He will be with us.

I have always said this. I know it has troubled some, even those I especially love; but I am sure it is the Lord's mind. I have said: We are the witnesses of the weakness and low estate of the church.

We are not stronger nor better than others (Dissenters, &c.), but we only own our bad and low state, and *therefore* can find blessing. I do not limit what the blessed Spirit can do for us in this low estate, but I take the place *where* He can do it.

Hence, government of bodies, in an authorised way, I believe there is none; where this is assumed, there will be confusion. It was here (Plymouth); and it was constantly and openly said, that this was to be a model, so that all in distant places might refer to it. My thorough conviction is, that conscience was utterly gone, save in those who were utterly miserable.

I only, therefore, so far seek the original standing of the church as to believe, that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, Christ will be, and that the Spirit of God is necessarily the only source of power, and that which He does will be blessing through the Lordship of Christ. These provide for all times. If more be attempted now, it will be only confusion.

The original condition is owned as a sinner, or as a mutilated man owns integrity and a whole body. But there a most important point comes in:—I cannot supply the lack by human arrangement or wisdom; I must be dependent.

I should disown whatever was not of the Spirit, and in this sense disown whatever was—not short of the original standing; for that, in the complete sense, I am—but what man has done to fill it up; because this does not own the coming short, nor the Spirit of God. I would always own what is of God's Spirit in any. The *rule* seems to me here very simple.

I do not doubt that dispensed power is disorganised; but the Holy Ghost is always competent to act in the

circumstances God's people are in. The secret is, not to pretend to get beyond it. Life and divine power is always there; and I use the members I have, with full confession that I am in an imperfect state.

We must remember that the body must exist, though not in a united state; and so, even locally. I can then, therefore, own their gifts, and the like, and get my warrant in two or three united for the blessing promised to that.

Then, if gifts exist, they cannot be exercised but as members of the body, because they are such, but by the vital power of the Head through the Holy Ghost.

"Visible body," I suspect, misleads us a little. Clearly the corporate operation is in the actual living body down here on earth, but there it is the members must act; so that I do not think it makes a difficulty.

I believe if we were to act on 1 Cor. xii. 14 farther than power exists to verify it, we should make a mess.

But then the existence of the body, whatever its scattered condition, necessarily continues; because it depends on the existence of the Head, and its union with it. In this the Holy Ghost is necessarily supreme.

The body exists in virtue of there being one Holy Ghost. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling;" indeed this is the very point which is denied here.

Then Christ necessarily nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh, as members of His body; and this goes on "till we all come," &c. (Eph. iv.) Hence, I apprehend we cannot deny the body and its unity

(whatever its unfaithfulness and condition), and (so far as the Holy Ghost is owned) His operation in it, without denying the divine title of the Holy Ghost, and the care and headship of Christ over the church.

Here I get, not a question of the church's conduct, but of Christ's; and the truth of the Holy Ghost being on earth, and His title when there; and yet the owning of Christ's lordship. And this is how far I own others.

If a minister has gifts in the Establishment, I own it as through the Spirit, Christ begetting the members of, or nourishing His, body. But I cannot go along with what it is mixed up with, because it is not of the body nor of the Spirit. I cannot touch the unclean; I am to separate the precious from the vile.

But I cannot give up Eph. iv. while I own the faithfulness of Christ. Now if we meet (yea; and when we do meet), all I look for is that this principle should be owned, because it is owning the Holy Ghost Himself, and that to me is everything.

We meet and worship; and at this time, we who have separated meet in different rooms, that we may in the truest and simplest way, in our weakness, *worship*. Then whatever the Holy Ghost may give to any one, He is supreme, to feed us with—perhaps nothing in the way of speaking—and it must be in the unity of body.

If you were here, you could be in the unity of the body as one of ourselves. This Satan cannot destroy, because it is connected with Christ's title and power.

If men set up to imitate the administration of the body, it will be popery or dissent at once.

And this is what I see of the visibility of the body; it connects itself with this infinitely important prin-

ciple, the presence and action of the Holy Ghost on earth.

It is not merely a saved thing in the counsels of God, but a living thing animated down here by its union with the Head, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in it. It is a real actual thing, the Holy Ghost acting down here. If two are faithful in this, they will be blessed in it.

If they said, "We are the body," not owning all the members (in whatever condition), they would morally cease to be of it. I own them, but in nothing their condition. The principle is all-important.

Christ has attached, therefore, its practical operation to "two or three;" and owns them by His presence. He has provided for its maintenance. Thus in all states of ruin, it cannot cease till He ceases to be Head, and the Holy Spirit to be as the Guide and the Comforter sent down.

God sanctioned the setting up of Saul; He never did the departure from the Holy Ghost. The "two or three" take definitely the place of the temple, which was the locality of God's presence, as a principle of union. That is what makes all the difference. Hence, in the division of Israel, the righteous sought the temple as a point of unity, and David is to us here Christ by the Holy Ghost.

On the other hand, church-government, save as the Spirit is always power, cannot be acted on.

II.

I suspect many brethren have had expectations, which never led me out, and which perplexed their minds when they were not met in practice. I never felt my testimony, for example, to be the ability of the

Holy Ghost to rule a visible body. This I do not doubt; but I doubt its proper application now as a matter of testimony. It does not become us.

My confidence is in the certainty of God's blessing, and maintaining us, if we take the place we are really in. That place is one of the general ruin of the dispensation. Still, I believe God has provided for the maintenance of its general principle (save persecution), that is, the gathering of a remnant into the comfort of united power by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, so that Christ could sing praises there.

All the rest is a ministry to form, sustain, &c. Amongst other things, government may have its place; but it is well to remember, that, in general, government regards evil, and therefore is outside the positive blessing, and has the lowest object in the church.

Moreover, though there be a gift of government, in general, government is of a different order from gift. Gifts serves or ministers; hardly government. These may be united as in apostolic energy. Elders were rather the government, but they were not gifts.

It is especially the order of the governmental part which (I believe) has failed, and that we are to get on without, at least in a formal way. But I do not believe that God has therefore not provided for such a state of things.

I believe "brethren" a good deal got practically out of their place, and the consciousness of it, and found their weakness: and the Lord is now teaching them. For my part, when I found all in ruin around me, my comfort was, that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there He would be. It was not government or anything else I sought. Now I do believe that God is faithful, and able to maintain the blessing.

NOT ORGANISATION.

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I believe the great buildings and great bodies have been a mistake: indeed I always did. Further, I believe now (although it were always true in practice), the needed dealing with evil must be by the conscience in grace. So St. Paul ever dealt, though he had the resource of a positive commission. And I believe that two or three together, or a larger number, with some having the gift of wisdom in grace, can, in finding the mind of the Lord, act in discipline; and this, with pastoral care, is the main-spring of holding the saints together, in Matt. xviii. This agreeing together is referred to as the sign of the Spirit's power.

I do not doubt that some may be capable of informing the consciences of others. But the conscience of the body is that which is ever to be acted upon and set right. This is the character of all healthful action of this kind, though there may be a resource in present apostolic power, which, where evil has entered, may be wanting; but it cannot annul "where two or three agree, it shall be done."

So that I see not the smallest need of submission to Popery; (*i.e.*, carnal unity by authority in the flesh), nor of standing alone; because God has provided for a gathering of saints together, founded on grace, and held by the operation of the Spirit. This no doubt may fail for want of grace, but, as in every remaining gift, it has its scope; in which Christ's presence and the operation of the Spirit is manifested, but must be maintained, on the ground of the condition the church really is in, or it would issue in a sect arranged by man with a few new ideas.

When God is trusted in the place, and for the place, we are in, and we are content to find Him

infallibly present with us, there I am sure He is sufficient and faithful to meet our wants.

If there be one needed wiser than any of the gathered ones in a place, they will humbly feel their need, and God will send some one as needed ; if He sees it the fit means.

There is no remedy for want of grace but the sovereign goodness that leads to confession. If we set up our altar, it will serve for walls (Ezra iii. 3). The visibility God will take care of, as He always did ; the faith of the body will be spoken of, and the unity in love manifest the power of the Holy Ghost in the body.

I have no doubt of God's raising up for need all that need requires in the place where He has set us in understanding. If we think to set up the church, again I would say, God forbid. I had rather be near the end, to live and to die for it in service where it is as dear to God : that is my desire and life.

J. N. D.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL, CH. II. III.

Such, then, was the birth of these two children, and such the attending joy of heaven and earth, recorded in these strikingly beautiful chapters. In the progress of them, we get other notices of these holy children. their growth in stature and in wisdom, while they were yet young, are given to us here, but here only, and this is quite according to that purpose of the Spirit in this Gospel, which I have already noticed.

For *the man* is thus kept before us. These glances at the childhood and youth of the Lord, are all sweet and touching in themselves, and in character fully with our Gospel. He was the anointed child now, as He will be the anointed man by and bye. In each season equally and perfectly well-pleasing to God, consecrating every period of human life. Here we see Him in subjection to His parents at Nazareth, in favour too with man as well as with God. For all this was fruit in season. He had not yet been called to witness for God against the world. When the season for that comes, we shall see Him to perfection then also, and getting the due hatred, as now He gets the due favour of men (John vii. 7). But as yet He is only the perfect child, at home in subjection to His parents, graced with every goodly ornament that suited such an one, and thus commending Himself to the hearts and consciences of all.

Holy diligence in attaining all goodly wisdom, marks this dear and perfect child also. Every year brought duly with it just its proper increase. But God Himself was His study, His only study, for the temple, as we see here, was the scene for the display of what He had been acquiring in this season of holy diligent pupilage. Many will run to and fro and increase knowledge of various kinds, getting it in the busy schools of men. But all the knowledge which this holy child sought or acquired, was knowledge that suited the sanctuary. He did not bring forth the fruit of His diligence in the schools, but in the temple of God.

Man, however, is but little prepared for this, and so we find it here. His kindred in the flesh do not understand this child. They are pleased, perhaps, that He

has attractions as a goodly child; and they judge that He is in the company, detained there by the desire of others to see and observe Him. A mother's vanity might suggest that.* But when they miss Him indeed, they look for Him where the flesh would have sought Him. But He was not there. And in all this poor human nature is exposed. In the vanity, the misdirected search, the amazement, and the ignorant rebuke of Mary, man is shown out. Jesus the anointed child can thus begin to expose the corrupted nature. "Wist ye not," He can say to them. Surely this child might say, "I have more understanding than all My teachers, for Thy testimonies are My meditation; I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." And blessed is the comfort of all this to us. Blessed is it to know that our God has thus had one object, on this earth of ours, in which His whole soul delighted. A Son of man too—the happy pledge to all of us who trust in Him, beloved, that our God will find even more than restored complacency in us. "Good will toward men" (*ευδοκία εν ανθρωποις*) was part of heaven's joy when this child was born to us.

III.—A long interval has now passed before we reach the time of this chapter. Like that of Moses in his youth, as I may call it, the course of Jesus has been interrupted through the reasonings and darkness of nature. Moses had supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them; but they understood not, and their unbelief separated him from them for forty years. So Jesus, the second deliverer of Israel, the greater than Moses, was doing his Father's business

* See another striking instance of the same mind in Mary in John ii. 3.

in the midst of Israel; but his brethren understood not, and he had to go down to Nazareth estranged from Israel for another season. He can but pass it, however, in the same perfectness before God. Man's unbelief may change the scene, but nothing touched the heart of this holy one. He went down to Nazareth to be in subjection there, still as a goodly child, increasing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man.

But here, in this chapter, we enter on other scenes and times altogether. The children have grown up, and are ripe for their showing unto Israel. And just at this solemn moment, our Evangelist takes a full survey of the world. It was a task which properly belonged to him under the Spirit, for the Spirit through him, as I have said, looks at man, and deals with man. He here shows how still and at rest the whole earth was sitting, for the Gentile beast had all in order, according to his mind (Zech. i. 11). Tiberius the Roman, was emperor, his proconsuls were in their several governments, Judea itself being a member of his strength, and part of his strength, and part of his honour. The priests, too, were in their temple. All in the earth, both as to its religion and government, was just as man would have it. But But under the eye of God, all this was a wilderness; and instead, therefore, of his taking a place in it, and owning it as repose to him, the voice of his servant is sent forth to awaken it all, like Elijah in the evil days of Ahab, and to disturb this sleep of carnal contentment in which man and the world were folded.

God's thoughts are indeed thus strikingly declared not to be as man's thoughts. Man's sabbath was now a wilderness to him, and he will act on it as a

wilderness. The dispensation of the law, had by this time, tested man, and found him to be hopelessly departed from righteousness. Flesh was found out, and it was proved that there was no good in it; and John is now, according to this, sent forth to call on man to take the place of a convicted sinner. He points to the remedy that was in God for such an one, but he does not reveal it as already accomplished and brought in. He announces the vanity of all flesh, uncovering the very roots of it, but his hand did not carry the seed of a better harvest. He laid the sentence of death in man, but he did not bring in life for him. He put him in the dust, but gave him no power to rise. The life and power were to come in by the Son afterwards. "John did no miracle." He challenged the violent to take the kingdom by force, but he did not set before them an open door. "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness to that light." He stood between Israel and their God, telling Israel, on the one hand that they were all flesh, and that flesh was as grass; pointing to Jehovah-Jesus, God of Israel, on the other, as bringing his reward with him, and doing his work before him.

There was a mixture of grace and righteousness in his ministry. He came "in the way of righteousness," standing apart and refusing contact with the world, and thus by his light rebuking its darkness. He mourned to his generation, neither eating nor drinking, because he called on men to know themselves to be sinners, and to take their place as such. But then he came in the way of grace also, because he was the forerunner of Jesus, and went before the face of the Lord to prepare the way of salvation and the kingdom.

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AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL, CHAP. III.

THERE was a mixture of grace, and righteousness in the ministry of John, and it was clearly quite an advance upon both the law and the prophets. The law had sought to order man in the flesh, according to righteousness; and the prophets had been sent, in one sense, as in aid of the law, to call the people back to obedience, so that every help and advantage might be rendered, and God's abounding patience proved in the trial of this question, whether or not man were able to restore himself and stand in righteousness. But John's ministry assumed the vanity of all expectations of this kind, and took up man as a *convicted sinner*. But then, such is the holy order in the divine wisdom, it was not so high a ministry as that which has now followed it. The Apostles after the resurrection, called on man to take by faith the place of a *pardoned sinner*. And thus over us, the light of grace and salvation has reached its noon-day strength, and we are waiting only for the light of glory and the kingdom.

With our God let me here say, there has been from the beginning a work far deeper and more excellent than all the *old creation*. The old creation was, in some sense, left at man's disposal. His allegiance or disobedience were to determine its history. But the divine counsel from before creation, had planned and laid a work in, and by *the Word*, which could never fail, or be contingent on any strength less than His own.

And it is this mystery which the Lord has before Him when He says, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Creation was removeable, redemption (the work of the Word) is immoveable, because the living God has joined Himself with it. And thus the prophet addressing Jesus, the the Word, says, "of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand—they shall perish, but *thou* shalt endure." And so all things that are *made* may be shaken (Heb. xii. 27). For God Himself is not joined to them, He is not their foundation. But to the work of the Word God has joined Himself, for the Word was with God, and was God, and was made flesh, and became part and parcel (so to speak of this blessed mystery of everlasting goodness) of the work itself. He is the vine of the branches, the chief corner stone, and head stone of the building. This gives redemption an unspeakably more excellent glory than creation ever had. And thus the Baptist, in the ministry which we have in this chapter of our gospel, says, "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever." All in this work is incorruptible. The seed of the life which it brings is incorruptible—the body with which it will clothe that life is incorruptible, the inheritance to which it introduces is incorruptible (1 Cor. xv. 1 Pet. i.) God has entered through the breach which man's sin produced in the old creation, and has joined Himself with the mighty ruin, in such a way, and for such an end, as will be to the everlasting praise of His own most blessed name; and also to the sure abiding and imperishableness of this His new creation.

The 90th Psalm appears to be the utterance of a

soul that has learnt something of this mystery. The prophet there looks to God Himself as above all created strength, he then traces the vanity which had attended the old creation, and at last finds his relief from such a sight in God's work of mercy, or the work of redemption by the Word. And this is so with us, beloved. The work of the Word, or of God made flesh, is the relief of our hearts from the painful sense of the universal vanity around us. And John's ministry might lead the soul into that sense of vanity, but it remained for another to give us this blessed and sure relief in Himself, and His work, that standeth for ever.

Surely we might easily learn to say that blessed was the necessity which thus cast us on God Himself, wondrous was the grace which could thus repair the breach in God Himself! But all this was worthy of Him, and His love can account for it all, though nothing else can.

But this, beloved, only by the way, as we pass on, in connection with the ministry of the Baptist which this chapter gives us. The Lord's genealogy is then traced here, up to the sources of the *human* family; not to David and to Abraham as in Matthew, but to Adam; and this, I need not say, is quite according to the general mind of the Spirit in St. Luke. And the absence of all such genealogies in St. John, is in the same way entirely consistent. For genealogies recognise human or national relations; and the preserving of them, as is done in the Jewish scriptures (see 1 Chron. &c. &c.), shows a jealousy for the order and maintenance of the human system. That system will be sustained in the kingdom, when the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers, and the hearts of

the fathers to the children. But *we* are told not to mind genealogies (1 Tim. i. 4, Titus iii. 9), for the church is not to be the minister for ordering and maintaining the human system, but is taken into heavenly associations, the saints owning as kindred all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and not knowing any man after the flesh.

But before I enter on the following chapter, I would observe that our Lord's Sonship of God is here owned at the time of His baptism, as in the other Evangelists. The same had been done at the time of His birth before, and is to be done at the time of His transfiguration afterwards (i. 35. ix. 35). But there is distinct value in each. The virgin's child, from the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, was to be called "the Son of God." His *person* merely was then owned.—Now at His baptism, the same attestation is made a second time, with this addition, "in whom I am well pleased." His *ministry* was thus owned to be that which awakened the divine complacency, for His baptism was introducing Him to His ministry. And this is blessedly comforting to us sinners. The law was never thus approved, for the law exacted righteousness. John the Baptist was never thus approved, for he convicted man without relieving him. But now that the Son was coming forth with grace and healing for sinners, God's mind could rest, for this was the accomplishing of the previous purpose of His own love, and thus it could now be said of the Son and His ministry, or of the Son at His baptism, "thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." And so by and bye He will for the third time be so attested, when the glory or kingdom shines for a moment on the holy mount. And then

this same attestation will come forth with this addition, "hear him." But this is equally perfect in its season, for this owned Him in *His kingdom*, or the glory, for in the kingdom He must be listened to—every knee must bow to Him, and the soul *that will not hear Him* shall be cut off from among His people.

Thus on the three occasions—at His birth, His baptism, and His transfiguration, His Sonship of God so divinely attested; in other words, His *person*, His *ministry*, and His *dominion*, are all owned of the Father; the full pleasure of God resting on Him, and the full subjection of the earth demanded for Him. God is well pleased in Him, and the earth is to hear Him. And after these attestations by the voice from heaven, the resurrection comes to verify and close them all by act and deed, and to declare Jesus to be the Son of God with power.

IV.—Jesus had been owned as Son of God, and that too, in connection with the human family, as Adam had been in Chap. iii. 23, 30. But Satan could not allow all this. He could not let this claim be revived without contesting it, for through his subtilty the first man had lost this dignity. God had created man, and in his likeness made him, but man had begotten children 'in his own likeness' (Gen. v. 1, 3), defiled as he was, and not as a race worthy of being called "sons of God." But Jesus had now appeared to re-assert in man this lost dignity. The devil must therefore try his title to it, and with this purpose he comes now to tempt him, saying, "If thou be the Son of God." And this was a crisis between the anointed man and man's great enemy. And surely He stood, stood in the loftiest attitude of a conqueror. Every thing that had surrounded Adam the first man, might

well have pleaded for God against the enemy. The sweetness of the whole scene, the beauty of that garden of delights, with its rivers which parted hither and thither, the fruits and perfume, with the willing service of ten thousand tributary creatures, all had a voice for God against the accuser. But Jesus was in a wilderness which yielded nothing, but left Him an hungred, and the wild beasts were with Him, and all might have been pleaded for the accuser against God. All was against Jesus, as all had been for Adam, but He stood as Adam had fallen. The man of the dust failed with all to favour him, the man of God stood with all against Him. And what a victory was this ! What complacency in man must this have restored to the mind of God. To achieve this victory Jesus had been led up of the Spirit into this place of battle, for His commission was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John iii. 8). He stood now as the Champion of God's glory and man's blessing, in this revolted world, to try His strength with the enemy of both, to make proof of His ministry, and to the highest pitch of praise He is more than conqueror.

But He was conqueror for us, and therefore at once comes forth with the spoils of that day to lay them at our feet. He had been alone with the enemy, but would not enjoy the victory alone. He that soweth and he that reapeth must rejoice together. It was an ancient statute of David, that he that tarried by the stuff, should share with him that went down to the battle. And it was a decree worthy the grace of "the beloved." But a better even than David, one not only of royal, but of divine grace, is here ; and accordingly Jesus, the Son of God, here comes forth from the wilderness to publish peace, to heal disease,

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to meet all the need of those who were the captives of this enemy, to let them know that he had conquered for them.

And this tells us the character of the blessing which we sinners get from the hand of the Son of God. *We get it as spoils of conquest.* By sin we have forfeited all creation blessing. All such was once ours in Eden, but we lost it there, and now all blessing is the fruit of the victory of Jesus. And this gives the heart assurance while enjoying it, for we read our title to it, while we take it. The blesser has entitled Himself to bless, for He has won the blessing before He confers it. We know our right to be blest in Jesus as surely as Adam knew his to be happy in Eden. And what doubt could he have had? It is not stolen waters that we drink, nor bread eaten in secret that we feed upon, but meat won from the very jaws of the eater, and sweetness gathered from the strong. This is the character of the blessing which the Lord is giving to us sinners. It is His own well-earned spoils. And such do we get here. Full of the Holy Ghost (ver. 1), He met the devil in conflict to withstand and overthrow him; full of the Holy Ghost still (ver. 14), He meets sinners with blessing to heal and to save them. And since this day in the wilderness, he has been with the devil on Calvary, and there by death destroyed him, and has come forth in resurrection, again to part His spoils with sinners all the world over. His title is our title, and this gives us certainty of heart while we survey the glorious blessings which are ours.

But where is the sinner to value the blessing, and to array himself with the spoils of the conquering Son of God? That is the question, the only question now. Man has no mind for the blessing, and cares not about

a victory and its spoils, in which the god of this world has been judged. The synagogue at Nazareth now shows us what man is, as the wilderness has just shown us what Satan is, and the stuff that we have tarried with is better in our esteem, than the fruit of victory which our David brings with Him. This is now seen at Nazareth. Human desire is stirred for a moment. The people in the synagogue wonder at the gracious words of Jesus, and they fasten their eyes on him; but this current of human desire is soon met by a stronger current of human pride which sets in against it, and all this delight in the grace of Jesus goes. They hang on His lips for a moment, but the pride that suggested "is not this the carpenter's son?" overpowered the attraction after a very short struggle, and their goodness was found to be as the morning cloud or early dew that passeth away.

And so it is, beloved. Enmity to God and His anointed must win the day in the heart of man, whenever such a conflict as this is fairly raised. Where it is simply between mere human delight or admiration of Jesus, and the strength of nature, this scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, tells us what the end of the struggle will be. The stuff in the heart or in the house, is more heeded than the blessing of God. Indeed before now, man has sold that blessing for thirty pieces of silver, and even (if anything could be more worthless) for a mess of pottage. And this is a solemn thought. He that trusteth his heart is a fool, for God cannot trust it. There is nothing in man that God can trust. Some believed when they saw the miracles that Jesus did, but He would not commit Himself unto them. Nothing of the natural man will do. "Ye must be born again." "This is the victory

that overcometh the world, even our faith." Resolutions will go before temptations, and the bonds of man be broken by Satan, and communion with God in the truth through the Spirit, will alone stand the soul, when the native strength of the stoutest will go to pieces.

But this chapter shows us also that the love of the Son of God, was not to be wearied or worn out, for leaving Nazareth He goes down to Capernaum with the same blessing and spoils of war. For His love was stronger than all repulse then, as since then it has proved itself stronger than death. "Love" surely we may here say, "never faileth;" and the Son of God is still going through this world of sinners with these same spoils, as fresh as though they had been gathered yesterday, to know who will rejoice with Him in them.

Such is this chapter which opens the ministry of the Son of God according to St. Luke; and as in this Gospel he is especially dealing with man, we have here at once strikingly displayed to us what man is. Like the drawing by the preacher, "there was a little city and few men in it, and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it; and there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." The synagogue of Nazareth proves all this against the citizens of this world.



MARKS OF THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD. *

OUR Lord searched the heart of Peter (in John xxi. 15-17) with three questions, which brought up to Peter's mind the *roots* of his failure, rather than the overt act of denial. And He graciously closed up each probing with a word of comfort: Feed my lambs (v. 15); Shepherd my sheep (v. 16); Feed my sheep (v. 17); thus breaking the self-confidence of His servant, both in himself and man, ere He confided the sheep and lambs of Israel to his care. Then He adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (v. 18). What a Lord He is, and how admirable in all His ways! Many of us, too, when young, thought of "what we would do for Him," and we, too, have had to learn that *the* happier question is, "What will He do with us?" You will, I am sure, go along with an aged pilgrim in admiration of this wisdom and these ways of our common Lord and Master. He did not turn Peter off and send him away as a failed hireling, but used the failure as a means of fitting him for a more important service and place; and He would not accept Peter's rejection of the crown of martyrdom, but would take His own way of putting that honour

* Being a letter to J. G. Deck of, New Zealand by G. V. W.

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upon him ; no praise to Peter. Counting that, as an aged one, on reviewing your course from England, through India, England, and hither, you must have made your experience (in a long residence here, too) as I have mine in other scenes, I have selected you as one to whom, in grace and love, I may fairly address a few thoughts connected with the work of the Lord in New Zealand. I will only add that, in doing so, I desire to remember, and myself to act upon the Lord's own words to Peter, "Follow me" (ver. 19), and "Follow *thou* me" (v. 22).

There are, as men speak, very many *gatherings* in New Zealand to break bread and drink wine together, weekly and professedly, in memory of Christ and of His death until He comes (1 Cor. xi. 17-33). To interfere in the house and at the table of any one would be wrong for me and unlovely. And who, or what am I to venture to dictate at the Lord's table? I would be aware of so doing ; the Lord keep me from it. But my place is, at what is His table, as a guest ; and if in any measure I can guard others from sinning at it, or, in my little measure, after the line of Paul's conduct, can stay the Lord's hand from sending weakness and infirmity upon many, and cutting a good many off in discipline, by arousing the attention of the guests to an existing cause for His discipline, I would desire to do so humbly but freely. The Lord was indeed in discipline cutting off many, that they might not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. v. 30-32), and Paul knew it ere he wrote his first letter, calling attention to sins, and among them to the awful one named in chap. v.

I would, also, as one desiring grace to be faithful, warn the simple ones as to what are the marks of His

table; and so, also, arouse the attention of some who assume their table to be His, while there is still cause to question its being so. And, indeed, God is the God of reality, and, if I and others go to a table and call it "the table of the Lord," we should expect that He will make manifest to all what it really is in His sight—whether it is His table, or whether it is not,—and so, I think, He is wont to do; as well as, if it be His, to make all that is at it manifest,—for He is light and is present there.

And now, firstly, there is an expression connected with our being together *in His name*, which is important as connected with His assembly, and is if understood, helpful to us. It occurs in Matt. xviii. 18, 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The gospel of Matthew gives us the history of our Lord's life here below, when looked at as Son of David (securer of the sure mercies of David) and Son of Abraham (father of the faithful, having promises for earth and heaven). Himself, the heir and alone holder of all promised blessings and the object of faith, was to have a kingdom and a church also. And it is by reason of this, as I judge, that the church, or assembly, is brought out here as in none of the other gospels. See chapters xvi. 13-28 and xviii. 15-20. The word "church" never occurs in the gospels, save in these two contexts; the word occurs here, though the church was not set up until Pentecost. Now, in the second of the passages the words I have cited are found, "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name* there am I in the midst of them." In v. 15-17 we learn how a private injury of one individual brother against another is to be met: Christ gone to

heaven, there could be an appeal to the church, which would have responsibility and authority (not infallibility, but authority), heaven-sustained, v. 18; then v. 19 a promise as to prayer; and after that v. 20. To me it is clear that this last verse contains the strength and limits of the whole and that which qualifies it: it must be *in His name*, whether the gathering together or the prayer. And here I must remark that the term "*name*" in scripture, as applied to God and the Lord Jesus Christ in their various titles, is not merely a conventional sound without meaning. The *name* of "God" (Elohim) had its illustration, as first recorded in the pages of scripture, in the first chapter of Genesis. Creation made manifest and stood forth as witness of the eternal power and Godhead of the incorruptible Elohim (Rom. i. 20). The second chapter brought out to light another part of His glory, viz., as "Jehovah"-God, and His provision for and association with man in Eden. The meaning of the word *Jesus* is "Jehovah-a-saving," (compare Matt. i. 21); He was *made* Lord (Acts ii. 36 and Phil. ii. 9-11), and Christ (Acts ii. 36), "Anointed," with a glory as such in heaven, even as He is to have a glory as "Anointed" on earth, under His Hebrew name of Messiah (John i. 41). And what is the manifestation, now, from the throne of God and heaven of the Nazarene, once crucified, now ascended and seated on the throne under these titles, "Jehovah-a-saving for heaven, Lord of all things, the Anointed Son of Man?" This is His *name*, and those who come unto Him and shelter there, find every need met. A company being, in whatever humble measure, in the liberty and life-giving power of this manifestation which God has made by Jesus, and is ours through

faith and the Holy Spirit, is a very different truth (for truth it is) from man's thoughts, when, from whatever motive, he merely spreads a table and sits down at it with others on the first day of the week. I judge we should *all* do well to stand under the light of these rays shining down upon us from the newly announced name (or manifestation) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is a flood of blessed light making all manifest, and of love telling itself out as none but God, who is love, can tell it; and the people into whom it shines know the hallowing effect of it on themselves as to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Secondly. Before coming to certain *tests* of the table and company at it, which the scriptures give, and in the very nature of things, suppose (or take for granted); tests, therefore, which they who accredit it as the Lord's table in any place, are bound, by their allegiance to their Master and as His friends met to remember Him, to look for—let me say a little word as to what they (the guests) are supposed to be.

Does it not *suppose*, as being given to disciples (who were first called Christians at Antioch), that the guests at it are a people who have been separated unto Himself in heaven (John xvii. 19) from out of the world, as not of it even as He was not of it (v. 16)? His death stands between them and the world and worldliness, as the Red Sea divided between Israel in the wilderness and Egypt, the house of bondage and land of captivity. He who dwells in them now is the spring and regulator of their life here below, as the flesh once was. And now, instead of being deluded by Satan and led down to destruction by him, body, soul, and spirit, they know and have been owned by Jesus, the mighty conqueror of Satan as His own, and they

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have found in Him, risen from death and the grave and glorified, an object of joy and rejoicing. They sing *His* victory and enter with joy into *His* having triumphed gloriously and anticipate the songs of *His* triumph and the rejoicings of that day. One man has been found who has done nothing amiss; and He has won, by His lowly and perfect obedience unto God, a place from God, a place and glory which He has opened unto them. His complete self-surrender when here below, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God" (the whole of that will, and nothing but it); and the beauty of His ways and thoughts and the marvellous moral display He has made of His Father and God have laid hold of their hearts and (forgetting all that is behind and looking forward to meet Him), they live to Him and Him alone. Dust of this earth they think not to collect as their portion; the old selfishness of flesh they have judged; Satan they resist, knowing that he will soon be bruised under their feet. The supper is a feast in the wilderness pilgrimage of life, in the entering into the land and amid the wars thereof;—but they at it are the church militant and are fighting, through grace, the good fight of faith. Many a fall and many a wound they each may have had, and yet they can sing "In all things more than conquerors through him that loved us." Is it not so, beloved? The church is the house of God, the body of Christ, and serves as exhibited down here, for the nursery, the schoolroom, the guardroom, the hospital of God's own heavenly people. But it is only for those who on credible testimony can be received at first as already His. And here, observe, that (in Scripture) the seeker and the inquirer were not as such called Christians. The saved were those who could take their places in

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the company that owned the apostle's doctrine and fellowship (Acts ii. 41); and they were of one heart and of one soul (iv. 32) through the presence and power of the Spirit.

Christ never forgets His Father's choice of us, nor His own call, nor the faith and purpose of the Spirit in us—even in the days when we were not self-judged; as we should have been, surely. He is the alone faithful and true One, and His ways change not. He has, too, for you and for me, little as we may be, tokens of His love and good pleasure just suited to our littleness and low estate.

Thirdly, there are the habits and ways of His people and assembly down here, to which attention will have to be called if we come to trace the way back to their original position of those who have wandered from it. These I leave for the present.

(To be continued.)

“BRING OF THE FISH WHICH YE HAVE” NOW CAUGHT.

(JOHN xxi. 10.)

THIS is typical of the millennium. The net full of great fishes is a picture of the bringing in of fulness of the Gentiles, brought in to complete the feast which the Lord, when He comes to reign, will have prepared for His own people. It is His “brethren” (Matt. xxv. 40) who go out to the nations, and those who re-

ceive their message are blessed with eternal life. Here in John they are brought as fishes caught in a net. It is not enough that Jesus should reign over Israel. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6). This is the Lord's joy, and for His glory.

He had already provided, and the fish caught by the disciples was not to supply a deficiency in what the Lord brought. There was a sufficiency for the disciples, nothing wanting in the rich provision of His grace. "They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread." But this does not meet all the Lord's mind; they must contribute. If what He brought was enough for them, it is not enough for the Lord. If they are called to feast with Him, He will also feast with them. They, after all, can only bring what He gave them. It was by no skill of their own, but in obedience to His word, that casting the net on the right side of the ship they found a multitude of fishes. So they bring of His gifts. When all is ready He invites, "Come and dine."

But whatever the typical import of this or of any Scripture, there is always that in it from which the Church of God may receive instruction in the lessons of grace. And here is a beautiful illustration of communion, and of worship. It is not service here, but the Lord and His disciples in communion, a privilege common for all His saints now. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." In service He calls whom He will. All saints are called to serve the Lord, but we are here

looking at the prominent and public service of the Lord. The sphere of most is in their own households, among those with whom they are daily brought in contact, where if unable by word, they can by life, make known the grace of God; and to this silent and unobtrusive preaching the reward of grace is given, as well as to that which is more prominent.

Many, alas, who are active in service, and even used by God in the conversion of sinners, do not seem to know what worship is, or imagine that service is worship. Truly, obedience, spending and being spent for the Lord is to His praise, but it does not give the higher aspects of worship, nor the intimacies of communion. It is a great honour to toil for the Lord, and to catch souls, to be a fisher of men, and I believe a still higher rank in the Lord's service to feed His lambs and His sheep, and the Lord blesses His faithful servants in it. But the sweeter thing is when the Lord says to us, "Come and dine."

There are three functions of the assembly of God—service is individual—which appear to me most prominent, viz., prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, worship, for which the Father sought us; and thirdly, the special and highest act of worship when the gathered saints sit round the Lord's table. Not one saint but feels the need of prayer, confession of daily failure, supplications for the supply of all our wants, joined with thanksgiving for countless mercies received. I judge that the strict meaning of worship goes beyond thanksgiving. We can say, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." We do rejoice in His salvation. We sing of His precious blood, and because He has with it washed us from our sins, know that He has made us kings and priests. But this is

what we have through redemption. Prayer is bringing our empty baskets to get them filled, praise is bringing a full basket, a bringing of the fish we have caught. Is there any one thing we can bring to the Lord which is not already a previous gift of the Lord? The disciples spent the night in useless toil, and the morning dawned upon empty boats and disappointed weary fishers. So is all our toil, whatever name we give it, when undertaken without the Lord's command, and only by our own will. But when He gives the word there is blessing. This is not only true of service, but souls earnestly seeking for salvation, yet not in the Lord's way, fail to obtain peace. When brought to Him according to His word, then the pardoned soul can praise with a full heart for His wondrous grace. He has caught fish, pardon, peace, and justification through faith, and he worships, in giving thanks to God for His unspeakable gift.

Worship is more than praise, because *we* are saved, it looks at God and worships Him for what He is, it is praise to the Redeemer rather than glorying in redemption, though only the redeemed can praise. It is when the assembly is gathered that we offer this higher praise. Every assembly has its evening for prayer, but does it not forget its best privilege, and neglect its highest function when there is no time specially set apart for church worship? I do not mean open meetings so called, but when worship is the special thing before the mind and heart of the church, as much as prayer is the purpose of meeting on the "prayer-meeting" night. Meetings are sometimes said to be in a low condition, worldly. May not this be a result of not giving the Lord His due? We are content to get all His blessings, but do not meet to

worship Him who in His love says to every assembly of His, "Come and dine."

The highest act of worship is, of course, at the Lord's table, the highest and yet the most common, for all are found there who frequently neglect the prayer meeting. Yet to such its character of privilege is lost sight of, and the idea of duty takes up the whole heart. But to those who by grace see it more a privilege than a duty, there is nothing so high, so sweet, so holy. There, indeed, the true worshipper leaves all outside, will only remember the Lord in His death, we do not forget redemption, but the person of the Redeemer fills the eye and the heart. "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." These two words express the true and special character of the assembly at the Lord's table—Lord's death—the glory of His person the Lord, not the man Jesus of Nazareth, but the Lord of all, the Creator and Sustainer of all. There is also his humiliation; the Lord stooped to become Jesus of Nazareth, and so He died. It is this wondrous union of highest glory and deepest abasement that draws forth our wonder and adoration. Grace has taught us, has brought us to this highest place on the earth, and we bring our worship, our incense a sweet smelling savour. The Lord Himself delights in it—wondrous grace—and even in a higher sense than to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias says to His saints now, "Bring of the fish that ye have now caught," and "Come and dine."

THE TESTIMONY WE HOLD.

"They were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held."

DISAPPOINTMENTS discourage. But the Christian, held fast by the Word of God, will escape much that saddens the heart, and paralyzes the efforts of those who indulge unscriptural expectations.

After first departure, any return to corporate testimony, worthy of the transcendent grace of God to the Church, will be looked for in vain in the Epistles or the Revelation. The Spirit of God contemplates these "last days" as times of abounding hypocrisy (2 Tim. iii.), or of still more awful abominations, and infidel scoffing (2 Pet. ii., iii.). In all that the Spirit says to the Churches (Rev. ii., iii.), threatenings abound; and the hope and stay of the faithful is the promise, not of revival, but of the Lord's coming quickly.

It is a thought well calculated to make us serious, and surely is meant to cast us individually more and more on God and the word of His grace. He has not failed man at any time, however man has failed, again and again, by not heeding the testimony of God.

It may be, as men say, that the last bit of the hill is most difficult to climb, and that the darkest and coldest hour is that immediately before the dawn. But what of that? Has it not often been so in the past?

Israel, as a people, were borne down with additional burdens immediately before their deliverance. The helpless captives in Babylon had to witness the vessels of their sanctuary publicly profaned at the very time

their captivity was expiring. The feeblest of the feeble, represented by aged Simeon, and perhaps still more aged Anna, were those who were looking in company for redemption in Israel when Jesus was born. And so it is now, for surely the Lord is coming to gather all His own to glory. Soon, very soon, the hour of our translation will come, and Church testimony, and Gospel testimony (as of that "true grace of God" that saves at once, and eternally, and for heaven, the vilest that believe in Jesus), will cease.

It is a comfort, too, to know that, in contrast with the timorous, feeble, and, alas! too often artificial testimony of Christians now, there will immediately follow, on our translation to heaven, a testimony suited for the matured evil of the whole world, whether Jew, Gentile, or Babylon the Great. Devoted ones will be raised up to stand for God and His truth, amidst all the raging of the dragon, of anti-Christ, and of the beast. Some will be martyred for their faithful adherence to His Word; and for their testimony to Jesus as the *hope of the nation* of Israel, and the blessing, through that nation, of all the nations of the earth (Rev. vi. 9-11; xi. 3, &c., and vii. 3-8; xiv. 12, 13). The fruit of their testimony is seen, in part at least, in Rev. vii. 9, 17, and perhaps in xv. 2, 4; the former on the millennial earth, the latter in heaven. Precious fruit of an intelligent and faithful testimony. Intelligent, because formed alone by the *Word of God*. Faithful, because sustained alone by Him. "They were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." They will know by that Word the character of the scene they are in, and will keep themselves from all the efforts of God's enemies to seduce them.

THE TESTIMONY WE HOLD.

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These three things appear so lacking now—

First; Knowledge of the scene we are in, so as to avoid every temptation to be drawn into its sphere of action.

Second: Intelligence in God's ways as revealed for the present moment.

Third: Secret dependence on Him alone; praying in the Spirit, "who also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

What is the world?

Have we practically forgotten that, by crucifying the Lord Jesus, the world, as the world, has become shut up in darkness and under judgment, for the day when He shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. i. 7-10)? The brief period when Jesus was here was one of intense light and love to the world. Unlike the time of the law, when there was no near approach to God, and every transgression was imputed to men, Jesus admitted the vilest to His presence, and forgave the most guilty. But fallen man is fallen indeed, and the fierce rejection of the Lord, crucifying and slaying Him, has proved (poor, sinful creatures that we are) there is no blessing possible for the flesh—our fallen nature. No good is there, or it would have responded to the supreme good displayed in Christ when He was here. Sin only, uncloaked sin, dwells and reigns supreme in all of Adam birth (John xv. 22-24; Rom. v. 12, 19, 21; vii. 5, 14, 18, 20, 23; John iii. 7).

Such is unconverted, unsaved man; and in full correspondence is the world he has built up around him. Most solemn is it to believe God's testimony as to it. Satan is now its god (2 Cor. iv. 4). "Prince of the power of the air," is now his title of universal

sway over it (Ep. ii. 2), and none can walk according to the course of the world, and not walk according to Satan. The salvation of God proclaimed in the Gospel, is as surely from the world (Gal. i. 4; 1 John v. 9, 19), as from sin, and from the wrath to come.

When the eye of faith is opened to things as they are; when by grace we take in the whole present situation, is there no response? Is there no feeling of responsibility? Is there no cry for something real from us, that, may in some degree at least, by God's grace meet the exigencies of men, and of the times? What is even the *Church* as men see it? In Rome it has become systematically infidel by insisting that God's word is to be received on the authority of "the Church;" and has followed Israel, by rejecting the commandment of God that they might keep their own traditions.

For a brief period there was deliverance from this at the Reformation; but Protestants by falling, as State Churches, into the hands of different governments; and, as Dissenters, by joining with infidels in scientific research, or to carry on political schemes, are giving up Scripture more and more.

For many years teachers, accredited as Christians, have been throwing doubts on the Word. Some books of the Bible, they maintain, are forgeries. Others poetical effusions of patriotic writers, Jehovists or Elohist. Others urge a return to priesthood, ritual, and all that can minister to the natural man; while uprooting everything like truth and sincerity, where they ought to be most regarded. Others, again, who have a name for Biblical knowledge, and for great reverence for holiness and godly principles, are giving themselves up to hypothesis. Inferences from Scrip-

ture are taught with an earnestness that is wanting to the promulgation of the unadulterated word of God (2 Cor. iv. 2; ii. 17; Ep. iv. 14). Others, again, with a real heart for poor, lost souls, are applying varied, unscriptural movements, to seek to arouse them from their fatal slumbers; and God in mercy blesses, and sinners are saved, to the joy of heaven, and to the praise of the Lord from all who love Him on earth.

Still, what sober mind can check the fear that all the religious tendencies of the present moment are destructive, and hastening the long foretold apostasy (2 Thess. ii.)?

There are few, perhaps, who will read this paper who can preach. God is sovereign. "Gifts" there are, but it is sad to observe that, where there is gift, it too frequently gathers to an outward condition that may prove like the heath in the desert (Jer. xvii. 6). What is the practical result during the *week* of many a powerful Lord's Day testimony?

The want of this time is the silent, but powerful ministry of *daily life*, where we are, whether in the most menial or the most exalted station. Each child of God should seek earnestly in the intelligence of what the world is, and what has befallen the Church, to know by faith *each and every result* of the precious atoning work of Christ, and the power of His resurrection, as so copiously revealed in Scripture. As Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Our life *is* eternal, our position *is* heavenly, our portion *is* glory in Christ. All is revealed, and it is for us, in these last days, to gather up, as Paul did, the divine mind, and express it in a divine way. "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, *manner of life*, purpose, faith, longsuffering,

charity, patience." Grace is not inert. Every individual saint is either a living testimony, or there is decline. The Lord is coming, and souls are perishing. The children of God are feeble; little taught as to the answer to a guilty conscience in the blood of Christ; as to deliverance from sin by His death and resurrection for us; as to our standing and acceptance in Him; as to the life of God in us, "*Christ our life*"; as to the path; as to the presence of the Holy Ghost; as to Christ serving us in heaven as High Priest to God, and Advocate with the Father; as to our infinite resources; as to the Lord's coming. Peter earnestly exhorts to diligence (2 Peter i. 5-7), and warns against idleness and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 8; for diligence leads to rich bestowals in the coming kingdom, v. 11.

Fellowship with saints is of great moment if regulated according to God (John xi. 52; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. xv. 7.; Eph. iv. 1 to 16). But this is too large a subject to touch upon now.

It is well, at such a moment as the present, to feel, and that deeply, how all have failed in this. The world has neither been attracted, nor put under the responsibility of a true, united testimony to Christ (John xvii. 20, 21). But God, in His great love, gathers us each closely to Himself (Eph. ii. 13; Heb. x. 19, 21). So important is enjoyed *personal* nearness to God and communion with Him, that the greater part of the epistles, even of Paul, is devoted to the truth as it bears on individual souls. A distinctive characteristic of Christianity is this. "By Jesus Christ we have *access* by faith unto this grace in which we stand" (Rom. v. 2). "Through Him we have *access* by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii.

18). "In whom we have boldness, and *access* with confidence, by the faith of Him " (iii. 12.) Unspeakable privilege! Ever an opened door that none can shut, an opened ear that none can weary. There we shall each find the truth of our *daily duties* and strength for them, and from this presence, this secret communion with God (Matt. vi. 6), can alone proceed that living testimony that can tell effectually on souls around.

With the constant tendency to inflame ourselves in defence of something, perhaps right in itself, and thus hide the real state of the soul as before God, it is good for us to be disappointed in that something, and be put back to *learn Christ*.

It is far easier to teach than to learn, and the Spirit of God in James spares none. "In many things we all offend" (stumble). ALL. There are failures in each; some more, some less.

In 1 John ii. 6, we read, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Measured, then, by this standard, and the Christian has no other, all must own to failure. Again: The life we have from God "doeth righteousness" (1 John ii. 29); "does not commit sin" (iii. 9), and "loves" (iv. 7). Who is bold to say that, in walk, he always expresses these characteristics of the new birth. In "the mind that was in Christ Jesus" we have the perfect expression of obedience and love, in every step, from the glory right down to the cross on Calvary. Our journey will be incomparably shorter, but let *that mind* be in us all through (Phil. ii. 5-16. "MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU." The peace of Christ in every changing circumstance of life! The common duties of every day thus become "the work of the Lord," by doing

all to Him in the truth of our duty, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are in no danger of being *slain* for the testimony we hold, but no "work of the Lord" will be in vain, or bear no fruit when He comes. And "God is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him." It is when *alone* with God that we can pour out the soul, and say, "Thou knowest," however full and particular our confessions; however peculiar our constitution, circumstances, and susceptibilities; however strange the temptations and the trials; however deep the cravings and the wants. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Wonderful! save that God is God: and what is all testimony worth if it is not that?

"Oh, blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field, when He
Is most invisible."

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL, CHAP. V.

(Continued.)

WE now enter on the 5th chapter, the materials of which generally we find in the other Gospels, and therefore I would notice only what is characteristic. But here I may observe again, that our Evangelist is not very careful about mere historic circumstances (as the order of time and the like), because he deals rather with men and with principles. And so would it be among ourselves. If one were narrating to another

some events in order to acquaint him with the events, he would be careful to note accurately the details of time and place; but if he were using the events only for the purpose of illuminating principles or enforcing truths, he would be less careful as to such things. Thus we have in this chapter, a scene which in point of time preceded much that we have already had in the previous chapter. The call of Simon to be a fisher of men, for instance, actually preceded the healing of his wife's mother, but here it follows it (see Matt. iv. 8, Mark i.) But that is nothing to St. Luke. His purpose is not to determine which came the first, but to give us principles, to give us God and man, and accordingly while he is careless as to circumstances here, he discloses great moral principles in the call of Simon, which the other Evangelists had not noticed.

And striking indeed is this disclosure. It gives us a view of man brought really under the power of God. There was nothing in a draught of fishes, let it have been as large and unexpected as it might, that in the way of nature connected itself with conviction of sin. But in the way of God there was. For it is ever the discovery of God that leads to repentance or true conviction of sin. It is only in God's light that we can duly know ourselves. It was the common judgment of all those who in old time owned the fear of God, that they could not see Him and live. They had carried that conscience with them ever since Adam had retreated from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. Manoah judged that he must die because he had seen God. Gideon looked for the same. Ezekiel fell on his face, and Daniel's comeliness was changed into corruption, when they came in contact with the glory. Isaiah learnt the uncleanness of his lips, when

he saw the King, the Lord of Hosts. This was rightly learning themselves, and it was acquired in God's light. These measured themselves, not by themselves or among themselves, but by God, and thus they measured themselves duly.

And so it is now with Peter. The glory had come very near him. Others might not have perceived it. What was a large draught of fishes to ordinary fishermen but a lucky cast? But a little matter will speak great things in the ear of a soul that God is leading. A hole in the wall is enough to show a prophet great abominations; and to such an one a cloud no bigger and to such an one a cloud no bigger than a man's hand is full of God's works and praise. A draught of fishes is now the glory to a heaven-led sinner; and the glory is no sooner at his side, than like others of old, Peter learns himself. His eye sees God, and he abhors himself in dust and ashes.

This knowledge of ourselves by the light of God, forms the principle of repentance. We may read many a blotted page in our own history, and be sorry and ashamed of it; but to read ourselves in the light of the glory and presence of God, leads to that repentance which the Spirit works. We learn that we are black, when the sun looks upon us (Cant. i), when the burning brightness of the glory rises upon us, as here upon Peter.

And let me add, that as we learn ourselves in this way, so do we learn God. As my trespasses and follies may tell me much of myself, but as I shall not know myself duly and thoroughly till I see myself in the light of God's glory; so God's works may tell me much of Him, His power and Godhead, but I shall not know Him really as He is, till I see Him by the

darkness of my own iniquity. Then it is I learn God indeed, when I see Him in the face of Jesus Christ providing for me a sinner, and rolling my darkness and shame away for ever in the abounding riches of His grace. It was thus Adam learnt God. The six days' work of God's hand did not give Adam all that God had for him, or tell Adam all what God was. It was his transgression that drew out the full treasure. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, was the word that fully told Adam what God was. The woman's seed was a secret which creation had not declared; it was a treasure richer than all the fruit of Eden, and which grace abounding over sin, and not the labour of creating hands had made Adam's. Adam then learnt God indeed, and the sinner so learns Him now. And this is the sequel to the mystery of death and life—we learn ourselves, all darkness as we are, in the light of the divine glory; we learn God, all goodness as He is, by the evil of our own sin.

Blessed truths these are which our Evangelist here leads us into. The scene is peculiar to him, but quite in the way of the Spirit, who would by him trace our Lord as the Great Teacher, who was dealing with men's hearts and consciences, and with truths and principles. And upon this scene, I would further observe, that the sinking here was no occasion of alarm to Peter as it was afterwards (Matt. xiv.). Here he does not feel it, or think about it, for his soul was big with other thoughts, and his eye with other objects altogether, so that he had no place for thoughts of himself, or for fear. And this is the true healing of doubt and fear and all confusion. And what a pity it is, that this fresh sense of the fulness that is in Jesus should ever cool. It was *after* this that Peter feared

the waters, because it was *after* this that his vision was less occupied with Christ. O the shame and the sorrow of all this! But have not the brightest in our company failed, dear brethren? Even David who stands among us (the redeemed of the Lord), in so dear and honoured a place, when a stripling in the fight, could say even to a giant, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand;" but *afterwards* said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Well for us indeed that one has stood through life and in death, to the perfect good pleasure and praise of our heavenly Father. Saul's hand which David feared, was not so big as Goliath's hand which David despised; but then Christ was not so large and full before the eye of David's faith afterwards, as it had been before in the valley of Elah.

But into the further details of this chapter I do not enter. We have them generally in other Gospels. But there are at the close of it a few words which are peculiar to our Evangelist, and which I would therefore notice, "No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better."

This is still in the character of this Gospel, for here is disclosed another great secret in human nature, the power of man's habits and associations, and which, humanly, so hinders the power of God in his soul. We have been feeding upon the *old* wine (that which the flesh has been providing for us from our birth), and our appetite for the *new* wine (that which the Son of God has brought with Him since nature and the flesh) is spoiled. We are all conscious of this. How can ye do good, says the prophet, who are *accustomed* to do evil? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the

leopard his spots? And here the great prophet, in like wisdom, warns us that "no man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new."

And it is, beloved, a solemn warning. All things are possible with God, it is most true, and He giveth more grace. But still we do well to take heed against relishing the old wine. Every thought that we follow, every desire that we indulge, savours of either the old or the new. It is a draught (small it may be), but still it is a draught of one or the other. And this leaves a solemn word behind it, on the heart and conscience of each of us. What are you thinking of, what are you tasting now? we may say to our souls through the day. Is it provision for the flesh you are making, or is it a walk in the sanctuary? Comes it from heaven or from hell? And oft-times, beloved, the saint has to learn to his sorrow and shame at the end, the provision he had been making by the way. The patriarch was not drunk at the beginning, but he became a husbandman, planted a vineyard, and then drank of the wine. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" the soul may indignantly reply; but if the *hidden tempers* of the dog be allowed, his *active fury* will break out in time. "Walk in the Spirit," that is the Divine security, "and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And surely, beloved, a little of that walking should enable us to change the speech and to say, the *new* is better. That is what our blessed Lord would have. The holy watchful habit of denying the flesh, its tempers and its lusts, will keep the appetite fresh and ready for this new and better wine, and into all this may the gentle and yet strong hand of the Spirit, lead our souls daily!

MARKS OF THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

(Concluded).

It is the assembly called out of this world; one and holy.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven was what Peter preached at Pentecost when he called on those that believed: "As many as the Lord our God shall call Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts ii. 39, 40). The apostles' doctrine and practice and fellowship were clean outside of Judaism (v. 41). The church was *formed* through faith upon Christ gone up out of this earth into heaven and made Lord and Christ there on the throne; it was thoroughly worthy of Him as being there, and had been formed and was sustained by the Holy Spirit come down to dwell on earth among the poor sinners who believe in the Messiah martyred and rejected, as now alive and on the throne in heaven—the fountain of all grace. Paul was called out of all earthly and worldly blessing by a Lord gone into heaven; and he called people to go out to Jesus the crucified and ascended, Heb. viii. 12, 13 and Gal. i. 4, and vi. 14; it presents one body and one Spirit, and it is holy in principle and practice, sanctified to God.

As to the one body and one Spirit: a few remarks may suffice to show how far the one body and one

MARKS OF THE LORD'S TABLE.

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Spirit are essential characteristics of the church or company called out of earth for heavenly places and blessings, even as Israel and saints before had been called out of idolatry for earthly places and earthly blessings. A king is yet to reign upon earth centre of government and worship on God's behalf. A king supposes both a kingdom and "subjects." The king is the higher party of the two; the "subjects" are the people who are blessed by relationship with him, *members of his kingdom*; not members of the king. The word "subject," not "member," answers to the word king in the official relationship of king and people in a kingdom. On the other hand no Englishman would say, speaking of a human body, "the head and its subjects," but the head and *its members*. A human body has but one head; and many "*members*" are required to make up the complement of the body. Our Lord Jesus Christ has had all things put under His feet (Eph. i. 22, 23), and has been given to be Head over them to His assembly; but then, likewise (and the truth is distinct from that of His being Head over all things in the sense of His causing all things to work together for our good), He His Head of His body, which is the fulness (or complement) of Him that filleth all in all. May [we] grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ from whom the whole body joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (iv. 15, 16, comp. 1 Cor. xii. 7-27. There is but one such Head, but one such Body.

It is not that there is but one Spirit in this one

body, which is all that we need to remember. He is God, a person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who has wrought in creation, in providence, in government, who now, in eternal salvation and redemption, takes a new place and comes down to dwell in the body the church; the alone power that ought to work in it too. The apostles had to wait for Him as the promise of the Father (Acts i. 4, 5, 8). In Acts ii. He came down and made their company to be the church, and gave out a bold testimony for the Lord on the throne on high, forming a company and a teaching and a fellowship and practice which were new. Note the word Spirit through v. 4, 17, 18. This he continues in chap. iii. and iv., adding certain things, however. In chap. v. He is the power of discipline inside the assembly and putting Peter forward (v. 3. 9. 32), making the place a terror to the unrepentant. In vi. He shows Himself as the One, fulness of whom would fit a man for diaconal care, or for the work of an evangelist (vi. 3, 5, 8; vii. 51, 55); leading on to (vii.) Stephen's becoming, through Him, an adequate testimony against Israel; that, as they had rejected a Christ in humiliation upon earth, so they rejected Him now in glory, and giver of forgiveness of sins and of the Holy Spirit. In chap. viii., when the twelve apostles, under the first persecution of the church, tarried in Jerusalem, He used those that were scattered abroad to go everywhere through Judea and Samaria preaching the word. He was with them, and v. 17-23 met new difficulties. Read too, chap. ix., Saul's conversion, and mark v. 17, 31—(compare xiii. 2, 4, 9, 52, &c.). I will not write more, but I commend the careful reading of the Acts, as showing how the presence of God, the Holy

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Spirit, and His using men, and working by men, is stamped in divine grace upon every part of the narrative.

Fourthly. Ere I come to holiness, I would say a few words on the church as a depositary of the scriptures, and, so, of truth. Isaiah viii. gives us part of the trial of Israel; and there we read of the word "being sealed up among His (Immanuel's) *disciples*;" v. 12 to 20 are very important and apply to Pentecostal times, as also to the hour yet to come to the remnant. The term "*disciples*" is a name new, and marks a relationship new to the Jewish mind as a line of blessing. The old line of blessing to them was that of lineal descent from Abram. The one new was, "You have His word." This is more developed in John xv. than in xvi., where their relationship in the Spirit is given. Study John xvii. and Rom. xi. 12-24, as giving very different connections of the same truth about the Word of God, and in His people down here. Also John xiv., Acts xx. 32, 2 Tim. iii. 14-17, &c., and 1 Tim. iii. 16.

The Lord Jesus Christ in the revelation of God and the Father. Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. i. 95); the image of God (2 Cor. iv. 4); in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9); the man that is Jehovah's Fellow (Zech. xiii. 7 and xi. 12, 13). He that has seen me has seen the Father also (John xiv. 9; read from v. 6 to 20, and John i. 11).

The written word is the place where alone all about Him can be found by those that are taught of God (John v. 37-47, and vi. 45).

The Scriptures may be said then to be, in a certain sense, God's letter to the assembly; and believers

and the assembly are responsible to be His letter to the world.

Fifthly. The assembly is responsible by privilege and calling to be holy.

For our sakes the Lord has sanctified (or set apart) Himself on the throne on high, that we may be set apart (sanctified) by the Father through the truth (John xvii. 17, 18, 19). He is, as it were, the vow of our Nazariteship. We are to be holders forth of the word of life (Phil. ii. 16). But more than this, He is there as the Head of the body, the church. If Christ is Head of the body the church, if God the Holy Spirit indwells it, is it unable to find out, to see and to judge of evil which may be in it? To be unwilling to admit sin and sins in one's own family and to tolerate it in the assembly, is to cast dishonour upon the Lord Himself; making Him out to be more indifferent about sin than we are; a very awful sin it is too. This has been by *many*, avowedly, too, as a doctrine, morality and spirituality; and where tolerated, and in principle adopted and sanctioned by any company, it ceases, if it perseveres in so doing, to be part of the Holy Catholic Church. If my principles are such, the sooner I were separated from the better.

On the other hand, there may be infantine weakness and excessive ignorance in an assembly—and the more of these there be, the more would the Spirit of God and of Christ recognise there all that is of God—all that makes the company to be part of the church; and so ought I, too, to recognise it and seek to make it consistent with Christ's mind about it. But what if I find a company whose *principles* might be, 1st, the denial of the one body and one spirit;

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2ndly, the maintaining the independency of the churches; 3rdly, the setting aside of responsibility as to the truth and pleading against holy discipline in word and doctrine and walk of life. Should I accredit it? Nay, I ought to leave it as an assembly to its own principles, as antagonistic to Scripture and to mine; and (counting it neither heavenly nor divine) leave it alone. To their own master they, in it, will individually stand or fall, and I would pray for them each and all, and try to help each into a better position. By why waste time through giving them credit for being that which they are not, for being that which they disclaim? The state and condition of individuals may be very low in an assembly which owns Christ in His Headship and as Head, which owns and recognises the living God the Spirit to be with and among them; which desires to purge out all leaven that it may be an unleavened lump, &c.; in such case I own the assembly and try to help the individuals. But if the assembly is anti-scriptural and anti-christian in *principle* as an assembly, I say the word applies to them in it, "Come out of her my people." I cannot own such assembly as God's. "The Spirit and the bride say Come," mark that which pastoral power now-a-days, should seek to bring forth among God's people down here.

* * * * *

Yours in Him,

G. V. W.

"THE CHURCH OF GOD."

"The Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx. 28.

"The Church of God," amazing, precious thought !
That sinners, vile and outcast, should be brought,
Renewed in heart, and cleansed by Jesus' blood,
To form the body of the "Church of God."

Angels, around the throne, that never fell—
Seraphic spirits that in glory dwell,
The holy patriarchs before the flood,
Nor Israel since, compose the "Church of God."

Distinct in glory from "the Church" they shine,
Though each unfolds a wonderful design ;
The Holy Spirit makes His blest abode
Alone, in those, who form the "Church of God."

Renewed, and quickened by the Holy Ghost,
The Church began on earth at Pentecost,
When, like a fire, He came on earth and stood—
That little band commenced the "Church of God."

The Church is one—it has one glorious Head,
And by one Spirit through this waste is led,
And nourishment from Christ, on high, bestowed,
Together binds in one, the "Church of God."

United to her risen Head above,
E'en now she knows the sweetness of His love ;
His power is hers and helps her on the road,
"Bride of the Lamb"—"Church of the Living God."

Soon will He come, and take the Church away,
And oh, sweet thought ! fast hastens on the day,
When He will stand, with all His saints avowed—
"Head of the Church," the purchased "Church of God."

A. M.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE Saints of God have ever found in the four Gospels rich pasture-land for their souls to feed in. Having learnt in the Epistles how a man can be "just with God;" having found there that "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," that "being justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him;" having found there that "our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" and that it is our blessed privilege to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ;" they have turned to the Gospels to find the "bread of God" which "cometh down from heaven." This is true and divine order. The question of sin must be settled, and our relations with God established in righteousness and grace before we can really *feed*. Nor does the pilgrimage in which we need the manna begin till we have passed the Red Sea. Thenceforth as pilgrims we find this manna in the Gospels—"the living bread which came down from heaven" to sustain and nourish us on our way thither.

True we find Christ in the Old Testament in every sacrifice and offering, and in numberless typical histories. He is the burden of many a prophecy and the theme of many a Psalm. Ever present to the mind and heart of God, He is the grand subject of Scripture. But when we find ourselves in the Gospels we begin to learn that "the darkness passeth and the true light now shineth." The Son of God is

there not in type or shadow, but in living presence. "God manifest in flesh" is before the eye. The Son in the bosom of the Father yet walking upon earth and declaring the Father,—He is livingly before us. The Son of Man, the servant of God's counsels, Emmanuel—God with us is before our wondering eyes and speaks to our worshipping hearts. No wonder that souls have found their richest, sweetest nourishment in the Gospels!

But how much more precious do these Gospels become as we learn them better, and find out how God has given us a threefold manifestation, and yet a fourth, of the glories of His blessed Son! How strengthening to the soul to find that there is no repetition even where the same tale is told by three, or even four evangelists, and that the histories are far—very far—from being each a complement of the others, to fill up what is lacking in them. All Christians own and feel that they could not spare one Gospel, but many feebly, if at all, apprehend that in each Gospel there is a presentation of Christ distinct from that of the others, blessedly agreeing with them, and having this in common with the rest, that it is for the fuller delineation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet having its own distinctive character. That it is so, however, is seen by the narratives and discourses found only in a given Gospel, and by the differences in the way the same fact or doctrine is presented, when all, or more than one, contain it.

What divine interest it gives to the Gospels, to trace in Matthew "the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers!" His genealogy, His birth, His name,

His presentation to the people of God—all tells that He is *Son of Abraham, Son of David*; Messiah—Christ of God. His rejection by Israel, and the unfolding of the dealings of God consequent upon this rejection, have the character suited to the Matthew-aspect of the blessed Lord, as have also the predictions of His coming glory.

In Luke, on the other hand, birth and genealogy, words and works, life and death present the glories with which the Lord has surrounded the new name he has been pleased to take of *Son of Man*.

The activity and obedience of the *servant of God* are blessedly before us in Mark. No genealogy is needed for a servant, however blessed. His service is before us, as rendered to Him whose servant and prophet He is, and whose will He does in lowly grace.

In John He is the *Son of God*—"the Son in the bosom of the Father," and pre-eminently the *Word of God*. The absence of birth and genealogy tells who He is, and as His blessed Person is the Word of God and reveals Him perfectly, so His words make Himself known: "Never man spake like this man." (John viii. 25; vii. 46).

(*To be continued.*)

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

INTRODUCTION.

It is painful to know that many true, simple-hearted Christians rarely if ever read the Revelation of Jesus Christ. They practically set it aside as too difficult. So many and various, they hear, are the schemes of interpretation; so little hope, they think, of understanding it; so small the profit, they judge, in turning to

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it, that they forget how earnestly God has commended it to them for blessing. Even the hearer of it, as well as the reader, who will act in faithfulness and keep what is written in it, shall be blessed (i. 3.)

How little is God believed even by His children ! How slow are we to have confidence in His love and care for our soul's profit ! There is so much in this religious age to favour the growth of the *tares* rather than the wheat, that none but the Lord Jesus Himself, in judicial glory, can unsparingly, yet in real love to His own, expose the wiles and deceits of him who prepares the soil and cultivates the field : and God has given this Revelation to Him for us (v. 1), that, forewarned of the end of all that is of Satan whether in the Church or in the world, we may be preserved.

The arbitrary division of this book into chapters and verses has obscured the beautiful order of its parts. The following may help to display this order in some degree :—

The Revelation is in two distinct portions. Part I., extends from chap. i. to chap. xi. 18—*i.e.*, from the title and source of the book to the close of God's dealings with the earth in longsuffering mercy, when the final results of His government are briefly but comprehensively stated (xi. 17, 18.)

Part II., from chap. xi. 19 to chap. xxii. embraces the events when the powers that be will *not* be ordained of God ; but the great dragon, that old serpent the devil, being cast out of heaven, will stir up the earth in war against Christ as the Lamb ; when the Church (God's dwelling place by the Holy Ghost), having been taken to heaven, the great whore, " Babylon the great," will be on the scene in all her meretricious glory ; the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church all

in open apostacy. But the triumph of apostacy is short, its judgment final and overwhelming.

Heaven is also seen, and the ways of God and of the Lamb, that issue in glories and joys that will never cease, are made known. Great will be the enlargement of soul, unspeakable the blessing to "him that reads, and to them that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand."

There are three subjects concisely named in verse 19 chap. i. :—

First. "The things which thou hast seen" (chap. i. 12-16).

Second. "The things which are" (chapters ii. and iii.).

Third. "The things which shall be after these" (chap. iv. to the end).

The second and third subjects are remarkably arranged in septenary subdivisions.

The second comprises seven addresses to seven local Churches, which doubtless are samples of the state of Church testimony from its decline to its cessation. The wish for each is blessing (i. 4), but while every resource is offered in Christ, judgments are threatened to those who have no ear to hear; and, on the other hand, exceeding great and precious rewards are promised to those who will hear and avail themselves of these resources. Thus the wealth of Christ is laid open in a present practical view, most exalting to Him, and encouraging to the weakest and most failing believer.

The sevenfold subdivisions of the third subject are of the deepest interest, and the most solemn importance. The secrets of heaven and of providence are unsealed, and the place of the earth-rejected and

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crucified Lamb, in connection with all those powers and agencies that shall accomplish the purposes of God, is clearly revealed. The heart is led on in adoring wonder to contemplate the magnificent glories encircling Him who here was crowned with thorns and slain.

The first subdivision is chap. iv. Jesus Christ is here seen as Lord God Almighty,* according to John i., Col. i. and Heb. i., and as receiving, as Creator, the worship of the *heavenly* family.

The second is chap. v. Jesus Christ as the Lamb : the Redeemer : and worshipped by every family in heaven or earth, blessed with Him or under Him.

The third—chap. vi. and chap. viii. to verse 6. The sealed ways of God towards men then, and their state are opened for us by the Lamb ; who thus treats us as His friends (John xv. 15).

The fourth—The sealed ones of Israel are specified in their tribes, the seed of blessing for the earth. (Chap. vii. 1-8).

The fifth—The saved of the Gentiles are seen on earth after the great tribulation, and their worship. (Chap. vii. 9-17).

The sixth gives the seven trumpets, fruit of the Lord's interest in the sufferings of His earthly people, and His intercession as the angel at the golden altar. (Chap. viii. from verse 3 to the end of chap. ix., and xi. from verse 14-18).

The seventh. Jesus as the mighty angel claims His right to the whole world. Its condition at the time is disclosed. (Chap. x. and xi. to verse 13).

Part II. is in seven sub-divisions :—

* " He that sits on the throne is Christ, but viewed as Jehovah, and sitting as such, not as a distinct person seen apart from Godhead, nor as a Son with the Father in Godhead ; but the Jehovah of the Old Testament revealed in the Son." J.N.D.

First. Summary of events from the birth of Jesus Christ to His return in judgment, with descriptions of God's vessel of rule, and also Satan's: *i.e.*, Israel, and the beasts (chap. xi. 19 to xiv.).

Second. The vials or seven last plagues (chaps. xv., xvi.).

Third. The judgment and mystery of Babylon the great (chaps. xvii., xviii.).

Fourth. The marriage of the Lamb, followed by His coming with His saints to judge and to reign (chaps. xix., xx.).

Fifth. The eternal state (chap. xxi. 1-8),

Sixth. The Church in governmental glory (chap. xxi. 9, to chap. xxii. 5).

Seventh. Solemn conclusion (chap. xxii. 6-21).

Note well the effect of these disclosures of the glories of the Lord Jesus on His servant John, and say—Had he no blessing in this book? Can such an “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” as he closes with, come from a divided heart? Oh, Reader! may you and I share spoils with John. (Ps. cxix. 162.)

THE SON OF MAN WITH POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. This is the divine record of the Lord Jesus while here. Not reconciling God to the world, but the world to God. He gave His Son—there could not be a greater proof of His love—and that when the Son was here it was not to impute sin and then condemn, but to save. The world hated God; it was the world that needed to be reconciled. All that the Lord Jesus did before

He suffered on the cross is the demonstration that God was seeking man. We now know that the cross is the only way by which man can be reconciled; for apart from that not even the works of mercy and the words of love could have any other effect than to increase his hatred. For when they saw Him they hated Him. What a proof this is of enmity; for the greater the love shown from God, the greater the hatred from man. Yet all through His life the Lord was seeking to win souls, to attract men unto Himself. Not imputing sins; but even to the woman (John viii.) His word was, "Neither do I condemn thee." But He was drawing men to Himself by His works of healing. There was no case beyond His power, no sorrow without His sympathy; the deaf, dumb, blind, and dead felt the authority of His word, even the possessed were delivered, and demons compelled to relinquish their prey. Why this display of healing power? So that whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole. All was as proof that He was there to bless them, and of all blessings surely the greatest to forgive them their sins. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." This was the object for which He came; without this, all the power and love manifested in His daily work of healing would have been insufficient. Sinners came with diseased bodies, and He healed them, and did not impute their sins to them. Not that there were no sins; their diseases were the effects of their sins. But He came not to judge, but to save, to forgive wherever there was the least faith, and His

miracles prove His authority to forgive. Both proclaim that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The not imputing trespasses, does not necessarily mean forgiveness. The woman in John viii. was not condemned, it is not said forgiven. Mere forgiveness is not justification. We who now believe have all three. For we are justified. We can say, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." If forgiveness through His blood, then His blood meets the claim of a righteous God against the sinner who is so forgiven, and if God's claims against sin are met, the justification of the forgiven sinner necessarily and legally follows, and the resurrection of Christ is the divine assurance and proof of justification. For He who was delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification. But none could be legally justified till the blood was shed that paid our debt of sin.

In the palsied man, given in three gospels, we have an instance how God was in Christ, reconciling and not imputing. Forgiveness, unsought and unthought of—as far as the word tells us—either by the paralytic or by his four bearers. Their aim and desire was the healing of the body. But it was an occasion for the Son of Man to give in His matchless grace a proof of His power to forgive sins. He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Many think, seeing this is the first said to the man, that they all came for forgiveness. If so, why was not forgiveness given to all? Nay, the four men brought the palsied man to be healed. This was their sole object, and it is losing sight of this that some adduce this healing of the palsied

man to prove that bringing infants to be baptized has a scriptural warrant. The faith that they had was with reference to the body only. This is not the thought with those who baptize infants. And this narrative gives no ground whatever for that rite.

It was at Capernaum, the place where so many of His mighty works were done. The multitudes are attracted to see and hear Him. Among them is the palsied man, helpless, and at the mercy of others. Four others with himself are fully persuaded that if they could only get to the Lord Jesus, He would heal him. But the crowd is so great, they cannot get near the Lord. The case is urgent, the man must be brought to Jesus, for He can cure, and they are quite sure that He will cure. Well, if they cannot get near Him by the door, they will break through the roof. If the regular, the respectable and orthodox way be closed they will take another, a way which some might forbid, which at least was extraordinary, if not disreputable. But no such thought or feeling hinders them. Faith rises above every difficulty, has but one thing in view. The mere looker-on might smile, the unbelieving Pharisee scorn, and all would wonder. But their faith carried them through every difficulty and received faith's reward. It is an instance full of instruction. How often do we allow difficulties, to overcome the action of faith. "According to your faith be it unto you" is a solemn word, conveying as much of warning as of encouragement. Had the four men turned back because they could not enter by the door, the man would have remained palsied, he would not have heard the gracious words, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Lord saw their faith, and gave an unexpected blessing. O how infinitely beyond the

healing of the body was the saving of the soul. In grace the Lord proves Himself able and with authority to meet the need of both; and restored health to the body, the evidence of new health to the soul. But why begin with forgiveness, why forgive sins before raising the man from his bed? It was the primary object, all else subsidiary. It is indeed grace, for while He never gives less than faith expects, how often He gives more; insomuch that we are astonished, it is so utterly beyond expectation. The healing was for time, the forgiveness for eternity.

The scribes were quite right in saying, "Who can forgive sins but God?" But God was there. It was not a whit easier to say "Arise, take up thy bed," than "Thy sins be forgiven." The Pharisee is convicted out of his own mouth. He admitted that God alone could forgive; could any other than God by a word raise the paralytic from his couch and give him strength to carry his bed? This was the fact before their eyes. God was there, manifest in flesh. Impossible for them to doubt. They did not doubt, but they hated. They could not but believe in the sense of giving credence to the fact that God was there, for the miracle was incontestable evidence; but they did not believe in the sense of confessing Him and trusting in Him as the One who would save them from their sins. How determined the opposition to truth and love, the hatred to Christ even at the risk—nay, the certainty—of their own everlasting destruction. They had seen and hated both the Son and the Father. The Lord was there to forgive, and they would not be forgiven.

The forgiveness of the man was that they might know the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins. He was there in the fulfilment of prophecy; He

was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind, liberty to them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

The accepted year of Jehovah was the Son of Man on earth, with authority to forgive sins. Surely, in view of His atoning work on the cross, without which there never can be any forgiveness at any time. But the atoning work was not then done, and the full effect of it could not then be known. There was remission of sins, and the burdened in conscience would receive rest in coming to Him. Every motive that love and grace could supply was there to draw and attract man to Him. It was an unspeakable blessing to the man, but the power of the Son of Man to forgive is the reason given in the Word why he was then and there forgiven. In the case of the woman in the house of Simon another reason is given. There, too, His authority to forgive appears, but the condition of the woman's soul is seen; not faith in a crucified Saviour, not the knowledge that through His blood there was redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, but a wearied burdened heart, attracted to Him by the display of His love for the lost. And she weeps at His feet. Did ever anyone truly weep there without having his burden removed? He who reads all hearts saw at once the sins which needed forgiveness, and the fruit of grace already there, and proclaims to the despising Pharisee that she loved much. Love for His person brought her there, and at His feet she received forgiveness. He who came to seek and to save the lost, said, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee." It was confidence in His goodness, that He would not bid her begone after the manner of a

self-righteous Pharisee, and she was not only not thrust away, but received a blessing, I doubt not far beyond her thoughts. Her faith was the fruit of her love, itself a fruit of grace through faith, to the Lord Jesus; that of the paralytic was confidence in His power for the cure of the body. But faith, whatever its peculiar aspect, if Christ be the object, always gets unexpected blessing.

Neither the man nor the woman could say, "In whom we have redemption." They both could say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." And the woman, if not the man, could likewise say, "In whose spirit there is no guile." Her weeping at the Saviour's feet unmindful of the guests in the Pharisee's house, was proof of repentance unfeigned, that is, no guile. A full redemption and being justified make the difference between the forgiveness they knew and that which we have now. The shed blood has paid our debt. Christ has borne our judgment: the claims of law are met. The justice of God is satisfied; in proof of which Christ was raised from the dead. Remission of sins, then, did not righteously cancel the debt; now, the shed blood does. Remission removes the penalty, but not the condition of indebtedness. His precious blood does both. And the indebtedness removed—another paid it—we are justified. And our redemption is not merely saving us from the consequences of sin, and delivering us from the condition of sin, it is the righteous clearing us from all the demands of a broken law, and of a sin-hating God. We are cleared in presence of and by consent of the law. Our justification is legal, and is perfect, for He was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Now we are

debtors, not to law for that is death, but to grace and that is life eternal. What can we say to all this? Let our answer be in accordance with Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAP. VI.

HERE we again have what we have already read in Matthew and Mark. But I observe that the appointment of the apostles is here made *after prayer*, and this is not noticed by the other Evangelists, as also on other occasions, the same notice of the Lord in prayer is peculiar to Luke. But this still shows us that the Lord is here before us rather as *a man*, than either as a Jew, or the Son of God. For a Jew under the law was not properly called to pray, for the law put him on his own strength; but prayer being the expression of dependance, is the first duty of a creature, like man, who should learn to wait on God as all his sufficiency and strength.

The holy instructions which we get in the progress of this chapter, are found in the sermon on the mount in Matthew. We need not determine whether the Lord delivered them on two different occasions, one of which is given us by the one Evangelist, and the other by the other, or whether the very same occasion is thus recorded differently by them. The Spirit, I am assured, designs to serve a more general purpose by our Evangelist, than by St. Matthew. In

St. Matthew the Lord's words are recorded, as though he were very particularly addressing himself to a Jewish ear. There are instructions there which would exclusively, I may say, reach the conscience of a Jew, awakening in his mind recollections of the law and the prophets. These are omitted here, and the Lord speaks as having *man* before him. 'The sayings "of them of old time," that which was "the law and the prophets," errors in fasting, alms-deeds and prayers which so prevailed among the Jews, get no notice here, but all that was *moral*, applying itself to the heart and conscience of man does.*

And this is so according to the mind of that perfect Teacher, whose instructions are here and there thus variously delivered. He was sent of the circumcision, it is true. He could not, in actual ministry, pass the Jewish boundary, but he could see *man* through the Jew; and it has been the good pleasure of the Holy Ghost, to show us by St. Luke, the Lord's mind reaching out and apprehending man in this way, dealing with the *human*, and not merely with the Jewish, conscience and affections. In Matthew, he sees the Jew in the land; in Luke, he looks outward to man on the face of the earth.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS chapter opens with another instance, in our Evangelist, of disregard of mere circumstances and order of time; for the place which the case of the

* The warnings against covetousness (which of course are of this general or moral character), are an exception to this, for though they are found in Matthew, they are omitted here. But we shall find that they are thus omitted here, only in order to bring them out in another place of this Gospel, in connection with other scenes and truths which were morally most suited to them (see chap. xii.)

Centurion fills in this Gospel, is not according to that which it holds in the others. And there are other touches in this narrative peculiar and characteristic. Thus we learn here of his sending the Jews to the Lord in his behalf, a circumstance which Matthew does not notice. Because Matthew, writing more immediately for Jewish converts, would not record that feature, in the case which might have nourished the old national pride; but Luke, writing more for the Gentiles, would keep in their mind the ancient favour in which the others once stood with God. Both of these things had their moral value, which the Spirit would surely consult. So, our Evangelist does not notice the Lord's comment on the faith of this Gentile as Matthew does, for the same moral purposes, —the Jewish Evangelist noticing this, as it might help to check the rising of a Jewish boast; the other not noticing it, for it might have helped to raise a similar feeling in the mind of a Gentile.

These distinctions appears to me, to be thus perfect in their place. And then we get (and only here) the case of the widow of Nain, a case so tenderly affecting the human heart, that it properly lay under the notice of the Spirit in St. Luke. For in the style of one who was looking at man, and his sorrows and affections, our Evangelist tells us, that the young man who had died, "was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;" and again, when the Lord raised him to life, that "he delivered him to his mother." These are strokes and touches quite according to the human tones, which have their happy and gracious current through the mind of the Lord in this Gospel. And the little word "only," is peculiar to Luke. It is used in the case of Jarius' daughter, and of the

man whose child was possessed with an evil spirit, and here in the case of the widow of Nain; and such a word would appeal to the tender heart of the Son of man, and is lovely and touching in its place. Would that we caught more of the same tender spirit, while delighting at the discovery of it in Jesus! It is well for us, beloved, that he has it more largely than we; but we should seek it and cultivate it, for he loves to find it in us, and what pleases him should be our care. And I cannot refuse to notice here, in connection with this chapter, what has struck me in these Gospels—the ease with which our blessed Lord allowed the vail to fall from Him at the bidding of faith. In old time when a king of Israel was asked to heal a man of his leprosy, he turned in a rage, and said, “Am I God to kill and to make alive.” But Jesus, the despised Galilean, in all the repose and certainty of conscious glory, turns at once only to say, “I will, be thou clean.” The glory of the God of Israel shone out then without distraction, when faith rent the vail. So here the faith of a Gentile appeals to him as the Lord of heaven and earth, who had once said in a word, “Let there be light, and there was light,” and could now just “say in a word, and his servant should be healed,” and immediately with the same ease the divine glory again breaks forth. No disturbance, as though some strange thing were doing, it was only looking through the cloud again, it was only letting the vail drop, that “the life-creating Sun,” the countenance of God Himself, might appear in His power and grace. Anything that belonged to God was nothing too great for Jesus to take, when faith discovered him. But save to faith, he veiled himself, for he came, the emptied Son of God, to atone for sin

and bring us home to Him from whom we had departed in pride. Faith, as it were, entitled him to know again for a moment, and that must have been a blessed moment to him. But otherwise, through love to us, he refused to know himself in this evil and apostate world, saying, "my goodness extendeth not to thee." But faith could draw aside the vail and let him see himself for a passing moment in this dark place. What mystery of goodness was all this! and upon all this he claims our love, and the heart is dead indeed that refuses him.

This chapter then introduces the mission of John the Baptist to the Lord, which I believe to be a matter of great interest and meaning.

John had long before this testified to the person of the Son of God. As to that he had no doubt; but it seems that he was not prepared for *all* the results of being the Lord's witness. Like Moses in his day. Moses was the minister of God, and had the conduct of the camp through the wilderness, but he became impatient under the charge, and says, "Have I conceived all this people, have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, carry them in thy bosom." The weakness of his hand to hold the glory betrays itself, and seventy others are made to share it with him. But though he is thus rebuked in the secret place of the Lord, yet before others his Lord will vindicate him, so that immediately afterwards Aaron and Miriam are put to signal reproach for not being afraid to speak against him (Numb. xi. xii.) Just so here with John the Baptist. John betrays the common weakness, and is offended in Christ. Like Moses he becomes impatient, not being prepared for all the cost and change of being the Lord's

prisoner as well as minister. He knew Jesus to be the Son of God, as Moses had known Jehovah to be the Redeemer of Israel; but as the murmurings of the camp had been too much for the one, so the prison and injuries of Herod now prove too much for the other, and John, like Moses, must listen to the rebuke in secret, "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;" but before men, also like Moses he shall stand graciously approved by his divine Master, "among them that are born of women, there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

This is the constant way with the blessed Lord, as here with Moses and John. Thus he smote Israel again and again in the secret places of the wilderness, but before their enemies he was as one who had not seen iniquity in them. Many a question was settled between the Lord and the camp when alone, but into the judgment of the ungodly they were not to enter. And so are the saints now under the judgment of the Father, but the future judgment does not await them. In that day they are to have boldness. Their *actions* may be weighed in the place of the children and heirs of God, and the glories parcelled out according to that, but their *persons* are never to be called into judgment. In the blood they stand accepted, and rise not to judgment, but to life. Salvation in their history occupies the very place which judgment once filled (Heb. ix. 27, 28).*

(To be continued.)

* In Ezekiel xliv. 10-16, we see the Levites and the sons of Zadok distinguished even after the glory had returned. The Levites who had failed in the day of Apostasy, bear their iniquity, while the sons of Zadok who had stood in that evil day, are brought into higher dignity. Thus both are accepted in the glory of the temple, but divers places assigned to them.

ENOCK AND NOAH; THE HOPE OF ISRAEL AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH CONTRASTED.

"By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death."—
Heb. xi. 5.

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the
cattle that was with him in the ark : and God made a wind to pass
over the earth ; and the waters assuaged."—Gen. viii. 1.

ERE the flood's engulfing billows
Desolation spread around,
Enoch to his rest was taken,
Happy *Enoch* rest had found.
Noah, brought through all its dangers,
Found the ark *his* resting-place ;
Each secure, and safe, and happy,
Through the Lord's abounding grace.

Enoch, of the Church a figure,
Taken ere the wrath was poured,
Knowing, ere his blest translation,
He was pleasing to the Lord.
Noah, representing *Israel's*
Remnant of the "latter day,"
Brought through all its tribulations,
To accept *Messiah's* sway.

Israel rests on *earthly* promise,
Israel's heart is on "*the land*,"
There, for God Himself hath said it,
Israel shall in triumph stand.
But *the Church*, with eyes uplifted,
Sees her all in *heaven* above ;
Waits her blessed Bridegroom's coming
As the object of her love.

Earthly goods are not her portion,
Heavenly things to her belong ;
"Resurrection" and "Translation"
Are the burden of her song.
Sweeter than the milk and honey
Flowing through *Emmanuel's* land,
Will it be for her, *made like Him*,
E'er to dwell at His right hand.

A. M.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE harmony of the Gospels is thus seen to be divine. It is in striking contrast with the *harmonies* which men have framed, and which, for the most part, endeavour to make one perfect Gospel out of four incomplete ones. Now it is quite evident that these histories of the Lord's life and death must be, and are, *harmonious*. They cannot contradict each other, for their one Author is the Spirit of God. But it is surely an altogether inadequate appreciation of them to believe and confess ever so fully, that our God has given us different histories which perfectly agree; and which taken together, form as complete a history as was needed for His glory and for our blessing. Of this every believer is fully convinced. If there were no more, he would bow adoringly before the wisdom and goodness of Him who has given these precious histories. But, indeed, this is a small part of the riches treasured in the four Gospels.

The real *harmony of the Gospels* is CHRIST. He is the One that God delights to honour, the centre of all His thoughts, the purpose of all His ways, the Man of His counsels, the One of whom He said: "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased" (Matt. xii. 18). Worthily to portray His varied perfections whilst here below, doing the will of God, and finishing the work which His Father had given Him to do, is here the good pleasure of our God. To do it, He has inspired four honoured ministers to view this blessed One on four different sides; to present Him in four distinct but divinely harmonious ways. A rare and precious privi-

lege it is to contemplate Him thus portrayed! Let us "turn aside and see this great sight." Let us take the shoes from our feet. Assuredly, whilst God unfolds to us His thoughts of His beloved Son, and unfolds them in threefold, fourfold perfection, the place where we stand is holy ground. May we bow our heads and worship!

The shadows are past; the great and blessed substance, Christ, is before us. God has spoken by the prophets, He now speaks in the Person of the Son. Aforetime he commanded light, now He shines. All the radiance of His unspeakable light beams in the Son; yet so gently that, hidden in the Rock, we may behold. God makes Himself known. It is in a Man amongst men, a Man "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," yet a Man in lowly grace, welcoming a sinner to weep over His feet, and to kiss them; giving His bosom for one of ourselves to lean upon in sweet and holy confidence. It is in One who, whilst He was weary, hungry, thirsty Man, could yet of His own all-piercing knowledge, tell a guilty woman all that ever she had done. It is in One who, whilst he needed the food a servant prepares, could, in His wondrous words, pour the deep things of God into a listener and worshipper at His feet. Let ours, then, be "that good part" which assuredly shall not be taken away from us. For if here, through a glass darkly we trace some of His beauties, if here in feebleness we hear His words in these blessed Gospels, we shall see Him, and hear Him in His home above in a perfection and a peace which shall never be destroyed.

In St. Mark, God says to us: "Behold my Servant." He gives us there an orderly history of His service.

How well this is for us, and how suited to Him and to the One whom he thus sets before us! It is, we may say, natural that where we have a history of the service of Christ down here, the order of events should be observed. Whilst Matthew and Luke take events and teaching, miracles and discourses out of their order as to time, and group them so as to present our Lord, the one dispensationally as Messiah, the other morally as the *Man* Christ Jesus; Mark, whose subject is the service itself or rather the Servant, follows the order of time. His Gospel resembles more than do the others that of Matthew, yet in every part the difference is felt: Matthew shows us the Minister of the circumcision, Mark the Servant of God in this world. He tells us how and when He went about doing good.

In St. Luke the Jew is not before us; save that (as in the ways of God it is "to the Jew first"), the beginning of Luke introduces Christ in His place in the dispensations of God, and in His ways with His people. Luke has to do with man, and with the Son of Man, come amongst men. Hence the moral truths we find here, apart from all question of the dealings of God with an earthly people. Hence, too, the precious unfoldings of divine grace towards sinners as such. Take as an instance of the former chapters xii., xiii. and xiv., where there is much that is in no other Gospel, and where the teaching which has its counterpart in Matthew is addressed, as it were, to *men*, not to Jews; it is *moral* not dispensational. As illustrating the latter, the woman at the feet of Jesus (Luke vii.), the "prodigal son" and the "penitent thief" are peculiar to Luke.

St. John's Gospel differs widely from the others. Every Christian feels this. All write as moved by the Holy Ghost. Each is perfect in his place. But John's

theme is, above all, the blessed Lord in His divine glories as the Word of God, as "the only begotten Son." Matthew began with His *Jewish* (Messianic) genealogy, which established the legal rights of the Lord to the throne of David. Luke showed Him as born of a woman, and traced His *human* genealogy through Adam to God. Mark plunged at once into His service. But now John introduces Him as before all genealogy, and as its source. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

T. N.

(To be continued.)

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

FROM the time that the Lord called out a people for Himself, as in Exodus, He has again and again intervened, by a display of His glory, when their moral condition failed to answer to the purpose and end for which He called them.

He said of Israel, "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise" (Is. xliii. 21); and this when all the nations of the earth were given to idolatry. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen" (10). This was their place and responsibility before the world. They failed all through, and the divine interposition to meet this failure was the display of the glory of the Lord, the only true test of their

condition (Exod. xvi. 7-10; Numb. xiv. 10; xvi. 19-42; xx. 6; Is. vi.; Ezek. i. to xi.).

God's glory could not be associated with their unfaithfulness, however great His long-suffering patience. Hence the judgment pronounced in Is. vi. 9-12.

The more searching test was the glory of the Lord Jesus, as the Word made flesh and dwelling among them. Their rejection of Him proved their utter departure, and after Peter's offer in Acts iii., and the yearning love of the Lord displayed in Paul's conversion and ministry, nothing was left but to put them entirely aside for a season, and the *Church* was definitely set in the midst of the darkness of the world, to be His witness, and to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But failure has marked the course of the church even as Israel, and many were the tears shed, even in apostolic times, over the inroads of decay.

In this first chapter, then, of the Revelation, we have a vision of the glory of the Lord in the midst of the churches, the only true test of their state as light bearers in the midst of darkness.

John sees one like unto the Son of Man, invested with such majesty, power and glory, that, in the sense of his own weakness and nothingness, "he fell at his feet as dead." Peter once fell at His feet in fear as a sinner; the cleansed leper in gratitude as a worshipper; but John in absolute weakness as a servant, and this book is for "*His servants.*"

It is required of the servant to be found faithful. Can he be so if ignorant or forgetful of his Lord? The end of the book shows us servants doing Him faithful, untiring service, but *they are ever in His*

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presence. "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face" (xxii. 3, 4). Of those who profess His name now, how many entertain seriously any thought of His judicial glory as *their Lord*, or His present judgment of their ways?

To John He was not only surpassingly glorious, but wonderfully gracious, sympathizing, and kind; giving power to the faint, and to him that had no might increasing strength.

Christian reader, let us pause together. Do we serve Him? Remember His words: "If any man serve *Me*, let him *follow Me*." What was His path, His Spirit, His motives, His feelings, His thoughts? Oh! the grace and goodness that ever helps the helpless: the compassionate wisdom that only appoints the service which He gives strength to accomplish. Happy service that runs when sent, yet equally can stand and wait.

But how many there are, in these days of fashionable Christianity, who claim to be pre-eminently the servants of Christ; a separate sacred order to whom public Christian service is entrusted.

To such, what a challenge to the real condition of their souls and the rightness of their claims is this revelation of Him whom, as His ministers, they profess to obey in everything as Lord! Can they complain if they are judged according to the place they take? "The occupant of the pulpit, who alone has the right in his congregation to interpret God's will, and minister to His saints, and plead with unbelievers," may forget that "there are *differences of ministries*, but the same Lord;" but it is no light matter, in the face of Scripture, to set aside His rights who has given the gifts (Ep. iv. 7-16), and to limit His service.

Blessed, incomparably blessed, the meanest of the children of men who is called to serve the Lord Christ (Eph. vi. 5-8; Col. iii. 22-24); and the humblest Christian slave who toils on heartily day by day, "as to the Lord and not unto men," will find it so when He comes to "give reward to his servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear his name, *small* and *great*."

To all Christians this revelation of the glory of Christ applies, and may we read the chapter with the earnest desire for profit. Are we not ever in His presence, and shall we not seek to know it, and cherish the thought of it? (Ps. xvi. 8).

It, at first sight, seems remarkable that it should be said, "God *gave* this revelation to Jesus Christ," but study Phil. ii. 6-11, and other Scriptures (and they are not a few), which speak of glories that the Lord Jesus has *won* by His devoted service, His unswerving obedience, His entire self-surrender to the deepest humiliation, to suffering and to death, and the wonder ceases. "Upon His head are many diadems."

Such are the glories revealed in this book; *given glories*, which, though chiefly judicial, yet call forth the worship of the redeemed. "For the Father hath committed *all* judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the *Son of Man*" (John v. 22-27).

Thus the angels are His. Their willing service is to ascend and descend upon the *Son of Man* (John i. 51). They all worship Him (Heb. i. 6). It is a thought of His glory not to be passed over. When He comes in vengeance on His enemies, or to reward His servants, He comes with His angels (2 *Thess.* i. 7; *Matt.* xvi. 27).

One of these blessed beings He sets apart to this special service for John and for us. John, for a moment overwhelmed with the sense of the glory of the messenger, fell at his feet to worship him (xix. 10, xxii. 8), but the angel at once forbad it, reminding him that he was his *fellow servant*, and fellow servant, too, of all who have the testimony of Jesus.

The blessing on the churches (4, 5) is not, as in the epistles of Paul, in relation with the Father and the Son in grace, but with God in government. This is wonderful, but blessing is God's delight in whatever way He may bring it about (Rom. viii. 28).

Grace and peace is pronounced from Him who changes not. From the divine Majesty who *is*. Who also *was* in counsel and purpose, and who *is coming*, in His power and glory, to accomplish all (xxi. 5, 6). From the Holy Ghost in perfection of testimony, "*the seven Spirits*" (Is. xi. 2), and, as before His throne, in perfection of governmental rule. (Comp. iii. 1 for the church testimony and rule, and v. 6 for the earth).

In the Epistles, the Holy Ghost is found *in the believer*, "*the other Comforter*," his Sustainer and Patron in the absence of Jesus. In the Revelation, as in the full unclouded light of the sanctuary, shining down on all here contrary to it.

Grace and peace also from Jesus Christ in His earthly relationships. "*The faithful witness*" in His life. "*The first begotten of the dead*," as deliverer of the lawful captives (Heb. ii. 14, 15). "*The prince of the kings of the earth*," whose dominion is an everlasting dominion (Dan. vii. 14).

Can love to Him be silent? The beloved disciple, forgetful of Patmos and all his sufferings, at once

raises a note of praise that has found an echo in many a Christian's heart (v. 6). All is grace, unspeakable grace, whether looking to the past, the present, or the future. (The true reading is, "To him who *loveth* us," &c.)

But the solemn testimony to the doom of those who reject grace must be added. To such all is judgment. "Even so. Amen."

The seal of Him who gives the revelation, the Alpha and Omega of all, is now affixed. But there is more. The One who in creation has displayed His power as God, *Elohim*; to the patriarchs His sufficiency as Almighty, *Shadday*; and to Israel His faithfulness as *Jehovah*, will yet manifest these glories in their combined fulness on this earth in the person of Jesus. He is JEHOVAH-ELOHIM-SHADDAY for that day.

The ninth verse gives the true position of those who, like John, are in the kingdom of Jesus Christ while He is in heaven and they on the earth; that is *now*. Tribulation and patience characterize it. Joint heirs with Christ we suffer with Him, but not for long (Rom. viii.). "Let *these* sayings sink down in your ears," said the Lord to His disciples when He began to open up His and their path of rejection in this world. Have they this deep place in ours?

It is not the Christian position as members of the body of Christ, nor as children in the endearing relationships of the family of God, though John owns this tie, but kingdom position. That which emphatically calls for loyal allegiance and unfeigned subjection to Jesus Christ. Not forms. Not to say and do not. Not meat and drink, nor even gifts: but reality. Suffering marks it. Patience expresses it. Fidelity characterises it.

It was "the Lord's day," (10) the first day of the week, distinguished from all others by the light of His glory as risen from the dead. Not the sabbath of the law, but that first day which His saints at once were led, and loved to connect with His name as Lord after His resurrection (Luke xxiv., John xx.).

In Patmos, then, the place of the saint in suffering, John is summoned to behold the glory of Him for whom he suffered. How the heart is bowed at the thought of this! Would that all His suffering witnesses had the eye thus directed to Him for whom they suffer, and their heart thus filled with His love.

But is it not worthy of note, that in chap. v. when John is in heaven, where there is no suffering, the vision of the Lord is, "*A Lamb as it had been slain?*" As though suffering had only left its marks on Him who suffered, the Just for the unjust. There is no trace of suffering on those who surround Him, the trophies of His redeeming love, "brands plucked out of the fire."

Here we may lose sight of His glory, as well as of His grace. There, blessed be God! we can never lose sight of either.

"While here, alas! I know *but half* His love,
But half discern Him, and *but half* adore;
 But when I meet Him in the realms above,
 I then shall love Him better praise Him more;
 And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,
 How fully I am His, and He is mine."

W. B.

THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL.

THE cross of Christ is the standing witness of what man's heart is towards God. Jew and Gentile, priest and people, king and subject, were gathered around that cross, and united with Satan in crucifying the Lord of life and glory.

But in place of this crowning act of man's wickedness shutting the door of heaven against the rebellious race, grace opens it wider than ever. The blood of the cross became the righteous ground in the boundless love of God for the richer display of His grace. Every covenant promise and blessing of the long-privileged Jew was now forfeited for ever; every mouth was closed, and the whole world became guilty before God—guilty of the death of His beloved Son. What was now to be done? If man's guilt is to be measured and estimated by the cross of Christ, what must the judgment be? It was no longer a question of law-breaking merely, but of the murder of the sinless One. Thus stood all mankind without one solitary claim on the compassion of God; but mercy, as at the threshing-floor of Arnon the Jebusite, "*rejoiced against judgment.*" "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound—that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans v. 20, 21.)

This is the gospel of the grace of God—the good news that *grace reigns*. Sovereign grace, no doubt, has always been God's ground of blessing for the sinner, through the foreseen sacrifice of Calvary; but its full, unhindered, unmeasured outflow, awaited the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. All partition walls were then broken down; all barriers removed. The cross was thus the great crisis in the world's history, and the moral centre of all the ways of God. His relationships with man were all changed from this time. The long period of man's probation closed

in the cross. He was now declared to be a lost sinner, guilty of the blood of Jesus, condemned already, and shut up to grace or judgment.

This gives a peculiar solemnity to the preaching of the gospel; the issues of life and death, heaven and hell, are involved in its proclamation. "For we are unto God," says the apostle, "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). This weighty and solemn truth is known to all Christians, and should lead all to watch and care for the salvation of immortal souls. True, all are not evangelists in the sense of being public preachers, but all may evangelise by saying a word for the heart or conscience as the Lord gives opportunity. All that is needed for such a work is love for souls—a love which acts in harmony with the heart of Christ. This is the best gift of the evangelist. Millions of souls will be in heaven at last, and swell the song of the redeemed, who were brought to know the Lord by a word fitly spoken, by personal conversation and prayer. All-important as the ministry of the word to Christians most surely is, it is never a question of life and death.

The Lord has His special workers for the different departments of His service, yet ALL may seek to win souls for Christ. He who said, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep;" also said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and "COMPEL them to come in that my house may be filled." And the great apostle, who cared for the flock of Christ as none since have done, could say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" And again, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." And, with his latest breath,

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he exhorts his son Timothy to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel;" and charges him to "do the work of an evangelist" (Acts xx. 24; Luke xiv. 23; 1 Corinthians ix. 16; 2 Timothy i. 8, iv. 5.)

"It is an unhealthy symptom," says one, "when the simple gospel is not relished. It shows that the mind is at work, rather than the conscience exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. The Spirit, who leads into all truth, connects everything in His teaching with those great primary truths, the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ." There are not a few, alas, in our own day who are affected with this *unhealthy symptom*. "It is only the gospel," say some, especially those who assume a high tone of spirituality, and who speak slightly of earnest gospel workers.

But whatever may be our individual thoughts of the gospel, we are bound to think of it according to the word of the Lord and for the sake of the unsaved. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36). Here the blessed Master assures all His servants that one human soul is of more value than the whole material world. And can it be a light thing in His sight for any of His servants to be indifferent to the means of the eternal well-being of that which is so precious to Him? Did He not commend in the highest way the zeal of the *four men* who brought, in spite of every difficulty, the palsied man and laid him at His feet? "When he saw *their* faith"—not *his*—"he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven" (Mark ii.). We want such zeal now, in connection with all our preaching-rooms—earnest hearts that would bring in faith poor palsied souls to the place where the Spirit of God is working. Such zeal is sure to meet its bright reward. In no other way can a preacher be so helped and encouraged. He who honoured the faith of the *four* then is unchanged and honours such faith now.

A great responsibility thus rests with all who know the gospel—the glad tidings of salvation to the lost. To hold back this truth, or in any way to hinder its full and free proclamation, is to rob the sinner of his only hope of heaven, and Christ of His special glory as the Saviour. “It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” What dignity and glory this gives to the gospel! It is nothing less than the power of God—“the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe; according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” Such are the marvellous results of the blessed mission of the gospel of the grace of God. It raises all who receive it from the depths of their guilt and misery, and sets them in the presence of God, pardoned and accepted in the Beloved.

This is the gospel which the Lord has committed to His servants; or, as Paul expresses it, “According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Tim. i. 11). Unspeakable privilege! Solemn responsibility! To be commissioned by the Lord Himself to proclaim that gospel, far and near, which is the highest display of the divine glory in the richest display of sovereign grace to man. Exodus xxxiii. 18, 19.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke iv. 18, 19.

A. M.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

AS SET FORTH IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER the Lord had vindicated and honoured his servant John, He turns to give them the character they had earned by their treatment both of John and of Himself. And what is this, but a telling us that man is a creature whom God cannot cure? God had now been making full proof of him, addressing him by different ministries, but man had no answer for God. When He mourned to him, man had no tears; when He piped to him, he had no dancing. The human heart was found to be no instrument for the finger of God. All was out of tune where God tried it. Intelligence, and zeal, and action, are there at the bidding and awakening of other influences, but nothing was there for God. He would have raised a solemn tone by the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking, and then a more joyous one by the social Son of man; but there was no music in the heart of man for God. This was now proved after the trial of the most skillful hands, for all these attempts had been so proving the skill of the player, that wisdom stood "justified of her children." For what could have been done more than had been done? "I have piped to you, and ye have not danced; I have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented."

But after this solemn word, our Evangelist leads us to another scene; the house of a Pharisee where the Lord had gone, upon invitation to dine. For our Lord, in this Gospel, is eminently the *social* one;

not social, however, as a servant in order to meet objects for His care and tendance, but social as a man in order to converse with men. Therefore we find Him here as I have already noticed, more frequently than in the other Gospels, seated at meat in the house of others, be they who they may, for there He could find the mind more relaxed and free to show itself.

Now this scene in the Pharisee's house is one of great moral value. It shows us that nothing rightly or really introduces us to Jesus but our sin. Admiration of Him as a Teacher, or as a doer of miracles, will never throw us across His path according to God. It is only sin and the sense of it than can really introduce us to the Son of God, for He is a Saviour, and sent to us of the blessed God as such. Nicodemus was led to Him as a doer of mighty works ; but Nicodemus must be born again, must get other thoughts of Him, ere he can duly go to Him. So here, this Pharisee. It is clear that it was not as a sinner he knew Him. He had been attracted, amiably attracted too, by something which he had seen or heard in Him, and he prepares Him a feast. But there is another in the house who reaches Him by a different path altogether. She is a sinner of the city, and her sin brings her to Him, and she prepares another feast for Him, and it is at her feast and not at the Pharisee's that the Lord really seats Himself. Her tears and ointment and kisses are the feast at which the Son of God here sits, while all the costlier provision of the host is passed by.

This is very blessed. It is the sinner who really provides the feast and the company for Jesus. Neither the table nor the friends of the Pharisee were quite the thing for Him. It is only the faith of a sinner

apprehending Him as the Saviour, that can spread a table for the Son of God in this wilderness world. And I observe that in every place where the conversion of Levi the publican is recorded, we are told immediately afterwards, that he prepared meat for the Lord in his own house. For he was one of those whom Jesus came down from the bright heavens to visit. He was a publican, an owned and published sinner in the world, and Jesus was the Saviour. The faith of such, therefore, opened the door and entertained Him, made Him welcome in His own proper character, while everything else could really but keep Him outside still.

It is indeed our joy to know this and believe it. And when we begin as sinners with a Saviour, our journey is wonderful and glorious beyond all thought, for our sin leads us to Christ, and then Christ leads us to the Father. And what a path that is! It stretches all along from the darkest and most distant places of creation, where sin and death reign, up to the highest heavens where love and glory dwell and shine for ever. Angels have their own untainted sphere to move in, but they have never trod such a path as this. The Church passes from a sinner's darkness into God's marvellous light, and there has been nothing like that, and none but a sinner conscious of the value of the Son of God can understand it. And I see from this striking scene, that this character of a sinner saved by the grace of the Son of God is remembered to the very end. This woman loved much, but her love did not serve her as a sinner at all, for at the end the Lord says to her "*thy faith* (not *thy love*) hath saved thee, go in peace." This is much to be observed by us all, for it is very comforting. The

fruit of our love may be honoured before others, as here this poor woman's tears and ointment are owned before the Pharisee. A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward, if given for love to Christ. But before the conscience of the sinner nothing is owned, but the blood and the faith that rests in it, as here. It is faith and not love that sends us on our way with the Eunuch rejoicing, or bids us with this poor woman to go in peace. And sweet it is thus to be cast on Jesus, and on Him only. Let the soul be as elevated, the walk as bright and unspotted, and the love as glowing as they may be, let the experience be as rich and various as David's or Paul's, yet Jesus, Jesus, is the only Saviour. He first sends away in peace, and the *first* confidence and joy is to be kept firm to the *end*.

But I cannot close this part of our Gospel or quit this house of the Pharisee, fruitful spot as it is, without another look at it. For it seems to me to have been a place where the great conflict which has been often fought, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, or between the two wives, the bondwoman and the free, was again witnessed.

By transgression, such as Adam's, the creature assumed strength independent of God, and therefore in restoring him, God must teach him that He alone is sovereign, and that all creature strength must fail. And this is the lesson which the law and the Gospel together teach : for the law, testing man, showed the vanity of confidence in flesh ; the Gospel revealing God, shows the safety of the soul that trusts in Him. And the mystery of the two wives teaches the same. Hagar had strength in the flesh, but her seed was not the heir. Leah had strength and title in the flesh,

but her son did not excel, but lost the birthright. Peninnah had strength in the flesh, but no child of her's delivered Israel out of their misery and oppression. But on the other hand, all blessing and honour lay with the children of promise. Isaac caused laughter, and was he in whom Abraham's house was established. Joseph got the birthright, and as soon as he was born, Jacob spoke of returning to his inheritance, for "if children, then heirs." Samuel filled the mother's heart and lips with a song, and was nourished up till he lifted Israel from the dust, regained the glory out of the hand of the enemy, and raised the stone of help in the midst of the camp. And all these things teach us, as the law and the Gospel teach us, that "by strength shall no man prevail." The rich are sent empty away, the bows of the mighty are broken, but the poor handmaid is remembered, and she that was barren bears seven.

This is the lesson which God is teaching us; the necessary lesson in a world like this of ours, where the creature has departed from God in pride; in the assumption of strength, affecting to be God. The Lord God is ever therefore saying, "not by might nor by power, but by My spirit."

But man refuses to learn this needful lesson. In the strong assertion of the truth of it, the Lord says by His prophet, "I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, and laid his mountain and his heritage waste." Esau then in the pride and confidence of the flesh answers, "We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places." But God will by no means allow this in the flesh, or let man boast himself, and therefore He replies again to Esau, "they shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them the

border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever" (Mal. i.).

This is the conflict in this world of ours; and that which is of flesh or of man has ever struggled with that which is of God or of the Spirit. And this struggle we have had exhibited to us from very old time, and have it still. The house of the two wives, to which I have referred, constantly presented it. That of Abraham witnessed it. There Hagar and Sarah for a season dwelt together, but in sad discord and strife. Again the family of Jacob presented the same. Leah had the right of the flesh or of the first-born, but Rachel was the object of election and delight; and they two, the wives of the same husband, dwelt together, but between them there was again the same disturbance, upbraidings, and annoy. Elkanah's house was the same. Peninnah and Hannah were the Hagar and Sarah, the Leah and Rachel, again—pride and provocations from the one, and constant sorrow of heart from the other. And all these scenes were the expressions of the way in which the flesh persecutes the Spirit. And of the same struggle the Church in Galatia was the scene; and the heart of each believer is likely still to be the same every day of our journey here; and nothing heals the house, the Church, or the heart, but strengthening the freewoman, giving fruitfulness to the seed of God, the Spirit of adoption, the principle of child-like holy liberty in us and among us. Bring forth Isaac, and then send away Ishmael, and dwell in an undivided house. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

J. G. B.

(To be continued.)

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

The special character of a gospel may be seen by considering—

(1) The facts or discourses, the parables or miracles found in it which do not occur in the other gospels.

(2) Those absent from it which are found in the others. And—

(3) The different way in which the Evangelist records a circumstance which has also its place in other gospels.

(1) The gospel of John is so strikingly unlike the others that by far the larger part of it consists of teaching and events not recorded in them. The whole of the first eleven chapters is peculiar to John with the exception of the early part of the sixth chapter, where the Lord feeds the five thousand, prays alone on the mountain, and then follows the disciples, walking on the sea. In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters there are points in which the history approaches portions in the other evangelists, but nowhere is the character of John's gospel more strongly marked than in these two chapters. The whole of the discourses of chapters xiv., to xvi., and the prayer in chapter xvii., are recorded in John alone. The interviews of the Lord with Mary and with Thomas in chapter xx., and the whole of chapter xxi. are, in like manner, peculiar to the gospel before us.

How blessedly we are called to learn in all this that it is indeed as the Word of God, with God (and Himself God) from all eternity; as the Son who is in the

bosom of the Father that the Lord Jesus is before us in these pages! In the first chapter the Spirit of God bears direct and formal testimony to this His personal glory. He bears the same witness through John the Baptist and through Nathanael. In the second chapter He is the Son, vindicating the honour of His Father in His house. His person, moreover, is the temple where God dwells. Deep humiliation in perfect grace in the third chapter! Yet is He "the only begotten Son of God," "from above" and "above all;" and if "Son of man," He is "the Son of man which is in heaven," though before the eyes of Nicodemus upon earth. Piercing, searching Word of God is He in the fourth chapter, though "weary with His journey, and saying, "Give me to drink!" It is the Father who seeks worshippers, yet it is in *the person of the Lord Jesus* that we are privileged to see Him at this wondrous work. And *who* gives the Holy Ghost as the living source of deepest inward refreshment and purest abiding joy? It is Jesus. He, too, is the "man which told" the poor woman "all that ever she did." More than a prophet, He is the "Word of God." In chapter v. the Son has life in Himself, and quickens whom He will. His sovereign voice reaches the spiritually dead, and they that hear live. It will sound to the depths of the deepest grave and they "that are in the graves shall come forth;" some unto the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of judgment. All judgment is given to Him, "that all men should honour the Son, *even as* they honour the Father." Need we go further to illustrate the way in which Christ is presented in this gospel?

(2) We learn scarcely less by that which is absent when we would know divinely the character of one of

these histories. Most of the striking features in the other gospels are absent from this. Among these some of the more prominent are: The Lord's birth, genealogy, and circumcision; His baptism and temptation; His transfiguration, and the solemn events of His last journey to Jerusalem. No discourse furnished by the other evangelists is given here, and no miracle recorded by them save the feeding of the five thousand.

What instruction as to the scope of our gospel is here! The first three of these circumstances have reference clearly to the humanity of the Lord Jesus, whether in that humanity He is Son of David (Matt.), Servant of God (Mark), or distinctively Son of Man (Luke). Here, however, His *divine* glories shine out. True, "the word was made flesh," and it is with Him as such that our Evangelist has chiefly to do. Had He not been made flesh, we could not have beheld His glory "as of the only begotten of the Father." But in this His glory unspeakable, He had neither birth nor genealogy. Circumcision, important where His Jewish rights are in question, and even where the deep reality of His manhood is brought out, has no place here, and could have none. The baptism and the transfiguration may be looked upon as the two ends of the active service of His life, before His service in death becomes the prominent subject. At both points it was the Father's good pleasure and joy to acknowledge Him. Both events are recorded in all the other gospels. The Messiah, the Servant, the Son of Man began His course among those who were confessing their sins, and was singled out by the Spirit of God, and a voice from heaven which owned Him as "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was

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meet! And it was as meet that in all these forms of love which He had taken He should be wrapped at the close in the cloud of Jehovah's presence, and acknowledged in and from the excellent glory as still and ever "My beloved Son." After "six days" of toil the Son of David and Son of Man comes in His glory. Nay, the path of His life leads Him before He suffers for sin into the glory itself.

But neither event finds a place in the Gospel of John. The testimony of John the Baptist is, indeed, recorded, that he "saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on Him," and that "the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Blessed testimony wherever recorded! Divinely in season where our God unfolds the essential glory of Him who reveals the depths of His being, and makes known the Father's name. Well may the Baptist add here what he says nowhere else, "I saw, and bear record that this is the SON OF GOD!"

(3) Here, again, for an humble and earnest disciple is the richest instruction as to the purpose of God in the history before us. The anointing of the Lord at Bethany is one of the few incidents given here, which are recorded in other gospels; Gethsemane, too, the Cross and the resurrection.

That Mary anointed both the head and the feet of the Lord we know, for the Word says so. Matthew and Mark tell of the head, and John of the feet being anointed. In John, the worshipper reverently approaches His feet and spreads her costly ointment there. Though, "made flesh," He is the Word of God, the only begotten of the Father. In Matthew, the royal Messiah, owned only by faith, is anointed close to His future capital; as David was anointed a

little further away long before it was said, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." In Mark, the servant—rejected in the service of His life—is just entering upon the service of his death (Phil. ii. 8). Faith owns Him, and anoints fittingly His holy head. "She is come aforehand, to anoint My body to the burying."

The unspeakable dignity which characterises the whole bearing of the Lord on the terrible night in which he was betrayed is most impressive. It serves, too, to bring into striking and solemn relief the other side, equally true, equally blessed, so vividly portrayed in Luke. The thrice-repeated prayer is not recorded here. No sweat, "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" but rather "the cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it?" "I AM" is there in glory which—veiled though it is—casts His enemies to the ground. "I AM" is there to give Himself up for the doing the Father's will; there, too, to screen those whom the Father had given Him: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way."

When He draws near to the cross it is with heart-stirring words, "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do." When He is "lifted up" no cry of bitter agony "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Nor is darkness spoken of. The Lord is here a whole burnt offering. All is for His Father. His will must be done, His word fulfilled: "I thirst." Perfect in *divine* knowledge the Lord can declare, "It is finished." Who but *He* could have said it? "It is finished," and then He (not "expires" as Luke records of the Man Christ Jesus, but) "delivered up His spirit."

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In resurrection He who had been in life down here, Word of God, and Son of the Father, sends to His "brethren" the message, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Precious words from the lips of the risen Jesus! And so fitting His grace and the value of His work! The "*Word of God*" has made *God* known, and now places the disciples in presence of a known God to enjoy Him as their God. The "*Son of God*" has declared the *Father's* name. He declares it now anew in resurrection. His Father is theirs!

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 CHAPTER II.

(12.) The eye of faith is now called to the vision itself, and I beseech the reader to allow his to rest upon it. Let us seek, with reverence of heart and confidence in God, to follow the prophet. He *turned* to see who summoned him. Was it that he, whose theme had been so characteristically grace, is now to testify of judgment? And is it a key to the meaning of the name given of the Lord to him and his martyred brother, "Boanerges, Sons of *thunder*;" the one in Jerusalem, closing the testimony to that favoured city,* the other outside all closing it to the church and to the world?

The vision is of seven candlesticks, yet (save an application of the symbol in chap. ii. 5), there is no direct statement to identify the seven candlesticks

* (In acts xiii. the Holy Ghost sends out apostles not from Jerusalem but from a Greek city).

seen, exclusively with the seven churches named. The vision appears purposely left in this abstract way. Seven indicates completeness, and golden that which is of God.

Historically the disciples of our Lord, gathered to Him as Messiah on earth, passed out of their condition and status as Jews after His ascension to the right hand of God, by the coming of the Holy Ghost. They became the church, and with the Gentiles brought in, became the responsible light bearers during the absence of the Lord. Local churches were formed, God giving increase, and these were owned as one in testimony. "God's building" (1 Cor. iii.).

The end proposed in the church was a company for Christ, fitted in sovereign grace to be with Him in glory, and that for ever. Has the church answered in character and aim to this, or, as a public body has it completely and utterly failed, and can any be aroused in it to their true position and calling? Who, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, can judge as to what is fitting in such a company, and who that longs, as of it, to be true in heart, earnest in purpose, and upright in way, will not desire "an ear to hear" His judgment?

Completeness, then, and that of God, *for testimony worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ during His absence*, seems to be the thought conveyed by the symbol "seven golden candlesticks." That is, the church in God's mind, for God's object; the vessel of light in the midst of darkness. The seven churches addressed give a complete picture of the decline, fall and judgment of this vessel of light, but between the two we have the vision of the *glory of the Lord*. One fears to weaken, by any comment, the deeply solemn impres-

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sion which this vision must give to any who can say with Paul, "Jesus Christ *my Lord*." The reader will do well to gaze for himself. Thoughts will arise beyond what another can give.

(13.) As Son of Man, universal dominion is His. (Ps. viii). "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." "*All judgment is committed to him.*" As clothed and girded He is perfectly fitted for government. "He has loved righteousness and hated iniquity," and "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." "He that judgeth *me* is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv.).

(14.) He is none other than the Everlasting God. The disposer of all rule and all authority; not only as man set over all, but as God blessed for ever. (Dan. vii. 9, Rom ix. 5).

His eyes are purer than to behold iniquity, (Habakkuk i. 13.) they also search it out and consume it in judgment.

(15.) His feet display His firmness in dealing with evil (comp. Mal. iv. 3), and His voice as the voice of the Almighty (Ezek. i. 24) in majesty and power. In special connection with the churches He sustains the stars—a symbol explained in verse 20, and wields the sword, the word of God, that uncompromisingly deals with all that is of the flesh; judging the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and bringing all that we might seek to cover over (and oh! how much we would), into the very light of God. "His countenance was as the *Sun shineth in his strength*."

In helpful connection with this vision it is well to read the tenfold description of the Lord in the Canticles. The bride (for earth and earthly glory) sees all beauty in Her beloved. The figures throughout are

most beautiful. And such is the unparalleled worth of Christ to those who know Him. "*Yea he is altogether lovely!*" This is my beloved, and this is my friend." In the Revelation the glory is of another sort. May we be able to gaze upon it. Nothing will be withered up but that which dishonours Him, and distresses us. Nothing, but that which *the prince of this world* can use against us to seduce or weaken our souls, and draw us back to whence we came out.

But the prophet has recorded his own experience in the presence of this revelation of the glory of Christ. "And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." He who had been with the Lord on the holy mount, who was privileged to lean on His bosom, who received His dying injunction at the cross, must learn, in his own soul and for himself, how solemn, how heart-searching is the presence of the Lord in judgment.

Oh! needful lesson for this day. Exposure of evil is not the service of the undisciplined soul, yet how many judge themselves as always ready for such work.

Not so Isaiah (chap. vi.). He must know *himself* ere he could be a fitting instrument to deal with others. Not so John. He must know the searching eyes, as a flame of fire, the sovereign majesty and authority of His countenance, and be conscious of his own personal nothingness, and indebtedness to sovereign sustaining grace, before he can be used to disclose the multitudinous forms of evil, as seen by Him whose servant he is.

What sorrow should we be spared if, in dealing with failure in others, we ourselves were, as these prophets, in the Lord's presence. How much may be within ourselves which He alone can restrain. At such a moment let each one challenge himself as to

the spirit in which he deals with evil. Remember Moses and the water of Meribah (Num. xx.). How unlike that same honoured servant when, in the Tabernacle of the Congregation, the Lord talked with him. Then his constant plea was, "Consider that this nation is *thy* people" (Ex. xxxiii.). Ah! that is the truth to be borne in mind, "*Thy people.*"

Isaiah proved the deep resources of grace that put away his iniquity at once by the live coal from off the altar; and John, when the sentence of death was the suited experience of his soul, had all fear taken away by the immediate ministry of grace from the Lord Himself. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and of hades."

Such an anchor to the soul is He who thus brings the light of eternity to bear upon all the enigmas of time. What are Satan, sin, the world, flesh, death—yea every enemy—in the presence of the Lord; of Him who in His own person, the everlasting God, is before them all, and will be after all, when every enemy shall be subdued to Him? (1 Cor. xv.). Oh, to remember that we are nothing. He is all, and rest there. And yet, in order to rest, there must be more. Redeeming love alone can raise the fallen servant. He, the First and the Last, *became dead!* By the grace of God He *tasted death*. Though "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," yet He had to say, "Thou hast brought me to the dust of death." The dark waters of Jordan are thus dried up; and, instead of a terror, become the peaceful entrance into the perfect light and

joy of the Lord's presence in heaven. What momentous consequences result from His victory.

Every believer in Him can look on with unbroken confidence, not only to the resurrection of life, but to the actual passage through death, if so appointed; and to the intermediate state, for He, and He alone, has the keys of death and of hades. Death, in His hands, is "giving to His beloved sleep;" dissolving the link for ever with pain, and weariness, and sorrow. Hades is, for the departed spirit, *paradise* with Christ. Precious prospect for each individual believer, yet in no wise dimming the common hope of all, the hope of His coming.

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks," may raise many questions; and, like Zechariah, when he was awakened to see the one candlestick all of gold, we may have to confess to much ignorance (Zech. iv. 4, 5). But so far the mystery is unfolded. The seven candlesticks are seven churches. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

The two symbols then clearly indicate—

First. Surrounding darkness—The world.

Second. Suitable light-holders—The candlesticks.

Third. Suitable light-givers—The stars.

The churches are seen in their responsibility to the world, to the perishing souls around them. They are set for this purpose on the earth—to give light. What light, what testimony do they afford?

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles we may learn much as to their formation, and the care bestowed upon them, but in the Revelation the conscience is directly appealed to. If there is no suited testimony, the candlestick must be taken away.

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Warnings are given, and much patience manifested ; but if, after all, there is no repentance and recovery, God will no longer own in the earth, as His witness, that which has utterly failed of the object for which it was formed ; and those who are responsible for the failure *will be judged forth their part in it*. The stars set forth the individuals of the Churches, who are responsible to the Lord for the actual condition of them. The light-givers in connection with Him (stars "rule by night," and "give light by night,") must be examined as to the light they give. Two things are said of the seven stars to be devoutly noted. Christ has them (iii. 1), and holds them in His right hand (ii. 8). What a perfect, what a divine system of light and order if every individual of the Churches had taken heed to the holy exhortations of the Spirit (Phil. ii. 14, 15), and been thus a light-giver to the world. But what if those who compose the churches, and *responsible*, grow indifferent and careless, can He who would have sustained them be indifferent, too ? Impossible. He addresses them, not as *stars*, but as they actually present themselves to His eye. The word "angel" is not in Scripture confined to spiritual beings. We read of the angel of the Lord, the angel of the covenant, Peter's angel, and the angels of little children.

If the thought intended to be conveyed in these, and similar places where the word *angel* is used, is—*the representative*—then those who represent and are responsible for the state of the assembly are addressed under this appellation. If so, who in an assembly can escape ? The Spirit speaks to the Churches ; but the individuals in each are informed of the Lord's judgment of their state, while "he that hath an ear to hear" will alone profit by the address. It was so

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when the Lord was on earth. The grand mark of distinction between the followers of Jesus and the apostate nation was having an ear to hear. As He said to them: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

God grant to us, dear reader, to have grace, like Mary, to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear His word. Let no one, whatever their pretensions, steal the ear from Him.

"O! may we, as faithful brethren,
Mourn the wide-spread ruin round;
Sigh o'er all our sad condition,
While we still maintain our ground.
Present victors! Present victors!
Ever in our Conqueror found."

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SEVENFOLD VIRTUE OF THE BLOOD.

1. REDEMPTION. In whom we have REDEMPTION through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins. (Col. i. 14.)
2. JUSTIFICATION. Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Rom. v. 9.)
3. SANCTIFICATION. Jesus also, that He might SANCTIFY the people with His own Blood, suffered without the camp. (Heb. xiii. 12.)
4. PEACE. Having made PEACE through the Blood of His Cross. (Col. i. 20.)
5. MADE NIGH. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are MADE NIGH by the Blood of Christ. (Ep. ii. 13.)
6. KEPT NIGH. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus. (Heb. x. 19.)

7. VICTORIOUS. And they OVERCAME him by the Blood of the Lamb. (Rev. xii. 11.) And have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. (Rev. vii. 14.)

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

SEVEN APOSTOLIC COMMANDMENTS.

1. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, WALK ye in Him. Rooted and built up in Him. (Col. ii. 6, 7.)

2. WALK in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. (Gal. v. 16.)

3. WALK in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. (Ephes. v. 2.)

4. And this is love, that we WALK after His commandments. (2 John 6.) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. (1 John v. 3.)

5. See then that ye WALK circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. (Ephes. v. 15, 16.)

6. Now are ye light in the Lord: WALK as children of light: proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. (Ephes. v. 8-10.)

7. WALK worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col. i. 10; Eph. iv. 1, 2.)

He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked. (1 John ii. 6.)

SEVEN NOWS.

1. The now of Calvary: now once in the end of the world (age) hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. ix. 26.)

2. The now of Resurrection: now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. (1 Cor. xv. 20.)

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3. The now of Salvation: now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation. (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

4. The now of No Condemnation: now there is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

(Rom. viii. 1.)

5. The now of Nearness: now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ephes. ii. 13.)

6. The now of Sonship: now are we the Sons of God. (1 John iii. 2.)

7. The now of Intercession: now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Heb. ix. 24.)

NOW unto Him that is able to keep us 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.)

SEVEN PRECIOUS THINGS.

1. None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is PRECIOUS. (Psalm xlix. 7, 8.)

2. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. . . . but with the PRECIOUS blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Peter i. 18, 19.)

3. PRECIOUS faith with us through the righteousness of God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter i. 1.)

4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and PRECIOUS promises. (2 Peter i. 4.)

5. How PRECIOUS also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! (Psalm cxxxix. 17.)

6. Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a PRECIOUS corner stone, a sure foundation. (Isaiah xxviii. 16.)

7. PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. (Psalm cxvi. 15.)

Unto you therefore which believe He is precious. Amen. (1 Peter ii. 7.)

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

CHAPTER VII.—(*continued*).

Now the Lord found Israel very much the same scene. That which was born after the flesh, persecuted that which was born after the Spirit. The poor barren woman was found there again, the tainted sinner or the publican, weak and lost in themselves, receiving the gracious visitation of the God of all power and love, but suffering the scorn and persecution of those who had strength in themselves, as they judged, the Pharisees, the Hagar and Peninnahs of that day. This was all in principle the flesh and the Spirit again, the bondwoman and the free; and this house which we have now been visiting was a sample of this. But, O beloved, may our faith be strengthened to do justice to God's love. That love claims our full and happy confidence. To render it only a diffident and suspicious trust is to treat it unworthily. May all such spirit of fear and bondage be gone. May the true Sarah in our hearts from henceforth cry out, and cry till it prevail, "cast out the bondwoman and her son." For when the Lord does His work, He does it in a way worthy of Himself. When Israel came out of Egypt, they came out not as though they were ashamed of themselves, but *harnessed* and *full handed*. They came out, as the host of God should go out. Not a dog dared to move his tongue at them, nor was there one feeble person among their tribes. And so with us sinners going forth from under the power of darkness with our Redeemer. We are not to go forth with fear and suspicion, as though we could hardly trust the arm that was saving us; but in such a way

as will give all reason to know, that the work is the work of Him, "whose love is as great as His power, and neither knows measure or end." We are to leave the Pharisee's house behind us, like this poor sinner, not minding what the company there say, but bearing the sweet echo of the Lord's voice which tells us of peace, still upon our heart and ear. Then we shall go forth, like Israel from Egypt, as the redeemed of the Lord ought to go, letting hell and earth know, in our joyous and perfect assurance of His salvation, that He who is higher than the highest is on our side, and that we are feeding upon "the Mighty's meat."

VIII.—This is the first of a series of chapters, in which we see *the Lord, the twelve, and the seventy*, in succession going forth to minister (see viii. 1; ix. 1; x. 1). And this extended exhibition of ministry is all according to the grace of the Spirit in this Gospel; and as a further expression of the same grace our Evangelist here tells us, that the Lord went "throughout every city and village"—no spot was unvisited by his light and goodness. And this divine minister of grace is here attended by a suitable train. A company of poor sinners, who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and cleansed of devils, follow Him now to witness His *grace*, as by and by when He comes forth in power, He will have behind Him an equally suited train of shining ones to reflect His *glory* (Rev. xix. 14).

Our Evangelist then records the parable of the sower, given to us also, we know, by both Matthew and Mark. No doubt it has the same general character and purpose in each Gospel, but I observe that the Lord here is not so careful, by directly quoting the prophet Isaiah, to apply the judgment of God to

Israel, as He is in the other Evangelists, and this is still according to His mind in St. Luke.

In the progress of this chapter, we get the case of the Gadarenes, of the woman with the issue of blood, and of Jairus' daughter, combined in the same way in St. Mark also. But I would meditate a little upon them as thus combined, for I judge there is much teaching in them.

Gadara was a portion of the Jewish or sanctified earth. It was within that land on which the eyes of the God of heaven and earth would fain have rested from one end of the year to the other (Deut. xi.). But the unclean had long since entered that land and defiled it, and there we find them at this time in herds, as also the full display of the enemy's unbridled strength. Legion and the swine were in Gadara, to tell us what the place of Jehovah's choice had now become. It was indeed the very palace of the strong man, but the Son of God now enters as the stronger man to do His proper work, to show Himself the redeemer of the captive, and the destruction of the power of death. But the feeders of the unclean swine in that place are not prepared for this, it was a trespass on them, and they would have Jesus depart from their coasts. Nothing that we see in all the history of the Gospel, gives us such an expression of the dark and unclean region of Satan as this. With such a display of the grace and power of the stronger Man in the midst of them, still they desire Him not, but would sell all their interest in the Son of God for a herd of swine.

This was very awful, and Jesus has but to leave them and to return across the lake of Galilee to pursue His way in other scenes. A Jewish ruler seeks Him

that He would come to his house in behalf of his little only daughter who there lay a dying. He goes onward with the purpose of proving Himself, in the house of the Jew, the resurrection and the life; but His path thither is interrupted by the faith of a needy stranger who touches Him in the crowd. She had a plague in her body. It was a kind of fretting leprosy, a fountain of uncleanness in her very flesh, which no skill of man could heal. But in her extremity she hears of Jesus, and now by a single touch gets all that she needed.

But no one knew her or cared to know her. Both herself and her touching the Lord would have remained a secret in the busy crowd, but that He who heals her knows her and owns her before them all. The multitude was thronging and pressing Him, but it was not need or sin that urged them, and therefore He feels it not. But her fainter touch was felt, because it was the touch of a consciously needy and defiled one, who had learnt to believe that there was virtue in Him. Her sorrow introduces her to Him, and He knows her because He healed her. This was the ground and the character of their acquaintance; and the Son of God and the healed sinner thus meet together to be alone in the crowd, she a stranger to all but Him, and He treating as strangers all but her.

(To be continued.)

"THAT SIGH AND THAT CRY."

AN EXTRACT.

IF that which bears upon it the Lord's name in our day, is looked upon by any as in any sense the Lord's house or responsible for His glory: Have such hearts

to sigh and to cry (Ezek. ix.) for the worldliness, and carnality, and idolatry found in it—have they hearts as loving it, to fall on the face and intercede for it that the mouldering and crumbling away which is going on in it may be stayed? . . . Do I indeed sigh and cry for the state of that which is dear to God upon earth? Do I love the members of Christ's body, the Church, and intercede for them amid the desolations around?

No hard spirit of judging others—no using of the light of prophecy for individual self-exaltation and contempt of others, are consistent with such a position. Entire separation from the evil (from the spirit as well as the practice of it) is imperative—is but self-preservative—when the Lord's judgments are in hand: but if we have Christ's Spirit—while we purge ourselves from all idolatry (1 John v. 23); while we seek to bring every high and lofty imagination into captivity (2 Cor. x. 4); while we guard, with all anxiety, against human plans, human energy, and every energy save the Divine, let the heart be free to pour forth earnest affections and feelings; let it be large and tender—if it might be so, as large and tender as was the blessed Lord's in His day. I speak not for the sake of the effect upon others; but for our own sakes, and for the sake of the honour and glory of the God whose we are, and whom we serve, and for the name's sake both of our Lord Jesus who has called us, and of His Spirit who leads us.

I fear greatly we are not sufficiently clear from the evil our own selves, to have the full display of the broken spirit of the sigher and cryer—of the zeal of the servant of the Lord.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

I.—THE Spirit of God begins this precious testimony to the personal glory of the Lord Jesus abruptly. The writer, whose heart He forms for it, and whose pen He uses, does not name himself—does not tell us who he is. His theme is uppermost. This is impressive. It is intended to impress us. The subject is not only important; it is urgent. The person of Christ is the foundation, a *sure* one, thank God! He is the chief Corner Stone of all that God builds; the Head-stone, too, which, shortly, “He shall bring forth with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!” Here, indeed, are other glories, but they are associated with, and dependent upon the divine glory of this first chapter.

The *Word* had no beginning, for He was present at the beginning of whatever began. The Word was truly and properly a *person*: He was *with* God. That person was divine in the most absolute sense: “the Word was God.”

Thus, in one short, striking, decisive verse, our God declares the divine and eternal glory of the One in whom He speaks to us. Blessed Rock of Ages for our feet! Sure foundation of brightest hopes to come, of unclouded favour now! “We beheld His glory”—a glory too bright and too real to be obscured to the eye of faith by the lowly grace in which He came. The One who was “meek and lowly in heart” is the Eternal God. The humble grace casts no shade upon the exalted glory, but is sweeter and more tender in its steady, unflickering light.

It is *in time* that the Apostles actually, and that we, by faith, "have heard, have seen with our eyes, have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." But the Word of God did not become such *in time*, as some have falsely and irreverently thought. Miserable fruit of human reasoning! "The same was in the beginning with God." There was a moment when the first creature "began" to be. At that moment the Word was with God. Alas for the deductions of the mind of man! It cannot, "by searching, find out God." But whilst man reasons and never "finds out," faith receives the word of God, knows only what He says, but knows this as "taught of God." Whilst the natural man questions and speculates, but never knows and never rests, the simple soul to whom God has spoken "knows and believes," finds its rest and home in "the deep things of God."

But not only was the Word thus "in the beginning with God." It was He who called the first creature—*every* creature—into being. The things that we see, and those we cannot see, every object and every power in the universe of God, every throne and dominion, all principalities and powers, all in heaven and all on earth owe their being to Him. Well might the beloved disciple, as prophet in Patmos, fall at His feet as one dead! And as well might that lofty One lay His right hand upon him and bid him, "Fear not!" He is, indeed, the Living One, but He has been dead. Majesty and glory are His—His in His very being, and His in every place He has taken, and in every work He has wrought. But they are now His, that He may lay His right hand upon us, that He may say in delivering grace "fear not." "Perfect love casteth out fear." Has *such* a One undertaken

salvation? Then how "mighty to save!" Has HE gone down into death? What sovereign virtue, then, in His death? "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Is He risen by the might and majesty of His being, and raised, too, from the dead by the glory of the Father? Then "we shall be saved by His life."

Has the One who is the Eternal Word, the Creator of the ends of the earth—has He dimmed His glory by bowing as Son of man to death, the death of the cross? Dimmed His glory? He has acquired new ones, all-glorious to the eye of God, glorious to the eye of faith! "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Let us ponder well these precious words, beloved! Let us meditate upon them, bowed low at His feet! Precious indeed, as contemplated there, is His essential glory as the Word of God from all eternity, and as the Son in the bosom of the Father! And glorious, indeed, a death which calls forth afresh, and in a way altogether new, the love of the Father! "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." How glorious everywhere, even in the shame of the cross, in the blessed One to whom we owe the breath we breathe as men, and the favour in which we stand as the redeemed of God!

"In him was life." As Son of David He had a genealogy. It was needed and seasonable in the Gospel of Matthew. As Son of man He was "born of a woman," and had a human genealogy (Luke iii.). But of the eternal God alone could it be said: "In him was life." A genealogy tells of life transmitted; "in him was life," tells of life uncommunicated, of life essentially *in* the Word of God. Thank God! "the

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life was the light of men." It was to man that God would reveal Himself; it was to him that He would speak in the person of the Son, the eternal Word. God would bring man, the sinner, to the knowledge of Himself. He would bring him "nigh"—nearer, far nearer than he would have been in his natural place in creation—unfallen. His counsels have not been such towards any other of His creatures, fallen or unfallen. "The life was the light of men." As *God* He would have man to know Him, to enjoy Him—He would have worshippers; as *Father* he would have children. The blessed Lord Jesus has made Him known to us in this twofold way. The Word reveals God, His thoughts, His mind, His heart, His being, "The only begotten *Son* which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER II.

THE church has a moral history. The epistles of Paul reveal to us its divine organisation and order, but the inestimable value of the addresses to the seven churches of Asia will be found in their application to the present state of soul of those who will bow to the judgment of the Lord Himself; that judgment not touching so much organisation or order, or giving command to separate, or instruction to gather, but searching the thoughts and intents of the heart, and discovering where it is resting, and on what.

The Holy Ghost will not unteach in the Revelation what He has taught in Paul's epistles, as 2 Tim. ii.

19, but John had a service to the churches in Asia when Paul's work was done. The most instructed as to church organisation and order, as to unity and schism, are challenged equally with the least. Separation from external association with evil is, alone, totally inadequate to meet the claims of Him to whom we are baptised. *Separation from the old man in everything, that Christ may be all*, can alone meet those claims. He is worthy! (Phil. iii. 8). With whom is a man so closely associated, day and night, as with himself? (Matt. xviii. 8, 9). The Lord, in these epistles, deals with the many subtle devices with which the heart deceives itself, and is deceived as to what is of Christ, and what is of self. "All the churches shall know that I am he which *searcheth the reins and hearts*." Heart questions are the deepest after all.

Thus from the time these epistles were written and sent to the Churches, there is a present application all through, till Church testimony is closed; and every church, and every one in every Church is called to give heed to what is said to all. Ephesus cannot say I have nought to do with what is going on in Laodicea, nor those of Sardis with what the Lord says to Thyatira. As by the divine organisation of the Church there can be no plea for independency, so as to responsibility. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The overcomer is thus preserved from the many forms of evil which the enemy can introduce, according to his knowledge of the condition of different assemblies. Ephesus is commended for hating the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, but Pergamos is censured for having those who held the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes. Thus the distinction men make between moral

evil, and doctrinal evil, that we are to judge the one and not the other, is of themselves, not of the Lord. The overcomer must be apart from everything the Lord does not approve, let it be found where it may. Thus I would urge on the reader, that these addresses have as real and as personal an application *to-day*, as when they were written; and it is for us to place ourselves, as of these churches, and to receive the Word in all the freshness and power of an immediate communication from the Lord Jesus Christ. The claims of Christ as to one's own heart and one's own walk will thus be precious to us. "Has He my heart?" and, "Is it with Him I walk, or, with the Church?" will be questions for each one.

The Church at Ephesus is first addressed. There is a peculiar interest in the history of the work of God in that city, that makes the selection of the assembly there worthy of serious attention. How short a time, comparatively, had elapsed since Paul laboured there, and what a work was done! "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts xix.). The Holy Ghost has also recorded Paul's deep solicitude for the future of the dear disciples there, in his affecting farewell to their elders (Acts xx.) Still later he besought Timothy to remain with them, and wrote the epistle as to important points connected with their welfare. This brings us down to about thirty years before this address. But, alas! what changes thirty years may witness.

Again, if we turn to the epistle to the Ephesians,* what truth is there! "The fat kidneys of the wheat, and the pure blood of the grape" were brought forth

* Perhaps a circular letter, but sent primarily to Ephesus, the Roman capital of Proconsular Asia.

to feed that favoured company. Ephesus, above all, seemed to be as a chaste virgin. Paul prayed earnestly that it might be so (Eph. iii.). That the Holy Ghost, ungrieved, might lead them into the confidence and rest of enjoyed and reciprocated affection. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

So Paul quotes the words of Adam, in that chaste, and pure, and happy, sinless moment, when Eve was brought to him for a help-meet (Eph. v. 31), as expressive of the wonderful mystic union, and all supassing affection between Christ and the church. In like manner he closes the epistle. Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ *in incorruption* (New translation). That is in constancy, uncorrupted, undecayed. (Contrast 1 Cor. xvi. 22).

But "how is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed?" The church has not loved the Lord Jesus in incorruption, but has provoked Him to jealousy. She has left her first love, even as Israel, and has come under judgment (Jer. ii.). But it is the judgment of one who loves the church, and because of His love looks for love. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

Precious Saviour! If the church must stay awhile in this desert, while He is absent from her in the heavens, He would have no interruption in her communion. For her affections to grow cold is, in His sight, of all moment. Corruption there is as the

inroad of death. Wonderful grace, that our love should be so much prized by Him!

Ephesus, then, is called before the Lord, as in the full responsibility of the whole church, having received the fullest revelation of church truth. Not the Hebrews, not Corinth, not the churches of Galatia. These had been slow to learn the way of God, were in need of milk, not of strong meat. Not so Ephesus. And what a word is this for the present moment! To whom, of all the redeemed on earth, has the Lord, of late, granted the richest, the fullest unfoldings of the whole counsel of God? Surely, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

At first the Lord was dishonoured outside, in the world; now *within* as well as without. He that would witness for Him must do so in sackcloth (compare Rev. xi. for a future testimony), in sorrow of heart, unfeigned sorrow that Christ is wounded in the house of His friends; that He is more dishonoured in the church than in the world.

Ephesus is called to own the Lord's place in the midst of the churches. His absolute right over them; another proof of her deep responsibility. *There is no appeal from His word.* And He who judged looked not on the outward appearance. Ephesus retained her spiritual intelligence. He who walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks saw some things to commend, and He made haste to praise. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Yea, he adds, "for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." How easily any eye but His would have mistaken all this for the glow of health. And they were strict, too, in dealing with every manifestation of evil (verses 2, 6). There was no lack of righteous dis-

cipline ; yea, they *hated* the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which He also hated.

With all this they knew not the secret evil gnawing at their very vitals, which would inevitably result, if not judged, in the removal of their candlestick. All *corporate* blessing should be taken away. All expression of divine unity should cease. "Nevertheless I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." When *Christ*, the light (*luknos*), no longer has His place in the heart, the church, as the candlestick (*luknia*), is useless (verse 5).

Nothing, however, can deprive the saints, *individually*, of their privilege of witnessing whole heartedly for Christ (Phil. ii. 12, 16), for He holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. All power is there for the weakest to present the testimony, to "shine forth as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." And when the name of the Lord Jesus is so precious, so above every name to the hearts of even two or three, that they are drawn together by the savour of that name—whatever the failure of the corporate testimony (the golden candlestick),—*there* the blessed Lord Himself will be found (Matt. xviii. 20). "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

He knows the companies drawn together by the precious fragrancy of His name ; virgin hearts that will not suffer their affections for Him to be violated. With such He Himself is, to draw them into still nearer communion (Cant. i. 4), that they "may be glad and rejoice in him, and remember his love more than wine."

Such are the overcomers. They own the righteousness of the sentence that sets aside all that was of primitive power and order, yea of beauty and loveli-

ness in the church, as seen on earth (Acts iv. 31, 35), the golden candlestick. They confess the need of being recalled to the consciousness of the Lord's presence, and of their state in His sight; but they know and rejoice that not a star, not one formed of God to shine for Christ, not a believer in Jesus, can fail if He alone is looked to. The self-reliant may tremble, but the weakest helped by Him, sustained by his omnipotent hand, will not fall (2 Cor. xii.).

Discipline corporately, and perfecting holiness individually, in the fear of God, the Lord looks for and commends. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified," but there must be more than this. The truth of the relationship of the church to Christ has called the saints *out of everything*, to go forth and meet the Bridegroom; and, if He has lost His place in the heart, this is impossible. The withdrawal of first affections is as the failure of the oil. "Our lamps are going out," say the foolish virgins (Matt. xxv. 8), and what so valueless, yea, what so offensive, as an expiring lamp? What a contrast to "first works," as seen in the Thessalonians and in Paul!

These are some of the lessons to be learned in this, the first address to the seven churches, over which we have lingered long, because of the importance of the first symptoms of decline. As another has said—"The *germ* of the dead Sardis, the lukewarm and nauseous Laodicea, and the judged harlot, Babylon, was in this."

But one more lesson must be named, as of urgent importance at the present moment. The church, as the church, has never recovered its pristine condition, its "first love;" has never repented and done the "first works." Individuals may have, but the church

is no longer, in unity and catholicity, a true witness for the Lord. He has "removed her candlestick out of his place," according to His word. No effort to set it up again will be owned of Him.

It would be despising His judgment,—the way of Cain; the result of compression, not of love. Witness all the great ecclesiastical bodies, where, indeed, hands and feet may be bound together by force or fear, but hearts and consciences are galled by the fetters. Turning away from these, the true springs of blessing can yet be found (Jude xx. 25), and love can still have its fullest and most blessed enjoyment and exercises, with the Lord in the midst (Matt. xviii. 20).

And what a scene is presented in the promise, to strengthen the overcomer in the conflict (verse 7). The Lord will come, and he shall be caught up to the third heaven, the paradise of God, and shall have his eternal portion in Christ Himself there. "I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." Oh, indeed it is true! He Himself will feed us, and *up there, in heaven*, in glory. Precious fruits of that tree has He ministered during our sojourn here; and, if we look up the stream of time, how many have eaten of that tree of life, and have lived for ever (John vi.), after proving every other tree barren to the soul. How many, in all their toil and weariness, the parching heat of trial and of persecution, have "sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet to their taste." What will it be in heaven?

"Oh, blessed Lord: we little dreamed
Of such a morn as this:
Such rivers of unmingled joy—
Such full, unbounded bliss!

"And O how sweet the happy thought—
That all we taste or see,
We owe it to the dying Lamb,
We owe it all to Thee!"

THE NATURE AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

(AN EXTRACT).

IN the first place, it is not a formal union of the outward professing bodies that is desirable ; indeed, it is surprising that reflecting Protestants should desire it ; far from doing good, I conceive it would be impossible that such a body would be at all recognised as the church of God. It would be a counterpart to Romish unity : we should have the life of the church, and the power of the word lost, and the unity of spiritual life utterly excluded. Whatever plans may be in the order of Providence, we can only act upon the principles of grace ; and *true unity is the unity of the Spirit, and must be wrought by the operation of the Spirit.* In the great darkness of the church hitherto, outward division has been a main support, not only of zeal (as is very generally admitted), but also of the authority of the word, which is, instrumentally the life of the church ; and the Reformation consisted not, as has been commonly said, in the institution of a pure form of church, but in setting up the word, and the great Christian foundation and corner stone of "justification by faith," in which believers might find life. But, further, if the view that has been taken of the church be correct, we may adjudge that he is an enemy to the work of the Spirit of God, who seeks the interests of any particular denomination, and that those who believe in "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," ought carefully to keep from such a spirit ; for it is drawing back the church to a state occasioned by ignorance and non-subjection to the word, and making a

duty of its worst and most anti-Christian results. This is a most subtle and prevailing mental disease, "*he followeth not us,*" even when men are really Christians. Let the people of God see if they be not hindering the manifestation of the church by this spirit. . . . Its tendency is manifestly hostile to the spiritual interests of the people of God, and the manifestation of the glory of Christ. Christians are little aware how this prevails in their minds; how they seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ; and how it dries up the springs of grace and spiritual communion; how it precludes that order to which blessing is attached—the gathering together in the Lord's name. *No meeting, which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son, can find the fulness of blessing,* because it does not contemplate it—because its faith does not embrace it.

Where two or three are gathered together in His name, His name is recorded there for blessing.

J. N. D.

EXTRACTS FROM PRIVATE LETTERS.

LAST night we had the 3rd of Daniel: first, Its typical bearing; second: Its practical teaching. The latter you would have found the better. The one to whom God committed power (even when he had had the most striking evidence of whence his power came by a servant of God recalling his dream, and explaining it in a manner, the moral weight of which he had owned), turns the very power against God, and would force His people into idolatry. There was no *doubt* as to the path of the faithful, but it needed real grace

and faith (*i.e.*, the power of God) as their lives were forfeited to a certainty by obedience to God. Their side is taken, and the Apostate King (for in a sense he had *had* the knowledge of God) cast a defiant challenge in the face of the living God: "*Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands.*" Modestly, but with a grandeur of firmness they express: (1) The *certainty* of their souls as to the *power* of the God that they served and that he had defied; (2) Their confidence in His intervention; and (3) their holy faithful unswerving determination not to serve this idol, whether God should directly interfere or not! What a lofty position faith set these three men in. They defy the whole power of this magnificent empire and the unbounded rage of the irresponsible warrior king who wields its force. This, too, with a gentleness which makes their inflexibility all the more telling. How faith sets a soul with God!

What is the result? All that the rage of the king, all that the ready services of his satellites can do, as far as the three servants of God are concerned (*not*, alas! as regards those who threw them into the furnace), is to destroy all that *hindered their walk* with God, and to provide them a place where they can walk with the Son of God in blessed liberty, in holy triumph and in sweetest communion. The enraged monarch, cooled somewhat by what he sees, is the very one who has to attest, on the one hand, his own impotence and utter defeat and, on the other, the highest honour permitted to any creature, human or angelic, for those whom he had failed to alarm or to punish.

How one's heart beats after such a walk in the trials of the way. Oh, its grandeur and its sweetness! May it be ours. . . . F.

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"THE WORK."

But *The Work* still remains for either, the interesting thing; since it alone has lasting connection with our Lord, and it will follow us into heavenly courts in many blessed ways, if it has been carried out under the Lord, souls saved through it, and built up through it—itsself the expression of our own walk with God.

G. V. W.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

CHAPTER VIII.—(*continued*).

BUT this progress of the Lord through these scenes is very significant. It tells us what we know the path and action of the Son of God to be. For He has before Him in the distance the day of His power in Israel, the house of the Jew, where He will make the dry bones live, and call His people from their dark and long sleep, as prisoners from the pit; but on His journey there, or during the present season by the way, a stranger engages His sympathies, a poor unnoticed one, save by Himself, whom conscious deep necessity had thrown in His way, like the church of God, which alone occupies the Son of God, while on His way to display His power in resurrection and life in Israel in the latter day.

This, I judge, is the character of what we get here; and thus this chapter which opens with the Lord going forth to His ministry, in the progress of it gives us these samples of the varied fruit of His toil both in the church and in Israel, showing us also, as in Gadara, what a world it was into which He came to

toil, that all His blessed travail might close in His own praise both in heaven and earth, the world's conviction and judgment, and the comfort of every poor sinner who will trust in Him.*

IX.—In the opening of this chapter, we get, in order, the mission of the twelve. But the Lord does not here, as in Matthew, limit their labours to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” this distinction being still according to the general character of the Gospels.

The exercise of Herod's conscience is then noticed here, and perhaps a little more largely than in either Matthew or Mark, and is again referred to in chap. xxiii. This is still according to our Evangelist, but the martyrdom of the Baptist, on the other hand, is not so fully detailed, for that was a fact in the course and history of the Jewish apostacy, and lay, therefore, less within notice of the Spirit in him.

Touching the Transfiguration which our Evangelist then gives us, and a little more particularly, too, than in either Matthew or Mark, I desire to say a little. There is an intimation in verse 37, that this vision was witnessed at night, and that circumstance appears to me to give increased interest and significance to it. For this scene was the place of the heavenly glory, and as by and bye that place will need neither the sun nor the moon to shine in it, but the glory of God will lighten it, so this mount was lighted, as it were, by the body of the glorified Lord. †

* The raising of Lazarus in St. John, is the same pledge of future resurrection and life to Israel, as this raising of Jairus' daughter in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is not the church's resurrection, but Israel's revival, for Lazarus and this damsel both walk again in flesh and blood.

† So the holiest in the temple, which was also the heavenly place, had no light but from the glory.

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Again I notice that this journey up the hill was expressly under promise that the disciples should see the glory (ver. 27), but that the Lord was in prayer before that promised glory broke forth, and that during that season of prayer, the disciples had become heavy with sleep. Now all this is precisely the call and history of the church in this dispensation. The church has been withdrawn from the world by the hand of the Son of God under promise of the kingdom, but there has been decline and slumbering. The virgins have all slumbered, there has not been due watching with Christ, the spirit is willing, but the flesh has proved itself weak. But in due season, the glory appears; for though it tarried it came according to promise, and then they slumber no more, the weakness of nature, the burthen of the flesh, are gone. And then, too, the glorified family appear also, when He who is our life shall appear, "then shall we also appear with him in glory."

But I further observe, that when the glory awakens Peter and his companions, Peter at once cries out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here"—this telling us where his heart and desire really were, though through the weakness of the flesh he had fallen asleep—like the wise virgins, who though they slumber and sleep, still have oil in their vessels, which tells us, like Peter's cry, that they were indeed, though in weakness, waiting for the Bridegroom.

This is another point of interesting instruction; and further I notice that at the close of the vision the excellent glory appears, and that too, for a very distinct purpose. A voice from it approves the Son of God, and the value of that voice I have already sought to interpret. But what I now notice is

this, that this cloud of the excellent glory here gathers up and takes up the heavenly family. Peter, James, and John have to stand without, while the Lord and His companions enter within, those garments of light. That cloud was thus the true veil separating the holy from the holiest; and it is the peculiar honour of the church, the changed and risen saints, alike transfigured or glorified, to have their place in it, while Israel and the honour of the nations only walk in the light of it. And thus this part of the vision was somewhat beyond the present thoughts of the disciples, and they therefore fear as Jesus with Moses and Elias are enfolded in that glory. For the heavenly places, or the top of the mystic ladder, up to which this cloud was now separating these glorious strangers, had not as yet been disclosed to Jewish faith. Jacob had been at the foot of it, and Jacob's people knew the God of Bethel, and lived in the hope of the promise then made touching the inheritance of the land. But neither Jacob nor they knew of anything at the top of the ladder but the voice of Jehovah who addressed Him. The Transfiguration now discloses the secrets of that glorious place, and shows a family of shining heavenly ones to be there with Jehovah-Jesus. This was the mystery, a secret even to prophets and righteous men of old, that the God of their fathers was to have a family in the place out of which the blessing was to flow, and the glory was to shine, as well as a restored people and a subject creation at the foot, to enjoy the blessing and to dwell in the light of the glory.

Thus this vision was an advance upon that of Jacob's ladder, filling out the revelation of "the purpose of his will," that God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which

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are on earth (Eph. i. 10). Indeed, so glorious a vision as this had never been then enjoyed. Abram's passing lamp was glorious, and the ladder of Jacob was glorious. The sight of the burning bush was full of blessing, and also that of the armed captain under the walls of Jericho. Angels were welcome visitors from heaven to patriarchs and rulers of old, and the passage of the Lord Himself before the Mediator (Ex. xxxiii.) and the prophet (1 Kings xix.) at the mount of God, were both perfect in their season. But this vision of the church on the glorious top of the hill is beyond them all. That which perhaps the most nearly approaches it, is the rapture of Elijah in the presence of Elisha, for that was the conducting of the glorified ones up to the place where they are now seen. But still this surpasses it, giving us to see the heavenly family, not merely on their way to their glory, but peacefully at home in it; no terror making them afraid, no surprise as from light that was beyond them, like Isaiah, Daniel, and others; but all is perfect calm in the consciousness of being at home, though in the very midst of the brightness of it all.

(To be continued.)

 THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

"The eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"—Eph. iii. 11.

"According to his own purpose and grace."—2 Tim. i 9.

The purpose of our God,
 In ages past was known
 To Him, who had the purpose planned—
 And known to Him alone.

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A purpose, wondrous fair !
 Of grace and glory, too,
Grace known in time ; the *glory*
 When He maketh all things new.

 Jesus passed ; the stream of time,
 Rolled on and on apace,
 And types and shadows gave to man,
 Sweet views of coming grace.

 God straitened all the while—
 Pent up the “ perfect love ”
 Which could not be displayed, until
 The Son came from above.

 He came—as *Saviour*, came !
 Love had its blessed way ;
 Incessant love ! the “ Word made flesh ”
 The sinner’s debt to pay !

 God’s purpose was fulfilled !
 Love flowed—a swelling tide !
 For who could doubt the love, who knew
 Christ on the cross had died ?

 Died, buried, rose again,
 Ascended up on high,
 And sitting there—embodied Love—
 To catch the sinner’s eye.

 To draw the heart up there,
 Won by a love—so vast ;
 For love had done its utmost now,
 Yes, love had done its last !

 We hail the purpose now,
 A purpose so divine !
 And only wait the blessed hour,
 When we, with Christ shall shine !

A. M.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER I. (*continued*).—How refreshing to the heart is this revelation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ! It is the spring of all our blessing. It is the choicest, noblest work of our God. That the unspeakable blessing of it might reach us, that God might be completely manifested and truly known, the Lord Jesus must go down to the cross, and our gospel bears this testimony with most solemn emphasis, chap. xii. 23-33. Nor was His work in revealing God complete until He had fully glorified Him in the cross. It is as the risen One that He effectively declares the Father's name to His "brethren." Compare chap. xvii. 26 with xx. 17. It is in Christ risen and glorified that we have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. But when Christ is before us as in this 1st chap., the "Word of God" is there, full and perfect. The One is there who entirely expresses what God is; "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of his substance," Heb. i. 3, N.V.; "the image of the invisible God," Col. i. 15. It is not with a hidden God, still less with an "unknown God," that we have to do. The Word makes Him known in all the perfection of His being.

This revelation of God is of all importance for His own glory. For God to make Himself known is to glorify Himself. Source of all glory, what *can* glorify Him but the manifestation of Himself? And it is of all importance to us. God really made known is a Saviour-God. He has taken, according to His own eternal purpose, the title of the God of our Lord Jesus

Christ ; a title immediately connected with this gracious, this glorious revelation. For, indeed, He would give to us a place before Him according to what *He is* when thus revealed. That place—the most blessed to which a creature has ever been called—is shown us in Eph. i. 4, “ According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” The full revelation of God in Christ—in His person and in His work—brings us to God in such wise that we answer to what He is. We are formed according to Himself, “ renewed in knowledge *after the image* of him that created him.” How holy is His nature! How blameless are His ways! What love supreme in His being! His will, His purpose, His choice “ before the foundation of the world ” was that we should be capable of, and that we should enjoy, the closest communion with Himself, that we should have a nature like His own : “ holy and without blame before him in love.” Blessed place for us ! Thrice blessed He who has designed it for us, and chosen us in Christ for it !

But God has not only revealed His being in the Word ; our chapter shows us that the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father has revealed Him: A further truth of the deepest importance as regards the heart of our God ! He would bring “ many sons unto glory.” What a God is ours ! Self-satisfying, surely, yet choosing us “ before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” As Father, what satisfaction He had in the Son of His love ! Yet would He bring *many* sons unto glory. He would pour the love of His Father-heart into the bosom of ten thousand

times ten thousand children. He would reap a rich harvest in the filial love of a multitude of children conformed to the image of His Son. Precious fruit of His ineffable love! The Son of God has declared Him as He alone could declare Him, and by His work so glorified Him as to give effect to these counsels, deep and wise. And how important for us this further truth! Listen, reverently and prostrate in worship, while our God declares His purpose as concerns us in this amazing manifestation of Himself. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Highest relationship, tenderest and best, to which a creature could be called! The contemplation of it called forth from the beloved disciple the exclamation, "Behold what *manner* of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons (children) of God!" Oh, the priceless grace which has called us from our place of children of wrath to be the children of God, partakers of His nature, loved with the love wherewith He loves His own blessed Son, and hastening to His own rest and home above!

" And can I call my home
My Father's house on high?
The rest of God, my rest to come,
My place of liberty?"

Well might the Apostle exclaim—well may we, with full hearts repeat: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Oh, for hearts and ways formed by this priceless revelation! May our God work in us that we may be here below in the state of our souls, and in our walk "to the praise of the glory of his grace!"

"And the light shineth in darkness: and the dark-

ness comprehended (apprehended) it not." Withering testimony as to the condition of man! Not only was our condition one of darkness, but alas! there was nothing in us, in heart or mind, in understanding or affection, which answered to this light of life when it shined. That when God gave a law man broke it was indeed bad. It was worse that when He came in by priesthood and by prophecy man despised them. But how hopeless our moral condition when "the life was the light of men," and there was nothing in man which responded to the light. Natural darkness cannot resist the light, for it is but the absence of light. But this spiritual darkness was far more, and far worse, than the absence of light. It was incapable of apprehending it. Satan ruled in the darkness of this world (Eph. vi. 12); and the *will* of man works in it, under the power of Satan. "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God . . . so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 7, 8). When God is revealed, when the light shines in grace toward man, "the darkness apprehendeth it not." It is unreached by the light.

Yet, thank God, the light does shine, and shines effectually. Grace—the purest grace which seeks nothing in the darkness, but pours itself out in its own supreme excellency, into its chosen and privileged vessels—*grace* works. Gently, but in all-constraining power, it works to "open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." It puts a new song into their mouths, and calls forth worship to Him "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Whatever the moral incompetence of man God-ward, nay, what-

ever the rebellion of the heart of man, for God and for faith, "the darkness passeth and the true light now shineth" (1 John ii. 8). In creation there was no *resisting* darkness when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." His voice was supreme and full of majesty. Before His eternal power and Godhead the darkness fled as the light answered to His call. But it was when darkness, a "darkness which may be felt," *resisted*, that God "*shined*." It was then that He became known. The majesty and glory of creation pale before the supreme glory of God, when He discovers before the universe the springs of His being. The lofty ones who "shouted for joy" at creation find a deeper and more absorbing interest here: "which things the angels desire to look into." Our God *commanded* in creation, He *shines* in redemption—He shines in Christ: "the life was the light of men." It is from among men that are gathered the sons of God who shout for joy in the new creation. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

(*To be continued.*)

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER ii. 8.

How often was our gracious Lord, when on earth, found with the poor, the suffering, and the tempted! Much that He taught His disciples must have sounded strangely in the ears of a people accustomed to look for earthly blessings and temporal deliverances from

the hand of Jehovah, and especially from the presence of Messiah. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." "Blessed are ye that hunger now." "Blessed are ye that weep now."

The address to the Church in Smyrna reveals the same heart of love, the same mercy and compassion for the poor and oppressed.

The clouds were growing darker, the world's hatred was waxing fierce, and the feeble disciples were a prey. Tribulation, poverty, reproach, suffering, Satan, prison, and death were pressing on them. The Lord at once assures them that He knows all, and has measured all. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days."

How easily He might have prevented it. But no. There is so much of Christ, and in Christ, that can only be learned experimentally in trial. Reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake give occasion for the display of His resources, while true discipleship is sure to bring the severest trials. Still, when He says to the tried one, "Fear *none* of those things which thou shalt suffer," Satan's utmost malice can only work for good. His messengers may buffet a soul, and that sorely, but every blow tells for that soul's profit. Though it humbles the saint, it exalts the Saviour when weakness makes the strength of Christ everything to him. "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

How tenderly does He express His interest in all that could add to the sufferings of these distressed ones. "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Mere hereditary religion was manifesting more and more its Satanic character. In his hatred to Christ the enemy had formed a synagogue, a company boasting in their claims to be God's people, with traditions and ordinances, who scorned and reviled the true saints of God. And was it not the self-righteous boasters in tradition that pursued the Lord with relentless rage, even to the cross? Why do we so feebly enter into His experiences? He surely "knew what was in man," not divinely only, but as proving and experiencing it in His own person as man.

As to reproach who has suffered as He? "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Oh! that we knew better how to bear every sorrow in His presence, who has suffered so much.

Observe, then, His perfect grace in this address:—To Ephesus He presented Himself in dignity, authority, and power; but to Smyrna in the rich grace of His own personal glory. He, the everlasting God, in love to men became a man, and as a man tasted all the bitterness of death, yet He lives. "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive" (comp. Heb. ii. 14, 15).

The Church there bore the name of this suffering, rejected, yet victorious Christ, *and so do we*. Why, then, should we count it a strange thing if that name brings with it the reproach, and scorn, and hatred of men? How the blessed God has taught us its inestimable value in His sight; can we wonder that it is an abomination in the world that crucified Him? It is good for us to prove the reality of these verities. We hear of them, assent to them, even repeat them in solemn phrases, or sing them in our hymns. Do

we live them? "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" It is well when the world will not suffer us to rest in it.

But fiery persecution was coming on the poor, tried saints in Smyrna. Their enemies were set upon killing them. The Lord reminds them, that men had persecuted Him before they persecuted them; had shed His blood before they thirsted for theirs. Yet He lived victorious over all, *and lived for them*. Why should they shrink from their full portion with Him? Saved by Him from the judgment coming on the world, they should share rejection with Him by the world. Having their inheritance with Him in heaven, they should be content to be as outcasts on earth. If they were accepted before God in all His perfections, surely, it was a small thing to bear His reproach before men (Gal. vi. 17).

Between, then, the Church in Ephesus, where first love had already waned, and the Church in Pergamos, where even the heavenly calling was in danger of being despised, comes this case of a suffering people. Surely, the Lord has no pleasure in allowing His people to suffer (Lam. iii. 32, 33), but His wisdom and grace in it, who can question? Why have we a whole book in the Old Testament occupied with the sufferings of one saint—the book of Job? God not only explains Himself in the book itself, and in its blessed close, but long after vouchsafes to call our attention to His ways. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Let us be assured that no trial is sent in vain, and be more desirous to reap the blessing of it than to escape it. As one has said, "*The desire to get out of trial is a perilous thing for the soul.*"

Love in the Church was growing cold. Satan, ever on the watch, seeks to profit by this state, and would make the weakened heart afraid to go forward in the path of confession of Christ. Do we know anything of this? Immediately the Lord Himself stands before the enfeebled ones, draws them to Himself, and holds the crown of life in sight, which His own hand will put on the head of him who is faithful unto death. "He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Thus their faith, which the enemy would shake at the sight of suffering, is strengthened by the revelation of the Lord, and of the joy that He sets before them in the coming kingdom. There are three special crowns held out to the faithful.

The crown of life, to them that love Him (Jas. i. 12).

The crown of righteousness, to them that love His appearing (2 Tim. iv. 8).

The crown of glory, to him who tends the flock of God (1 Pet. v. 4).

And every crown His gift ! Love for Him, love of His appearing, love for the flock ; what precious grace now, what eternal glory hereafter ! "I know thy tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich." Surely this is not nature's estimate. Neither is it the thought of the proud minder of earthly things. He may say it of himself, "Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich" (Zech. xi. 5), but certainly not of those whose only wealth is Christ. But who so rich now, and through eternity as those that are Christ's ? Oh ! that we would accept His estimate, "All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.)

The promise must awaken the most serious and solemn thoughts : "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Persecutors have been allowed to kill the body cruelly. The Lord delays His vengeance, but judgment will be executed. He has revealed the solemn certainty of the *second* death. He has described in imagery the most vivid and distinct, the eternal future of those who will be judged *according to their works* (Read Chap. xx. 11-15 and 10). He has fully made known the eternity of woe of all who shall be *hurt* of the *second* death.

Unspeakable mercy, then, must be the deliverance from it. Unspeakable the value of the blood of Christ in which, through grace, we trust.

But Satan's effort is to make men afraid. They *fear* to turn back from the broad road that leadeth to destruction. They *fear* to confess Christ. Yet, "the *fearful* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Chap. xxi. 8). Fear, unbelief and sin, Satan's threefold cord to bind souls to his own doom (xx. 10), must meet the terrible punishment of eternal judgment. None but the Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing but living faith in Him can deliver from this threefold cord. Better, then, to surrender life than to give up Christ. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

In this country there is, in mercy, great restraint put on Satan's malice and cruelty, but how long this will be continued, who can say? In other lands a martyr's death is not so impossible, and even in our own, slow martyrdom may attend on a faithful confession. Are there not such cases?

The *spirit* of persecution is reviving. What God may permit is not for us to foretell. Yet the wicked will not always have the upper hand, the power and

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energy of Satan shall not last (Rom. xvi. 20). Oh ! to be kept during the evil day.

NOTE.—If the words, “but thou art rich,” are in some degree a reproof, as some have thought, because all the Churches are under judgment as having declined from original standing, then the tenderness of the rebuke is the more to be admired. So subtle is the poor heart, that there may have been the tendency to seek to suffer before others, to be thus rich in other eyes than their Lord’s.

We know how early even martyrdom was braved for this; how much was made in the Churches of those who suffered. Still if this were so, the grace that sought to turn these sufferers from such vain solace to His own experiences, His thoughts and sympathies, to the crown of life, and to everlasting blessing secured in Himself, surpasses praise.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

Fragments from Notes.

DOES the Head judge the members? (Whatever may be the incapability of the Church to take care of the members of Christ, I have seen that the feeblest soul is nourished and cherished, in the midst of all, by Christ Himself.) My feet may get soiled by my walk down here, and this ought not to be. Christ will wash them again and again, but He does not judge His members. I have been quickened and raised up together with Him, and that identifies me with heaven, and with the centre of heaven itself.

You want something to link your heart up there with the Lord. The constraining power which Paul felt, *the love of Christ*, should be the constraint upon us as to our walk; and this is the simple doctrine of being co-planted with Christ. The mark of a new creature in Christ is not having a better heart, for that remains the same, but looking at everything as if God were the centre, and not judging as if men were the centre; that is, looking down deeper than our need, to the springs of love in God, flowing to us through Christ, the fountain. All "one spirit with the Lord." How different are God's thoughts from man's, as to walk. God looking at the One He raised up, and saying, I have not a word against those who believe in Him, their guilt has all been rolled away. They are one Spirit with Him I love. He is the Head, those poor things down there are as His hands and feet. I love them and have given them one Spirit with my Son.

Are these God's thoughts about us? Yes; and He can make them our thoughts, too, so that we may have bright faces and happy hearts while passing through this wilderness. What, then, are all my adverse circumstances, what all that wearies and distresses? If God be for us, what is all that is against us?

The primitive Christians, when spoiled of their goods, took it joyfully. They lost everything, gave up everything for Christ's sake, and had power to go forth with happy hearts rejoicing in the Lord. Whatever may be said against us, God turns round, saying, I have nothing against you, you are one Spirit with my Son. Every necessity in us is only something for God to find grace in Christ to meet.

Have you ever marked that expression, "Heirs of God?" What, are you heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, your names linked up with Christ in one lot or inheritance, like as in the promised inheritance of the Jews, each lot having a name with it? God has a lot, Christ's lot; and as it is drawn forth *your name* is linked with His, and you are to share whatever is in that lot. Oh! what a lot it is!

Our lot has fallen to us to suffer with Him here, and partake with Him of His glory hereafter. Your sorrow ought not to be the world's sorrow, but Christ's, singing for joy in the midst of it because identified with Him. There is no sorrow we can suffer in association with Christ that has not sweetness in it.

Is Christ looking on you or me, saying, "There is one as unlike me as was Saul of Tarsus, but, through grace, he has learned to cast away his own righteousness as filthy rags, and to become a debtor to God to have all his sins washed away in my blood, and he is identified with me by the Spirit of life flowing down to him, and I shall soon come down and change him, and conform him to my image, fashioning anew the body of his humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of my glory?"

It is not enough to the Lord Jesus that His blood has freed our consciences from guilt, and saved us, but He must have us with Himself, our bodies fashioned like His own. Whose counsel and plan was it to give a power that a poor thing, a sinner once, kept here for a time in continual weakness, should come forth in the end having a glorious body? Oh! it is a plan altogether above man. There is an answer in Christ's body for all the weakness of ours. Nothing

so sets the heart at liberty as seeing the Lord in resurrection. But how could He have taken me up there if He had not washed and quickened me?

Again. How do I know there is a portion so blessed for me? Because I am to bring glory to Christ. He is to have ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of mirrors to reflect His glory. When He appears it will be told out how all was shut up and hid with Him in God. He knows where every separate dust rests, the dust of a Peter and of a Paul, all to be raised in a moment and made glorious bodies like His own. Then it will come out in a volume, the whole sum and substance of the gospel of the glory shut up in Him.

Do you understand that the Lord Jesus has certain things belonging to Himself connected with the heavens? A portion peculiar to Himself, which He shares with the Church in the heavenlies, of which He has made us partakers. Do you know your title? Has your soul ever tasted what a place the Father's house is? Have we to wait to enter there for this? Oh, no. Grace has made me a fellow-heir (one lot). Grace has linked my life up with the Lord Jesus, my life is hid with Him in God, with Him sitting on the Father's throne; and for Him to come and take me and all His own up, is the hope which presses warmly on His heart.

Does that hope enter into your present portion? Does it press on your heart daily and hourly, that in *a little while* you are to enter into the inheritance, and to be a fellow-heir with Him?

With regard to conscience, how do I stand? I know, looking at myself, I could not have a hope. Title in me to anything save condemnation there is

none. How could any one have a hope without *peculiar* views of God's grace? But then God has the right to show grace. What, has He chosen me? What a God He must be to have a thought about a thing like me! That heavenly inheritance prepared, and the Father giving me a title in His beloved Son to enter in! Oh! what riches of grace. What hopes He puts before me in the ruin of the wilderness. How impossible, standing on that ground, not to know something of the wonders of God's grace, a little of the breadth, and length, and depth and height, and of the love which passeth knowledge.

What a happy people these fellow-heirs will be when they get home. More touching still to one's poor heart, so narrow, so hard, to hear God saying, You are not only, in a *little while*, to find rest up here with my Son, and all that He has shall be yours, but as He is so are you *now*, accepted in Him, one Spirit with Him. (As He said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.") He in us, we in Him!

Do you think God looks on you poor feeble ones as you look on yourselves, and on one another, with all your shortcomings, slips, and falls? No, He looks at you in Christ, and as members of His body. What makes saints so pertinaciously bear out to the end this looking at themselves apart from the body? The reason is, the heart does not like the idea of being nothing. God's grace having made us one with Him, that as He is, we are, His grace flows down, building us together for an habitation of God; but we don't like to go for nothing. It is sin, the sin of unbelief, this looking at ourselves only as individuals, and not also as in the Body. What would be the effect if such

a thought were received in simplicity? The eye of God turned to the heavenly places and fixed on the *one Body*, seeing not me in myself, but me as I am in Christ, and in the Body? How blessed! The very smallest space between the Head and the members would destroy life; how close, then, must be the union.

What becomes of all our guilt when Christ is looking into our hearts, saying, "I have separated you from guilt; I was crucified, I have died, and you have died with me unto sin, and are alive unto God, raised up with me, and sitting in heavenly places in me."

Do you know Christ? If you do it will make you loathe and detest yourself, and the better you know Him, the greater will be your self-loathing. But if you do know the living person of Christ your conscience is a purged conscience, it has to do with the blood of the Lamb. God has deeper thoughts of that blood than man has, and the mercy in the bosom of God none can know or tell but the Christ, who Himself carried out that mercy in His own body on the tree to its utmost extent. O God! Thy Son bleeding and dying on the cross could alone understand what that mercy is!

A thousand affections flow from Christ's heart to the members, not from fellowship with any more particularly. Down here He might have felt it more with John, than with James or Peter; but up there every member of His body can comprehend, by individual experience, His surpassing love ever occupied in nourishing and cherishing its object.

It is only the power of Christ, in His own living person, that can keep, sustain and nourish all the members, and, at the end, present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

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When it comes to *risen life*, and our being up there in heavenly places, we must have One to care and act for us *there*, One every moment occupied and dealing with us.

G. V. W.

(To be continued.)

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS..

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

[CHAPTER IX.—(*continued*).]

But even this, perhaps, had still to yield to something more glorious afterwards. The 7th of Acts becomes Stephen's mount of Transfiguration after this. And then the martyr himself is stamped with the heavenly glory. He shines with the light of the children of the resurrection who are to be as the angels. It is not that like the disciples here he sees that light reflected in others, but he bears it immediately himself; nor is it that the glory is let down on the mount that he might see it here, but the heaven itself is opened, and he sees it there, and one waiting to receive him into it. His eyes behold him for himself, and not for another. And his word before the council is a comment on all this, showing a line of strangers and sufferers, among whom he there was taking his place, led by "the God of glory" up to "the glory of God" (Acts vii. 2-55).

This was indeed blessed; but whether there with Stephen, or here to Peter, James, and John, heavenly secrets are disclosed, and the church is shown to be at the top of the ladder, in the glory of the Son Himself. There is the celestial, as well as the terrestrial.

The heavens declare the glory of God. Heaven and earth are both to have in them the witness of redemption. Redemption is too excellent a work to remain uncelebrated either here or there. It is a work that has called forth the full flow of the divine love and power, and must be known, therefore, in heaven and on earth. The church is appointed to tell of it there, and Israel with her attendant nations to speak of it here; and this heavenly witness of it—the church, is here for a passing moment, seen in her place on the top of the hill. But what a grace and calling that is. The very conception of it is divine. None but God could have conceived such a purpose, nothing less than infinite love could have formed the thought of a family drawn from among sinners to be loved with the love, and glorified with the glory of the Son, to dwell in one house, and sit on one throne with him. But O how little do our wretched hearts value either Him or His glory. What is it all to us, is the dark whisper of our souls. May the Spirit within, silence this unbelief of nature, dear brethren.

After the vision had passed, and they were descending the hill, the Lord in the other Gospels talks to them of the ministry of Elias. But that is unnoticed here, for being Jewish ministry it was less suited to the Spirit in St. Luke. But beyond this there is nothing characteristic in this chapter, till we reach the close (ver. 51-62). But there we have a very strongly-marked path of the Lord indeed.

The recent vision on the mount may have led to it, but whether that be so or not, we find our Lord here addressing himself to his journey in the consciousness of its leading him to glory. The time had come, we read, when he was to be “received up,”—words which

express his ascension to glory. And he acts according to this consciousness, sending messengers "before his face," as though it were to prepare for him a way suited to this anticipated glory. The chariots of God would be in readiness to attend him, from Jerusalem upwards (xxiv. 51), but it was now for the children of men to prepare his previous way from the place where he then was, to that city. And he was thus, as it were, trying whether the world would own his claim to be "received up," as afterwards he tried whether Israel would own his royal place in Zion (chap. xix. 28). But neither would the world know him, or Israel receive him. The world was not ready for his claims, as is here expressed by the conduct of the Samaritan village. The earth did not care for his heavenly glory. "Go up thou bald head, go up thou bald head," an infidel world was again, in the spirit of it, saying.

But the disciples who had caught the tone of their Lord's mind on this striking occasion, look on him as another Elijah travelling on to meet the chariot of Israel, and they move him to do what Elijah had then done, by resenting this indignity of the Samaritan villagers, as of the captains and their fifties. But the way of the Son of Man for the present must be different. He will pass to glory rather through sorrow of His own than through judgment of the world. He will "suffer thus far," and therefore He here restrains this motion of His disciples, bows His head to this scorn of men by seeking another village, and that, too, not with preparation before His face, but as the rejected Christ of God.*

* Elijah's ministry had ended, it is true, in the heavenly glory where the Church is to be with the Son of God at her head (2 Kings

In such a character he accordingly now resumes his journey. No sense of glory now fills his soul, as it had done when he set out, the Samaritans had changed its current altogether, and he goes on consciously despised and rejected of men, who had now in full deliberation hid their faces, and shut their doors upon him. And if, beloved, it be to the praise of grace in St. Paul, that he had learnt how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and how to be hungry, do we not here see all this to perfection in our blessed Master? He knew how one moment to act in the sense of His fulness or glory, and the next to become the despised Son of man. He takes the place which the scornful villagers of Samaria give him without an effort or a murmur.

And in this place of rejection we see those persons brought into intercourse with him, that we, beloved, through them they may have some good lessons read to our souls. Two of them introduced in Matthew (chap. viii.), but not in the same moral connection as here, for the value of the cases here lies altogether in those lessons which the Lord Himself teaches us by them. *(To be continued.)*

The name of the Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from the names of men.

The person of the Lord Jesus sets us free from the persons of men.

The word of Christ delivers us from the words of men.

The work of Christ delivers us from all dead works of our own. J. A. v. P.

ii.). But the ministry itself had been one of mingled *suffering* and *judgment*, like what that of the two witnesses is to be in the latter day (see 1 Kings xvii., 2 Kings i., Rev. xi. 3-12). The ministry of Jesus was of mingled *suffering* and *grace*.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER I.—(*continued*).

THE life has been before us as the light of men. In the gospel of Matthew Israel has a special place of privilege, nor can that Gospel be understood without bearing this in mind. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But here it is not the dispensations of God which are brought before us, but rather Himself—Himself fully expressed in the Word—in the Word made flesh. This is indeed life; but the life is the light, not of Israel, but of *men*. Even in Luke, "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel," marks the distinction which exists in the dispensations of God; although, as we have seen, this does not characterise that Evangelist. But there is no place for this where it is a question of the nature and being of God Himself. When the life is manifested it is for *men*. When God shines in Christ it is for *men*. And at the end, when dispensations are no more, a great voice from heaven proclaims: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with *men*."

This is in full accordance with the purpose of God in our Gospel, and it is characteristic of it. When God unfolds His nature the Jew is of no more account than the Gentile, however important the distinction is elsewhere. Here God has not a single claim to answer to, nor a single distinction to acknowledge. Apart from this very intervention of God, in thus revealing Himself, all is lost. The Gentile does his own will in lawlessness and godlessness: the Jew uses his privileges to make the name of

God blasphemed. This is more clearly brought out after the cross, but for the Spirit of God in John, all is over with man in his natural or legal responsibility to God. But not so with man as the object of grace. God begins to work afresh. He will call up another creation, a *new* one, where "all things are of God." The sphere of His working is "men," or—as our Gospel often expresses it—"the world." This brings in a deeper responsibility, but it is a work of sovereign grace in its highest expression.

"That was the true light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man." The light shines for all men. All are not enlightened by it, alas! We have seen that "the darkness comprehended it not." The light casts itself upon all, discovers and manifests all. Where there is faith it enters the heart, enlightens the conscience and the whole soul. But whether or not, it brings every man to the light. The sphere of the light is as wide as that in which men move.

There had previously been light in Israel, though even there it could not be said, in the way our Evangelist says it in his 1st epistle: "the true light now shineth." The Gentiles lay in darkness, a darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt. They were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But "the true light now shineth" and, coming into *the world*, it "lighteth every man." Solemn responsibility for all! Precious grace that such a light hath shined in our hearts!

Where is there a clearer or more striking manifestation of the real condition of man on the one hand, and of the abounding grace of God on the other, than

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that which is given us in v. 10-13 of this chapter? That the Son of God, the Maker of the world, should come into it as the light of life, lightening every man, and yet should be *unknown* by it,

“Wandering as a homeless stranger
In the world His hands had made;”

this tells with crushing power the sad tale of man's departure from God. What a sentence for the God of truth to write upon the world—this present evil world. Man may make excuses for his condition, he may call his sins by the mildest names to make little of them; but man is away from God. He does not know Him. He does not care to know Him. In his heart and mind, in his will and ways, he is estranged from God. When the Son of God came in the sweetest and tenderest, yet mightiest, manifestation of the light and love that He is, *man did not know Him!* And the world is ever the world. It may *progress*, but it progresses in estrangement from God. Its improvements are the improvements of a world which did not, and does not, know the Son of God, its Maker, come down into it in purest, richest grace.

In the world there was one spot where of old His “presence” dwelt between the cherubim; and although that glory had left the holy city, yet still there was there the temple and worship of the true God. The lively oracles—the word of the living God—was committed to a people “near to God.” “He came to his own” place or home, and “his own (people) received him not.” The guilt of breaking the law was exceeded in their “receiving not” the Son of God, and there was if possible less moral capacity to stand before God or to please Him shown in their “receiving him not” than when they made, and bowed before, the golden calf. Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are they

to the uttermost now ! Enough, and more than enough, to display the dark and deep guilt of man—his helpless ruin before God ! Further he could not go until, with wicked hands, he crucified and slew the Son of God. Then, indeed, was the judgment of this world.

But if man is seen as he is, so is God. The full manifestation of God was not possible until man had been tried in every other way. Tried, indeed, he had been “weighed in the balances and found wanting.” There is room for judgment—all-condemning judgment—and there is room for grace, pure and all-availing. The whole history of God’s ways with man tells how righteous the unsparing exercise of judgment would be. God’s Son came down in grace, charged with a work He was soon to accomplish on the cross, tells that grace and truth are come in His person ; that, indeed, grace is as righteous as judgment would have been, and righteous in a far more blessed way. In His person, as is manifested later in His work, “grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

That supreme grace touched some hearts in the world which He had made, and which knew Him not, it moved some amongst His own who, as a whole, received Him not. “To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His Name.” A new place for man ! Precious fruit of a new and now perfect revelation of God ! Never before was God fully made known ; never before had men the privilege to be “sons of God.” O, the goodness that looked in love on such a world ! O, the grace unspeakable that sought in it its objects to make them children of God ! May our God give us hearts to value this grace, and souls altogether formed by it ! May He give us to walk in it to His praise !

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER ii. v. 12.

IN the address to the Church in Pergamos there is, for the first time, a warning against corruption of doctrine. Satan's effort was to deceive, in order to form on earth a counterfeit that should bear the name and make the profession of Christ, without a trace of heavenliness, of grace, of holiness, or of truth. To this Church, thus exposed to his wiles, the Lord presents Himself as having the sharp sword with two edges, the detector of evil rather than the revealer of grace, though with discriminating love. How perfect is His way; how suited in every case to the danger and to the evil. Oh, that the poor sheep would but hear His voice. How surely He would, in a tenderness and love peculiar to Himself, gather us under His sheltering care.

The danger to Pergamos was from Satan's throne, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat (or throne) is." To such hearts as ours the glitter of his throne is even more dangerous than the terrors of his dungeons. Satan's world is more to be dreaded than Satan himself (1 John ii. 14-17). Samson was shorn of his seven locks, not at Ramoth-lehi, but in the lap of Delilah, and the Church was beginning to dally with the seducer.

The heavenly calling, and the gospel of the glory of Christ were, it may be, less cherished by them. Their faith of the Lord's coming, of being caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air, of being associates with Him in the Father's house, and of reigning with Him in His kingdom, might have declined, and thoughts of extension here have taken its place.

Persecution no longer constrained the eye to look

upwards, and doctrines that would effectually cloud the spiritual vision were tolerated. Oh, what a lovely heavenly stamp was on the Christian, when, in the freshness of first love, he was kept free from the world and the things of the world. Alas, that all this should so soon fade. Thank God, the desire is still in many yearning hearts, whose exercises are known only to Him. The power that dragged some faithful souls out of Rome, that wrought again and again in what men call non-conformity, that has wrought in many an obscure corner, and forced even the most timid and trembling to go on, though alone, with God, is still working. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." The holy Scriptures and the person of Christ are the inestimable treasures of the true believer, and they can never be separated. Most suited, then, for Pergamos as for us, is the appeal He makes as having the sharp sword, the WORD OF GOD (Heb. iv. 12, 13). Yes, let us repeat it, that Word and the person of Jesus Christ cannot be separated, and whoever and whatever claims to have the presence of Christ must own also the authority of the Word. "If a man love me he will keep my words," and again, "The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day." So here, "Repeat, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against *them* with the sword of *my mouth*." (Compare also chap. xix. 13-15).

With peculiar grace the Lord addresses the representative of this Church as not yet turned aside by the wiles of the devil. "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr (witness), who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

What an insight we here get into that which is pre-

cious in the sight of the Lord, that which, in mercy, the feeblest believer can accomplish. Activity and devotedness, works and self-sacrifice in service have their value before Him, but here He simply says, "Thou holdest fast MY NAME." They had not yet been drawn away from simple dependence upon Himself, according to His gracious promise (Matt. xviii. 20). They still experienced the faithfulness and sweetness of His care in ministering strength and blessing to their souls. Gifts had not yet displaced the supremacy of the Giver. The fountain of living waters was not yet forsaken for broken cisterns, though the danger was there. Their hearts, too, still prized the Word of God; "MY FAITH." He ministered it (Luke xxiv. 27), and it was concerning Himself. Let Him use whom He will by the Spirit to minister, He Himself is the treasure, and God's key to unlock it. Well may He say "My faith."

It is especially cheering to see how the Lord takes an interest in, and notices the peculiarly trying time when their love for His name and His faith was manifested. Antipas had been slain among them for his faithful testimony, and yet they held fast. Precious encouragement for each to know His eye was thus upon them.

But, alas, other influences were at work, the source of which they might as little suspect, as did the children of Israel the plottings of Balaam with the king of the Moabites. When Satan lays aside the sword of persecution, it is to bait the trap of seduction (read verses 14, 15).

This company, otherwise faithful, had become corporately loose as to the allowance among them of those who held the doctrine of Balaam. They were no doubt

personally sound, but this was not enough. All latitudinarianism as to such doctrine, all compromise with the false spirit of liberty, in having communion with those who held it (for this is the meaning of "*thou hast there*"), is thus seen in the light of the word of the Lord. He will not tolerate this looseness, neither may we. It was not simply the filthy lucre-loving of Balaam, nor his perversity, but it was the abomination of one who had so much truth about God and His people, not only yielding himself to serve those who hated both God and His people, but teaching them how to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel. Oh! it was a fatal snare, and the more glaringly wicked on his part, as it was opposed to the whole truth that God had put in his mouth as a prophet. How awful this must be in the sight of the Lord! The loveliest truth on the lip, and the heart a prey to covetousness! (2 Pet. iii. 14, 15.)

(See the sad story Num. xxiii., xxiv., xxv., xxxi.) Quickly, indeed, did Balaam's doctrine work. The prophet "returned to his place, and Balak also went his way," but Israel, what of them? Their place was with God, their way was to Canaan. God had brought them forth out of Egypt, and was leading them all the way in the wilderness to bring them into the good land. And who had spoken more blessedly of this than Balaam? "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." Thus lovely in the sight of God is the true expression of the heavenly stranger-ship and pilgrim walk of His people, *and Balaam knew it*; yet it was he who wrought to corrupt them, to join

them with Baal-Peor, the god of the Moabites, to defile their tents, and to bring God's hand in judgment on them.

"The daughters of Moab called the people unto the sacrifice of their gods, and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." Ah! this was the fruit, but Scripture reveals to us how the seed Balaam sowed took root. Zimri, a prince in Israel, *did not abandon his tent* (his profession), but brought the Midianitish woman (the world and its allurements) *into the tent*; and this he dared to do in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

So bold, so heartless are the results of the doctrine of Balaam. The world's idols—money, pleasure, self—are unblushingly justified under all manner of pretences by leaders in the Church, and rein is given to the flesh to pursue its course with but small restraint.

Oh! what a Church would Balaam's doctrine make, falsifying the truth of God to suit the world and incorporate it with the Church. As Zimri maintained his tent, yet openly brought Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a chief of Midian, into it, so would this doctrine maintain the distinctive ordinances of Christ, yet openly and unblushingly receive the world by those ordinances; and, when yet further developed, adopt even heathenish and superstitious ceremonies as religious rites, and idol festivals as holy days, to attain its end.

The righteous zeal of Phinehas stands out most in structively in contrast to this unholy commerce. Well may the Lord call on his saints to repent, to have no fellowship with those who thus stumble God's children, for He is coming to fight against such with the sword of His mouth.

The promise to the overcomer is one of singular beauty and peculiar suitability, recalling the hearer to the truth that the Son of God was, when in this world a stranger and a pilgrim, not of the world, but sent of the Father.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Manna was wilderness food, and a type of the Son of God thus sent of the Father. As He said (John vi.), "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "I am the bread of life." When He is the soul's delight, its daily food, when the heart finds its nourishment and strength in Him, then the Balaam spirit of the day, and the loose and pernicious doctrines that accompany it have no relish. But when the heart turns back again into Egypt, and lusts after the things of the world, then alas! there is no teaching so sought after as that of Balaam. And, dear reader, go where you will, and hear whom you may, be assured that if it is not with the name of the Lord Jesus and His faith your heart is engaged, you must stumble in your path. In this address there is nothing between "my name," "my faith," and corrupt doctrine. So in the epistles of John, if it is not the doctrine of Christ, it is evil seducers (chap. ii.); if it is not the spirit of truth, it is the spirit of error (chap. iv.). To sustain life in the soul is no more the work of any creature than to impart it. Only He who gave us eternal life can sustain, preserve and nourish it. This is true now, but when we are seated at His table in glory it will be no less so. He will come forth to minister to us there (Luke xii. 37). Now the world itself could not contain the books that

should be written of Him, then there will be no such restriction. Now we know in part, then we shall know even as we are known. The "hidden manna" will be hidden no more. All can be told, He will tell it, and we can receive it. "The white stone" will mark His approval, and the "new name" His own endearing expression of intimacy, in His infinite but personal love. Our tastes thus are being formed, by His grace, for eternity (Ex. xvi. 33). An omer of the food of the wilderness was laid up within the veil for the future. The spiritual enjoyment of Christ begun here will be perfected in heaven, while all earth-born tastes must perish (1 John ii. 16-17). May nothing be allowed by us to check our growth in that grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

FRAGMENTS FROM NOTES.—(*Continued.*)

WE are apprehended of Christ Jesus, evidently not for what we are, but for what we shall be. It is impossible when we come to know Christ thus (Phil. iii. 12-15) to stop still. We press on from childhood to manhood, and to fatherhood (1 John ii. 13), every separate saint preparing for a prepared place in the Father's house. Seeing this, it is impossible to settle down here. The question of self, and all connected with self, must die; the question of work will be setting Christ before you, pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Him. Christ has seen exactly where I shall be in the glory; the jewel will not be lost that is to be put in His crown. One can walk in the world

as apprehended of Christ for this place in glory. But is the heart really occupied with the glory we shall have? As a stream of heavenly blessing in all my troubles, is it the thought of my soul, I am to be up there with the Son of God in the glory. He has apprehended me for this, and my citizenship is there? Then amidst all the wretched short-comings of one's own heart, I may have present rest and peace in Him who cannot fail. If I have a consciousness of my fellowship in life with Christ up there (Col. iii. 1-4), there will be a throbbing of joy in my heart, flowing from communion with Him, sitting on the right hand of God, and from setting my mind on the things that are above, a communion which is to flow on for ever and ever, and which I date back to the quickening in His grave, His life then flowing back to us (Ep. ii. 5-6).

If I love God I want to be holy, for He is holy. "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." The desire for sanctification has thus no limit at all. The effect of God letting me know His plan of associating me with Himself hereafter is to associate me with Himself now.

And has that Christ who has brought piece-meal to you this wonderful love of God, as you were able to bear it, has He no jealousy over you, think you? What is your present state? Does He see your heart's affection linking itself round the God who has, by Him, associated you with Himself? Does He see the pulse of thought in you beating for God? You cannot hide yourself from Him. He, the good Shepherd, is leading and watching every individual sheep, and not a lock of wool can be taken from one of them that He does not see. Does He, then, see welling through your minds unceasing thoughts of the glory awaiting you, your

heart dwelling there, and your walk corresponding? Or is it like Jacob with you, halting on the thigh, because of the flesh needing crippling?

God has spread an expanse of glory all wrapt up in Christ for us. He has told of, and described the golden city, and the light and the joy of all there, and He would have us occupied with Him who is the centre of all, the centre of His mind, even Christ. Are we following in His wake? Is His centre ours, and the hope of Christ, the hope of His coming connected with our every thought and act? There may be failure, there may be something clinging to you that would drop off in the presence of Christ, but He will not let you off that hope. Is the future of your mind at all like His? A poor reflection it may be, but a real one, having its source from the centre of God's mind, which is Christ.

Has it ever come into your mind what a thrill the delight of God in Christ must cause in heaven? And is it indeed true that we are accepted in the Beloved, and that God loves us as He loves Christ, because we are in Him, and He in us? What in you or me shall interfere with the delight of God in His Son? His delight in believers is not in themselves, but in connection with Christ and redemption. His blood has washed all sin away; my soul is saved, is in Him, one with Him, all my guilt and misery judged on the cross. Oh, it makes one feel very little, it sinks one into real insignificance as being nothing, but then Christ is everything. God looking on His Son with ever the same delight, seeing His members and loving them. Ah! yes, it is *pure grace from first to last*.

I cannot get anything like happiness without Him. How much happier a way of learning that our rest is

not here is that thought, that nothing can make us happy till He comes. I may see what appears attractive down here, but looking up into heaven, I see Christ and feel that till He comes earth cannot be blessed. This world without Him is only a wilderness, no rest, for all earth's blessings, as well as heaven's, are shut up in Christ; all happiness and joy hid in the person of the Lord. It is all vanity, seeking rest whilst He is absent, filling our mouths with sand and gravel. . . . "I am the bright and morning Star." Does not God delight in seeing the Lord Jesus His people's hope? When the hour is come, God will give the word, and Christ will leave His throne to bring up His bride. "The bright and morning Star" is not for God, it is the hope for the bride in the dark night. This title does not come in once in the Old Testament. There we find the Sun of Righteousness; but this bright and morning Star comes before, to usher in the day, a morning without clouds.

The Lord knows what the hearts of His people want here. It is Himself, His own blessed Person. Is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself looked for by us? It is not the glory, but Himself, that is put forth. "I am the bright and morning Star." And, oh, it is Himself that I want. What would glory be to me without my Lord?

Just observe the sort of glory here. What is the shining forth of this bright and morning Star, as to glory, compared with the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness? Ah! but they who love Christ *now*, during the dark, dark night, know the sweetness of this title. All their heart's affections are bound up in His Person, it is *that* their love is set upon. How sweet to connect the hope of His coming, while in

the weariness of all this wilderness scene, with "I am the bright and morning Star; and the spirit and the bride say, Come." In 2 Cor. xi. 2 we get just the true idea of this bride, a people affianced to Christ. How that title of "bride" supposes all affection on the part of Christ. He looks down and sees one here and another there, who believe in Him, poor feeble things in themselves, but He has washed them in His blood. If the marriage of the bride, the Lamb's wife is to be (Rev. xix. 7), and I am part of that affianced body, where can creature merit, or title come in? *He has done all* (Eph. v. 25-27). What can He see in us but failure, but He has given us the Spirit, and made us one with Himself. He has the bride, a bride fit for God's own dwelling place. If you do not know the personal love of Christ for His bride, you cannot invite Him to come.

God did not stop when He had taken the bone out of Adam, but He builded the woman; so He not only calls and saves poor prodigals, but builds them a bride for His Son. The welcomed prodigal found he had all sorts of good things in the Father's house, so the bride may have all sorts of precious things, but she herself is for her Lord. Wonderful that Christ should have all glory, but the best part—a bride of poor prodigals, sanctified and cleansed at the cost of His own blood. What! I, a poor thing, a leaf in the wilderness, carried here and there, can I say, Come, Lord? If God has given me the Spirit and made me one with Christ, I can.

If He had shown me all the *glory* it would have had another effect on me altogether, but He brought the truth to bear on my heart. The Spirit of the living God brought, and is always bringing fresh tastes of

the love of Christ to my heart. But, oh, how the Spirit is straightened in us, as He goes through the wilderness and finds so little answer in our hearts, and cannot get the waters to flow.

Do not speak of *self*, be it failure or circumstances. Satan would always try and put these between us and Christ. But do set everything in the light of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and if you were but one alone in the world, the Spirit is sufficient to enable you to say, "Come." "*The Spirit* and the bride say, Come." Not the bride only, nor the bride named first, but the Spirit, knowing all the affections in the heart of Christ, says, "Come." Oh, it is sweet to have Christ wanting *you* to say, "Come."

Have you known the sweetness, when in solitude, when none have been near, of the thought in your heart, hardly breathed in words, "Come, Lord, come." And shall the thought—I may be caught up now, *at once*, alarm? No. I am as sure of being His as Rebecca, led of Eliezer, was of being Isaac's. Yea, more sure, as led of the Spirit; and so are all believers who can say, Come. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let *him that heareth* say, Come."

(*To be continued.*)

"The presence of God is a very real thing, even with two or three who are in the power of *His name*; and they get tokens of His presence. Such never could say, "We are His house, and His assembly" without arrogance and pride. If we assume it, we are Babel in spirit and mind If *the form* of two or three meeting occupy the mind, self and worldliness will be found in a new form, and that is all. But, if the purged people get together in the *fear of the Lord*, they will find the power of the Spirit, heaven and joy unspeakable."

G. V. W.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

CHAPTER IX. 57 ; X. 20.—(*continued*).

THE Lord speaks on each case (the three persons who here present themselves before the Lord) in the full sense of His present place of rejection in the earth. The whole bearing of the instruction proceeds from that. It is the Lord's rejection that has given His saints a *new* place, *new* duties, and *new* attachments, and these are here brought out for our contemplation, that we may count the cost of being His. It is this rejection which tells us that there is a *home* for us, but that it is outside the earth altogether; that there is *service or ministry* for us, but beyond that which human obligations would suggest; and that there is *kindredness and affection* for us, but different from that which human relations would supply. Something of the new condition of those who are "in Christ" (2 Cor. v. 17) is therefore traceable here. The fulness of that is, of course, more presented after this, when the Apostles through the Holy Ghost, open the mystery of the church; but we have the principle of it here. From these three cases the Lord suggests to us the *place*, the *duties*, and the *attachments*, which now, since the earth has refused Him, belong to us; and in those severally we see old things passed away and all become new. Nothing brings the saints into these new things, but the total rejection of their Lord by the world; but let the Lord be apprehended in His rejection, and then these new things will be entered

into by the soul at once. No "looking back," no knowing of man "after the flesh," by those gone forth to the Son of God outside the camp; and it is only when we in spirit stand there with Him, that we now understand Him rightly.

Thus these holy and solemn lessons are read to our souls by our divine Teacher from His present place—"despised and rejected of men." He would still teach us, even in and through His own sorrows, that we might be kept in constant company with Himself and His thoughts, as we pass on from scene to scene across this evil world.*

X.—This chapter gives us in order the mission of the seventy, but it is only here that we get this, for the Lord, as I have already observed, in this Gospel looks out to man beyond the Jewish boundary; and thus we are here given to see a ministry more extended in its character than that which properly suited itself to Jewish arrangements. It intimated a departure from strict primitive order in Israel, as did a similar appointment of seventy elders in the days of Moses (Numb. xi.). But this is all according to St. Luke.

This mission is sent forth with a message of peace from God, to every house and every city; but withal no man was to be saluted by the way. This has great value in it. Jesus proposes, beloved, to settle not the mere intercourse of men in their social order, but the connection between God and sinners. That is the

* In answering the third of these persons, our Lord seems to refer to the call of Elisha, to which the recent mention of Elijah by his disciples may naturally have turned His mind. His little analogy and instruction taken from a ploughman, seems to have been suggested by Elisha's history (see 1 Kings xix. 21).

great circumstance, and which the Lord, therefore, must first provide for. So with our Apostle afterwards. With Paul it mattered little whether the saints were bond or free; for if bond, they were still the Lord's freemen, if free, they were still the Lord's servants. Their relation to the Lord was the great thing (1 Cor. vii.); as here we see it was also in the judgment of the Son of God. There was to be no saluting of any man, while there was to be the publishing of peace to every house and every city. It was not the courtesies of human life the Lord's messengers were to bear on their lips, but a happy, holy, and weighty message from God to man.

This was the mind of the blessed Lord on now sending out His messengers; and on their return with the report of their labours, He anticipates the fall of Satan. A little sample of power in the hands of the seventy, hints the result to Him. But after expressing it, He turns to check in His disciples the looking chiefly at *power*, telling them that there was something deeper and richer than that for them, even a *name in heaven*, a memorial with a Father there; and however excellent authority over devils might be, or power in the earth, yet that memorial was happier still. It is not that He undervalues power, or withdraws it from them. Nay, He rather rejoices in it and confirms it in their hands, saying "I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions." But the home in heaven of the children is to be still more precious than the power in earth of the heirs of God.

(To be continued.)

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls ; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—(Matt. xiii. 45.)

FROM high, the Lord beheld, ere worlds began,
As though already tenanted by man,
This teeming earth, by sin and hate defiled,
Estranged from God, perverted, lawless, wild.

But underneath the mass of sin and vice,
He saw a " *pearl* " of untold, matchless price,
And, in the counsels of the heavens above,
He made that " *pearl* " the object of His love.

He waited long—but God's " *due time* " drew near ;
Hark ! angel's songs announce His advent here !
The " *Word made flesh* " is on the earth He made—
The " *Christ of God* " in human form arrayed.

Rejected by " *His own* "—the Bride of earth,
He turns to seek the " *pearl of matchless worth*—
His heavenly Bride—His church—His loved—His own—
Part of His body, of His flesh, His bone.

How fair and lovely to His eye appeared
The priceless " *pearl*," so to His heart endeared !
A love like this all other loves condemn—
He gives " Himself," and buys the peerless gem !

His own for time, and for eternal days,
His soul rejoices in His " *pearl's* " soft rays ;
His own for ever—evermore allied,
He loves the " *pearl* "—the church—for which He died.

He waits that " *pearl's* " fair beauty to display
Before the world, on the millennial day,
" *Prepared* " " *adorned*," as for the Bridegroom meet,
His church—His fair and glorious " *pearl* " complete !

A. M.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. i. (*continued*).—Grace is here in all its beauty, and we may say in all its majesty. The perfect love of God, now revealed in Christ, is at work in the midst of the darkness and coldness, the defilement and the guilt of this world. The blessed Son of God is not known by the world He made; His own—these that were *nigh*, Eph. ii. 17—receive Him not. But grace pursues its course. Some, who were “children of wrath even as others,” received the rejected One. When we consider who these were, we find that they varied to the uttermost in character and position; but that, from Nicodemus to Mary Magdalene, they had one thing in common, and one thing which forced them to receive Christ: *need* which no one but He could meet. On the one hand, all “heard and learned of the Father;” on the other, all came, “weary and heavy laden” to Christ. How truly we are in the presence of pure grace come down from its source above to impart itself. Yes, *to impart itself*, and that freely and unconditionally, “*to as many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name.*” To believe in Christ is to *receive* Him; to receive Him is to *believe* on His name. Thus He is everything. The sinner brings nothing, does nothing, is nothing. Christ *brings* everything, *does* everything, *is* everything, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

God revealed in Christ, then, is pure grace for the poor needy one. And if grace, mightiest grace, worthy of its source! For it gives its happy object the right to the highest position it is possible for a creature to

fill—the right to be a child of God. Whatever the one who receives Christ was before, in believing on His name, he enters into the privileges of a child of God. In liberty, in holy affections, he calls God Father here and now, and when the time of the manifestation of the sons of God comes he will enter upon the full enjoyment of all the rights and privileges which, through grace, are already his.

But there is more. This place, high as it is, is not only ours by adoption, it is ours by birth. “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. James i. 18. When a soul *receives* Christ it is not by an effort of his will any more than it is by natural descent. The noblest family—that of Abraham even—is nothing here: “not of blood.” Grace includes “flesh” as completely as it does “works;” and the only *will* at work is that of which the Apostle James speaks. Yes, it is a real birth, a new and divine one, “born . . . of God.” There is more than a new position, much more; a nature which is of God is imparted, divine in its source and character, in its origin and end. To the object of His grace, gathered from the scene of His Son’s rejection, He gives a nature capable of knowing Him, of enjoying Him, of holding communion with Him, and of that intelligent and filial worship which will make “blessed” for ever Him who is the source of all blessing. Acts xx. 35; 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

With verse 14 the Spirit of God begins, as it were, afresh. He declares formally the incarnation of the Word. “The Word was made (became) flesh.” He never became the Word, He *was* this in the beginning; but He, who ever was the Word, *became* flesh and “dwelt among us full of grace and truth.” The One

who tabernacled here below, Jesus, whom Nathanael was ready to reject because He came out of Nazareth, to whom the woman at the well said, "How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"—the One whom the Jews did persecute and sought to slay because He had made a man whole on the Sabbath day, who made clay with His spittle to open the eyes of one born blind—the One who gave His feet for Mary's worship, and His bosom for John's repose,—He is the eternal Word. Who shall sound the depths of such a truth? And who shall tell the eternity of blessing which hangs upon it for the redeemed of God?

Men, that is those who had eyes to see, for all is pure grace, men beheld His glory. And the glory they saw was "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." This, too, is the glory spread before us in our Gospel; the verse before us might be given as expressing in words of power and freshness the scope of the Gospel of John. It is not His glory in the offices He has deigned to fill, but His own personal glory. Nor this only as dwelling in the bosom of the Father, but as the Word made flesh; as the revelation before our eyes in flesh of what God is. It is in Him, and in Him down here that we see the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and learn that He is thus manifested to bring us as children into His own place. In the unflickering rays of His perfect light we read the writing clear, steady and bright, "and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

For He "dwelt among us full of grace and truth." It was no flash of glory, no mere burst of grace, He "*dwelt* among us." At Cana He was a guest at the marriage; at Jerusalem He was in His Father's house

with the authority due to the only begotten Son when in His Father's house; by night he is seen of Nicodemus, and by day of multitudes in the land of Judea, where His disciples baptized, for He dwelt among us. At Sychar the Word made flesh is seen in solitary perfection, yet as one dwelling among us hungry, thirsty, tired; at Cana importuned to "come down,"—for "He dwelt among us,"—He commands disease which is doing its deadly work at Capernaum; at Bethesda, in the temple, on the mountain feeding thousands, "we beheld His glory" as He "dwelt among us."

And in every place, and on every occasion when he was seen, He was full of grace and truth. In ways so varied, yet ever full of sweetness for God and of goodness to man, did He manifest the grace and truth which were in His person! What a living picture of grace the whole gospel is; what a perfect display of truth! What solemn, searching truth when He cried in the temple, the scourge in His hand, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," when in the stillness of night He looks down into the Pharisee's conscience and says, "*Ye must be born again;*" and when by the lone well He tells the poor woman all that ever she did, His voice ringing as the voice of the living God through a deserted conscience and a slumbering memory: "Go, call thy husband and come hither!"

What sovereign grace to the awakened Pharisee, when he says: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" What precious grace as He tells a desolate, thirsty soul, in accents of tenderest pity, "But whosoever

drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER ii. 18.

THE importance of the address to the church in Thyatira cannot be too earnestly pressed at the present moment. The Lord here reveals the rise of a dark, mysterious, deadly system, in the very midst of those whose love and service He could commend. In a few pregnant words He develops its debasing features, and the doom that awaits both it and its supporters. May He give us an ear to hear, a spiritual capacity to receive His faithful word.

The doctrine of Balaam brought corruption and idolatry into the church, and it has never been clear since. Love, the love of Christ, ought to have kept it free, for eternal life lives and feeds on Him alone. (Gal. ii. 20). But first from the Nicolaitanes, then from the Balaamites, doctrines came in ruinous to souls. The world adopted the sign of the cross, and true believers were seduced to give up the divine application of it. (Gal. v. 24; vi. 12-15).

The Spirit of truth would, if heeded, have preserved from this, but man ever glories in men. The Holy Spirit, because He is holy, must keep in absolute severance the world and the saints. He came to guide the saints into all truth, to glorify Christ. (John xvi. 13-15). Another spirit rules in the world. (Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Rev. xii. 9).

How great the delusion that the Holy Spirit guides it. He provides no ritual, no imposing ceremonies, no church formularies for it. He gives power to evangelists to preach the gospel to all, *to deliver out of it* (Gal. i. 4); but the world, as the world, He convicts of sin, because they believe not on Jesus. (John xvi. 8, 9). By introducing the world, Satan sought to set aside the fundamental principles of the church of God, and to establish his own—"the representation of truth *in falsehood*." A liar from the beginning, his aim is ever to present darkness as light, evil as good, sin as holiness, the prince of darkness as an angel of light, the world lying in wickedness as the church of God. The beseechings, the warnings, the conflicts, the tears of the apostles, had failed to preserve the church in separation. Think then of the grace that adds to the appeals of the servants these closing words of the Master. How shall we refuse the ear when the Lord challenges it? He surely will vindicate His own principles, now in gracious warning, soon in judgment.

In nothing is the sweetness of His living grace more manifest than in thus ministering His own word when all had failed; and if our lot is cast in a most remarkable day, so much the greater cause is there to value the mercy of the Lord in Himself teaching us as to it.

"These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass."

This is a word of power and authority, addressed assuredly to individual conscience, so apt to be tampered with and defiled. But why is the Church in Thyatira so addressed? Alas! another than the Son

of God was suffered to take the place of authority there, and to seduce His servants from their allegiance. True it is, that to bow down to the will of another in the Church is to degrade oneself, not Him. His glory none can dim. Forget it or despise it, it only shines out the more, but in judgment, not in grace.

What doctrine is so fraught with blessing to poor perishing sinners, so precious to each child of God, so sacred to the Church, so constantly the theme of the Holy Ghost, so jealously guarded in Scripture, as the doctrine of the SON OF GOD. Therefore is it that this doctrine is so incessantly attacked by the enemy. He would deprive the gospel of its fulness, the saint of his object, the church of its Lord. He would lower His person, detract from His work, set aside His offices, neutralise His authority. He would exalt anything and anybody so that he might dishonour Him; and there is not perhaps a Christian man on earth, that has not in one way or another been drawn aside, at least at times, to help on this varied dishonour of the Lord. Oh, that these words from His own lips might reach down to the very bottom of our hearts, though it might slay many a mighty man, and bring us all where God had to bring his servant Job, whatever his boasted integrity. (xlii. 6).

“I know thy works, and love, and service, and faith, and thy works, the last to be more than the first.”

The Lord must indeed reward, in His righteous government, the doer of evil according to his wickedness; but, in this day of grace, He is still acting in grace towards His failing servants. How beautifully is this manifested in these most touching words. What comfort to all who are conscious of failure to dwell

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upon them, to read them again and again. How could we go on without them? Misjudged on all hands, feeling and owning how prone we are to follow the impulse of nature, the desires of our own hearts, the judgment of others; how much there is in our life and ways not in accordance with the Lord's will, yet, while *we would not have anything passed over*, to know and realise we are still dealt with in perfect grace. How forcibly are we reminded of the words of David, in a time of deep, heart-searching sorrow, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are His mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

But for these epistles we may safely say, that not one of these seven churches could have formed a right estimate of its own condition, still less of the condition of any other. What, doubtless, were the thoughts of Ephesus, so earnest about discipline and service? Would they have judged that they had left all that was of value in the sight of the Lord? In Thyatira the error might have taken another form. They were allowing an evil of the greatest magnitude at the time when the Lord saw their hearts glowing with love.

What poor things we are. If grace abounds, righteousness fails; if righteousness prevails, grace is lacking. The Lord alone is full of grace and truth. Still it is striking that in Ephesus, where righteousness and service were so prominent, all ended in absolute failure. "First love" was gone, and "first works" ceased. So much easier is it to advance in light than in life, if indeed it be light. In Thyatira there was a real, if faint, reflection of the ways and walk of Christ; "love," "service," "faith," yet with all this they opened the door to the grossest corruption. Thyatira

suffered Jezebel, and doubtless Jezebel soon put things to the test. Where there is gold the crucible only severs the dross, thus the *last works* of the dear, but now oppressed, saints were more than the first. Faithfulness to Christ never shone more brightly than during the long, dark ages of church tyranny.

And surely by "Jezebel" (ver. 20-23) the Lord pointed to church tyranny and seduction, lording it on the one hand over the saints, and on the other boasting in its fancied knowledge of "the depths of Satan," while a prey to his devices. It may have been only in its germ in Thyatira, nourished at first by the claim to ministerial distinction, and the right to legislate contrary to the Holy Ghost and Scripture (Acts xv. 28, 29, 1 Cor. vi. viii. x.), but it grew up to the dark, cruel, deadly despotism of the papacy.

The sin of admitting Jezebel to a home in Israel opened the door to every enormity. She set herself to wipe out every trace of the Lord's delivering mercy. She stirred up Ahab, responsible to God to keep all the words of His law (Deut. xvii. 18-20), to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord. She cut off the prophets of Jehovah. She murdered Naboth for cleaving to the inheritance given him in electing grace.

But in the church the typical Jezebel went still further. She "called herself a prophetess," thus boldly claiming to have the mind of the Lord for what she did, and even the servants of the Lord were led astray by her assumption.*

* "In this typical sin, the place proper to Christ was usurped by the one who should have been subject to Him. When the authority proper to Christ is assigned to the church, or any of its members, then there is this usurpation of Jezebel." (Present Testimony, vol. V., p. 471.)

Notwithstanding all this, her wickedness has only served to make manifest the wonderful long suffering of the Lord. "I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication." (R.V.) Alas! when the will is engaged, as it assuredly is in this system, (and so with every one that copies this system), what hope is there of repentance? Never since the Reformation have more intense, incessant, persistent, and, alas! successful efforts been put forth to bring about submission to "the authority of the church," than during the last fifty years. The woman is to rule; the "law of the church" is to supersede the "law of the Lord;" the rule of Jezebel is to be supreme; the "ancient religion" is to be revived. The Anglo-catholic church is to be re-united to the Roman, and both to the Oriental church. Such is the hope of men, such is the prediction of this book (ch. xvii.). The young especially are ardent. Submission to ecclesiastical authority, instead of subjection to the Lord alone, has a charm for which, but for this wonderful epistle, we should be at a loss to account. But to subtilely undermine the authority of the Son of God is Satan's one object. Be it the rule of "the church" now, or the rule of "the beast, the false prophet," farther on, so long as *His supreme authority* is subverted, the enemy's work prospers.

But as Jezebel, her children and their followers met each their judgment, so will it be with this system, its agents, its children and its followers (ver. 22 with 2 Kings ix. 33-37; Rev. xvii. 15-18; also 2 Kings x. 7-18-28; with Rev. xvi. 19, xvii. 5; xviii. 4-8).

Oh, dear reader, have nothing to do with *her* works. The call of the *Son of God* is imperative *to-day*, when every barrier to Rome is decaying.

Overcome and keep *His* works. His grace will put no other burden on you, that which you have hold fast till He come. Test everything by Him and by Him alone. It is only for a little while.

And what is the reward? Read it as revealed in chap. xix. 11-21. If you share His sufferings during the brief moments of the enemy's triumph; if numbers, power, wealth, family, all are against you, turn with hope to the reverse of the picture. What will it be to share His triumphs, to be in that glorious, holy, heavenly, victorious army?

But there is more than this. "I will give him the morning star." This, too, is explained before the book closes (xxii. 16). It is HIMSELF. He counts upon real affection in us, not for the glory and the dominion He will give to us in that day, but for what He Himself is. His love will indeed enrich us with unspeakable glory, but He Himself is infinitely more precious than the glory He will give. While the unsaved sleep, and dream of the world's progress, we have the secret of Christ's heart as to ourselves. We are to be called away to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. iv.) to be united to Him as a bride to her husband, *and for eternity* (Rev. xix. 7, xxii. 17). Can love hold out a brighter prospect? And yet, again, can true love be satisfied with less? (John xvii. 24).

It is not without deep meaning that the appeal to hear comes, in this address, *after* the promise to the overcomer. Subjection to the Lord in a day of usurped authority involved rejection. The church counted all such subjection as heresy, and as outside her pale (the Waldenses, &c.). The Lord addresses them as "the rest" and encourages them. They cannot submit to Jezebel. This not only throws them

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together into the fire of persecution, as in Dan. iii., but discloses where the Lord is, and what His grace can do.

 CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

FRAGMENTS FROM NOTES.—(*Continued.*)

WE are in the wilderness now, and so we count by weeks and days; and the time seems long; but look up to the Lord Jesus and you can forget all this, for He; up there, looks upon you and says to you, "Surely I come quickly." To you, looking on things here, it may seem long, but to Him it is but a little while, and He can make it so to you. *Reckon on His love.* "Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them to the end." Is not this known to all who believe in Him, known from their own experience of that love? And, oh! how sweet is the experience of Christ's love in this cold world. When the heart is chilled, and yearns for a little warmth, to turn to the Lord Jesus to feel the warmth of His love! Looking up to Him my heart is always warmed. What an unfailing secret of purest happiness is this!

And what is it that feeds His love to His Church? From what source flowed the springs of that love? In the Epistle to the Ephesians we get the setting forth of that which would feed the love of Christ in regard to His church. In the first chapter we have the scene laid before time was (ver. 4). I am here taught that when the Lord Jesus looks at me, He

sees me as one who was chosen by the Father before time was, to show forth the glory of that grace that could accept me in the Beloved. He sees not only the poor lost sheep to bring home, the poor prodigal brought into the Father's house, but more, He sees, in me, one chosen of the Father, a secret purpose, He and the Father one in it. And can He have ought against me, or against you, poor saint, when He sat in council about us? And ought He not to have us seeing our association with these counsels of the Father in Him, before the foundation of the world?

But, secondly, His love is fed by the association of the Church with Himself, not only as one with Him, but as having Himself left all for it (Ep. v. 28). In the devotedness of His heart, He *gave Himself* for the church. Having borne our sins in His body on the tree—God Himself laying on Him then your iniquity and mine—He places us now in His presence without any other thought than that of His love. And can we look upon Him up there, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and not feel the unspeakable grace, purest and richest towards us, that raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him? When the Lord Jesus looks in the face of a poor sinner, thus saved by grace, does He not in effect say, “I do, and I must love you, but I love you for My Father's sake. I loved you because He chose you in Me before the foundation of the world, and I must *love you to the end for His sake?*”

As a child of God, wandering in the world's wilderness, it is very sweet to have comfort poured down to me in all my circumstances and my exercises, from Him who is unceasingly loving me; but even this is not so sweet as the thought that I can, by His grace,

have fellowship with the heart of the Father, as to His thoughts about His only begotten Son, and His love towards Him. Oh, what can compare with this—to enter into the revelation of God the Father's affection towards the Son of His love ?

And this is where grace has placed us. "Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." And, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Our hearts thus get rest, blessed rest, in *sonship*, simply by believing in Christ Jesus ; and the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, enable their happy throbbings to find expression in this wondrous cry of "Abba, Father ;" this new name, unknown to the Patriarchs or to the Jew. God has set us in His presence as sons, and life has flowed down to us, so that we can rise up and contemplate there the delight the Father has in His Son, and can have communion with the joy of the Father's heart in the Son. This it is that gives the church its highest point of glory.

Does the thought ever steal over your heart, Let things here be ever so clouded, there the Father's heart is fully satisfied, for there the Son is, and there, in infinite grace, my portion is, for I can say, *my Father*. In this sense alone the Lord calls us His brethren, thus alone can we be in association with Him who is on the throne of the Father, and it is thus the Spirit can feed us, administering all the thoughts of the Father and the Son to our hearts. Blessed truth ! that Son, the Lord Jesus, having become a *man*, and wearing man's form up there, we as men are associated with Him for ever. As man, that Son brought out the character of the Father, so that I, as a man, can understand it. Oh ! how one ought

to admire and adore the way Christ brought out the character of God on earth as love to the poor prodigal, and lost sheep. But He has given us to say, "His God is our God," and likewise, by His grace we can say, "His Father is our Father."

Thus we can look up and realise His present joy, even as He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." Does it ever come to you what happiness is *there*? How happy God must be with such a Son! How happy Christ must be!

No person save a child of God can be of the Bride, and it is the purpose of God that the Bride shall be shown out before the world, that the world may see the glory Christ has given her. The Father gave it to Him, but He cannot keep it for Himself. He must share it with those dear to Him (John xvii. 22, 23). The world will be forced to admire the Church in glory, and it ought to be admired as bought with His blood, for the Father's delight is in the Son, and there He is on the Father's throne, claiming all glory to give it to His bride.

But I do not find my deeper joy in this. I feel the Church's glory will be, the sense of being loved by the Father even as the Son is loved. This will surpass all else. That One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, causing all the love of the Father, as He knows it, to flow forth to us, and making us capable of receiving and enjoying that love—this is the deeper glory, the joy that surpasses all understanding.

We know "the Lamb," *worthy of all glory*, but we also know Him under another title.

I can say, "I know Thee as the Son who has revealed Thy Father to me. All, all would be nothing

to me did I not know Thee in the deeper glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." That name SON He ever bore. He bore it deep down here. He bears it high above in heaven. He is indeed the Son of Man, but this as having been made flesh. When He, as Son of Man, again enters this scene, why shall *we* fall down at His feet to worship? Because we know Him as the *only begotten Son of God*.

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, before there was anything—there was the Son in the bosom of the Father. The Father's house, the Father's bosom must be the resting place of the Church. Nothing can satisfy the Son but her being there, where He had rested from all eternity.

But we have this place of rest, by faith, even now. I shall never be more a son than I am now, else where were the force of that word, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God?" I have got the best part now. He has made me a son. He has given me to see and to enter into communion with the Father and with His Son (1 John i. 3). He makes me to enjoy the delight of the Father and of the Son as a fresh taste of heavenly joy in my soul day by day. If I am in trial down here, it is because this is no resting place for me. I know the Father is in perfect rest up there, and it is this that makes the heart happy, to have the same object and the same affections as He; for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Very little is said about the Father's house in Scripture, except in John xiv. One is never weary of these verses, because they tell of the personal love of the Lord Jesus. But locality is not defined nor the

thought of heaven introduced as meaning any particular locality. In John xvii. Jesus lifts up His eyes to heaven. Many found their ideas of heaven on some early association in their mind of a place of glory beyond the clouds, and connect it, more or less, with what the Word of God has made familiar to them.

But breaking down all this would leave the blessed thought of the Son now upon the Father's throne, and the Father setting them together in Him. Whenever my faith goes up there, what does it realise? The thought of One there who was once in all my circumstances of sorrow here, and the thought of *home* being up there *with Him*. Oh, what a warm, happy feeling the heart experiences at that thought. A man's heart is in his home, not because of the place, but because the object of his affections is there. The same in regard to heaven. I find uncommonly little of detail as to circumstances there, but I find unfading reality in one or two simple verses. For instance that one, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father." What a volume in that! The Lord Jesus Christ wanting us to enter into the joy of His heart at the thought of His being at home with His Father, saying, as it were, "I want to share the thought of my joy with you. I want you to rejoice with me, that so soon I shall be with the Father, and not only that, but you shall soon be with me too." If we could see all the glory of heaven it would be poor in comparison of seeing Him, the only begotten Son, on the throne of His Father.

G. V. W.

(To be continued.)

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

AND it has interested me very much to notice this, that it is just here (and in the corresponding place in Matt. xi.), that the mind of the Lord in those Gospels, approaches the most nearly to what it afterwards is in St. John. In St. John the Lord is in connection with the Father and the heavenly family, and it is just in this place of our Gospel that He looks out to those objects beyond all that was then surrounding Him in the apostate cities of Israel. It is as though our Evangelist had just laid hold on the skirts of St. John, or rather perhaps as though this mantle of our Prophet, that energy of the Spirit which clothes him here, were taken up by that other Prophet to do by it greater wonders, and bring out richer revelations still. The Father, the Son, the headship of all things in Himself and the family who have their names written in heaven (the church), Heb. xii. 23, these are the objects which are here present to the thoughts of the Lord, as He looks onward to what none then saw but Himself, through the unbelief of the Jewish cities, and this little sample of power in the hands of the seventy. And in Spirit He rejoices in all this, and takes afresh His complacency in the person and the purpose of the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, and also in His own place in the blessed mystery; turning, too, in all personal intimacy towards His disciples, as meaning to identify them with all this blessedness which here passes before His mind, which prophets and kings of

old had not attained, but which this communion with Himself was bringing them into.

But here we have a painful instance of the way in which the Lord's Spirit was liable to be intruded on in this low-thoughted world. He was at this moment, as we have seen, happy in thought of heavenly things, when a lawyer proposes an inquiry to Him, which came from other sources and springs altogether. But He bows His head to the intrusion and comes down to man's level. And in many other places, as here, we may notice the ease and patience with which He ever turned Himself towards man. I have already noticed the way in which He occasionally comes forth in divine glory at the bidding of faith (page 25), but his ease as a teacher or a healer coming forth at the call of man's ignorance or need, is equally lovely in its place. Nothing was too glorious in God for Jesus to assume when faith unveiled Him, and nothing too little in man for Him to wait on, when necessity or ignorance appealed to Him. And in all this He was never in haste, as though He felt He was meeting a difficulty, but always turns in the graceful as well as gracious ease of conscious power, telling the occasion, let it be what it may, that He was equal to it.

But this only by the way, beloved, if haply the Spirit would give us some delight in marking the ways of Jesus. This inquiry leads the Lord to the parable of the good Samaritan, which is peculiar to our Evangelist. The purpose of it was, to show this lawyer who his neighbour was; but in the usual way of the Lord, this instruction is conveyed in a body of larger doctrine. So that we get not only an answer to the inquiry, but other and larger principles of truth. I see the same in the character of the Apostle's teaching

afterwards. And this is always the way of power, and the way of God. God in His dispensations has done this. He does not merely restore what we had lost, but He brings in other glories and blessings which carry with them the full restoration. And so in divine instructions. The spirit of revelation not only answers the anxiety of an inquirer, but conveys that answer through truths and principles which unfold wider thoughts still. As here the law of neighbourly love is taught and illustrated by a beauteous exhibition of the grace of the Gospel of the Son of God brought in upon the complete inadequacy of everything else to answer the need of sinners.

(*To be continued.*)

EXTRACT.—Our hopes are not in the region of change, in the valley of the shadow of death. We are passing through it with a blessed, a divine Guardian, Guide and Helper, but our expectations are outside of it. Our springs are in God, our hopes in Him. It would be very blessed if we *realised* it more, but *the* blessing is that it *is* so. The present (I mean now till we get home) is not shrouded in gloom, and God would not have it so. He would have us form His estimate of the *place*, and seek nothing there. But we are His, and He is above the place that we are in, and “no good thing will He withhold.” We have all His resources for the way as well as at the end of it. This known in the heart keeps it at rest, at the same time as it produces the faithfulness which we would fain make a condition of the blessing. F.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. i. (*continued*).—It is not easy to leave a verse so full of refreshment and strength for the inner man; but its precious truths will be often before us as we meditate on this gospel. Here from first to last we behold His glory, and this ineffable glory is that of “the only begotten of the Father.” Unspeakable privilege to contemplate it, and to pour out our hearts in worship before Him; to view Him, Son of the Father, Word of God, full of grace and truth as He “dwelt among us;” to gaze and to adore!

But the Spirit of God, after a short parenthesis, puts into the lips of those who “beheld his glory” words which tell our portion in this manifestation of grace and truth. “Of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace.” He has been before us in this chapter as the infinite, eternal God; the Word “made flesh” could be no other. What fulness then is His! A woman in the crowd, pressed by her helpless need, touches the hem of His garment. Virtue is in Him; it is there in “fulness.” The touch of faith brings virtue out of Him to heal her. But the “fulness” is not lessened for the next need-pressed child of sorrow that comes to Him. Another comes to His fulness, and she a stranger to the covenants of promise. Thank God, another sample of faith in the presence of “his fulness!” But the children’s bread is not for dogs. No, but such is the “fulness” that the crumbs which fall from the master’s table would meet her need. What a chord in His being does faith touch! He places the whole of His fulness at her disposal:

"be it unto thee *even as thou wilt.*" And the next who came found the "fulness" still there in its abiding perfection. Such was it, that He would never have those who had received of His fulness to send empty souls away: "They need not depart, give *ye* them to eat."

Grace in its highest expression is the perfect love of God manifesting itself in the midst of evil. This grace dwelt in fulness in Christ—it dwells there ever; and we receive "grace for grace." Abundant grace; grace upon grace; grace meeting every need, yet rising above it; grace ever fresh for all our need, yet in its blessed outflow satisfying God in His sanctuary.

Verse 15 is a parenthesis, giving us the witness of John to the dignity and divine glory of Him who, born into this world later than he, and coming after him, was before him. Precious privilege to bear such witness! Happiest man of woman born! happiest until the "fulness" of grace and truth does its highest work: the "least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." There is a fresh testimony by John in every division of this chapter, v. 6, 15, 19, 29, 36, until the disciples who hear it leave John and follow Jesus. Ministry beyond all price which directs souls from itself to Christ! Joy of heaven for the One who renders it!

The contrast given in ver. 17 is very striking, the more so because it is the first reference in this gospel to the dealings of God before the Word became flesh, save the testimony of John. The personal glory of the blessed Lord so impresses the privileged vessel of its testimony that he at once delivers himself of his precious burden. The Word of God is there. He was eternally with God; He was God. Down here

He was the word made flesh ; His glory was seen as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. He was not only preferred before the one who came before Him, He *was* before him. Such is the testimony of the beloved disciple. But he does not even mention the preparatory dealings of God. Now, however, in divine wisdom he contrasts the service of Moses with the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The law is God's ; it was perfect in its place, and for its ends ; but it was not the revelation of God. It did not declare Him either in His nature or as Father. It is Christ who declares Him as God and as Father. The law tells what man ought to be for God ; Christ is the expression of what God is for man, when man has utterly failed to be aught for God, save a rebel and an enemy. God *sent* the law, He *brought* grace and truth. Grace and truth came (ἐγένετο) in the person of the Word made (ἐγένετο) flesh. The law required something of man. It did so rightly and divinely, seeing what man's condition is. "What things soever the law saith, it saith . . . that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." But it *gave* nothing. Yet it was in the heart of God to *give*, and the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But how could He give that which, whilst it met the need of man, satisfied the yearnings of the heart of God ? Only in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, "the very image of his substance." When the Word, become flesh, is among us, then and for the first time are grace and truth really come. That they might be ours His work was needed, and we find Him a little lower down in this chapter, "the Lamb of God." But grace and truth came in His person.

For God Himself was declared by Him, and declared as the Son in the bosom of the Father knew Him. The One who dwelt in "the thick darkness," whom no man hath seen nor can see, "was now declared." He was seen in the person of Christ. All the love of His heart, revealed now as grace, and all the truth of His being were there present. It was thus that grace and truth came. But there is more. The Son in that ineffable bosom knew fully the *Father*. He has made God known as Father. "I have declared unto them thy name (Father), and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 26). O what counsels of wisdom and goodness hung upon the coming of Christ! The Father would have children; such was His will and such His heart. None but the Son knew that bosom, none but He could make known what it is. It was His to declare the *Father's* name, and thus bring children to Him. It was His to make them know the love of that bosom in which the Son ever dwells. Priceless knowledge! Priceless grace that gives it to us!

Thus these 18 verses which form a sort of introduction, give us the purpose and scope of the gospel in words and a manner all divine. The more each chapter is considered in detail, the more all are considered together, and the more will it be seen that the gospel of John from first to last presents the glories which centre in and beam from the Word of God and the Son of the Father.

In the "record of John" given in the following verses, there is a further testimony to the dignity of the person of the blessed Lord. Not only does the Baptist efface himself in a grace which is most

beautiful—he is only a voice in the wilderness—but he declares that the One whom he introduces is Jehovah. He quotes from Is. xl. 3, where the word “Lord” is really Jehovah. The lowly one who comes “after John,” and who comes “unto him” is the

“Ever great I AM.”

Well might John, great as he was and honoured of God, say, “Whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”

“Fairer than all the earth-born race,
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenish’d are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest! we bow the knee
And own all fulness dwells in Thee.”

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER iii. 1.

THE resources that are in the Lord Jesus Christ are inexhaustible, and no change of time or of circumstances can deprive the waiting soul of these resources. There is not a need of the conscience or of the heart which the love of Christ cannot, and will not, supply. In the long catalogue of the sins of Israel (Ps. lxxviii.), not the least is that “they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel;” and we cannot read these addresses to the churches aright without being struck with the truth, that the sin of the church is want of faith in the fulness that is in Christ. Well might Paul say, “by faith ye stand;” for as the standing of faith gets weaker, the rays of light from the candlestick become fainter.

To the church in Sardis there is not a word of commendation, yet they were not guilty of holding false doctrine, or of identifying themselves with open flagrant evil. On the contrary, they sought to present themselves in the fairest character—a name to live—a high religious reputation. They doubtless preserved the utmost outward decorum, a correct creed, and an ordered service; but it was the order of the flesh, not of the Spirit, the authority of man, not of God alone. This is surely indicated in the character of the address, the church, as a whole, being absolutely destitute of anything that the Lord had for it. “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

However fair their profession, they were found wanting in reality. But, oh! the unspeakable mercy, in the midst of this barren church, this place of utter destitution, this empty form, this lifeless company, there is found One walking in the very fulness of power, and the sufficiency of grace for all who will look to Him; the very emptiness of all else only giving occasion for the display of the abundance that is in Him.

No doubt Protestantism generally is an illustration of the characteristic feature of the church in Sardis, and evidently was foreshadowed in it, as the rule of the Papacy in Thyatira.

The speedy relapse into dead form, after the first energy of faith in the reformers, is well known; though many a chosen vessel of the Lord has been used in blessing then and since. Still it cannot be denied, that even men of God sought to supply the place of direct dependence on the Lord by ordered forms, and

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a humanly appointed ministry. With all due honour to the great leader of the Reformation, we may yet, with profit to the soul, contrast two scenes. Luther on his face before the Lord, just before he was to appear in the presence of the Roman Emperor, and the whole power of the civil and religious world.

"Do Thou, O Lord, assist me against all worldly wisdom and understanding. Do this. THOU must do it. THOU ALONE. I rely upon no man. Come, oh, come!"

And when the decisive moment arrived, hear him.

"My conscience, *and the Word of God*, hold me prisoner; therefore I may not, nor will recant! Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me. Amen!"

Man had no place in these solemn moments. "THOU, THOU ALONE, O LORD."

But turn to another scene, but a few years later. Luther, favoured by the Elector (John), is commissioned to prepare a new church service for his dominions, and in compliance he arranged a mode of worship "as a public attraction to Christian faith." First the *Latin Mass*, "purified in the spirit of the Gospel." Second the *German Mass*, "for the sake of the ignorant laity." A third he proposed "for serious Christians, ready to confess the Gospel with hand and mouth;" but this was for some future day, "when true and earnest Christians might unite for that object, and require it of him"—a day he never saw.

Fatal delusion! "A public attraction to Christian faith" puts a slight on the attraction of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is, in His sight, but covering over death with a deceitful appearance of life. Oh, to ever imitate the *faith* of earnest men of God, but never their departure, a hair's breadth, from Scripture. The

Lord bids the church "remember." "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent."

They had received, they had heard the Word of God. It once held them prisoner, as Luther said. It bowed their consciences to God, it rested their faith on Christ. To acknowledge any other authority, to rest on any servant, however honoured, was to effectually destroy conscience and faith, to exchange the most precious substance for the most worthless shadow. "Hold fast, and repent." How gracious the call!

But to return to the all-important opening words of this address. "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." He hath all the fulness of the Holy Ghost, in all His infinite perfections and qualities, and he hath also every vessel of mercy, that He qualifies by the Spirit for true and effectual testimony. Not a servant that He fits to serve, but He claims, and none have a right over them to dispose of their service but Himself. It will greatly refresh the weary heart, weary of the failure and the ruin everywhere, weary of asking where shall I go? What people are real? Where is there no pretence, no assumption, no mere hollow name to cover nakedness?—to turn to God's testimonies to the precious truth in these opening words.

We have the Lord's own testimony, that *the fulness of the Holy Ghost* for every need of Israel was in Himself, when He was made flesh, and dwelt among them. (Compare Is. lxi. 1, 2 and Luke iv. 17-20). But Israel had a name to live. Self-righteous and self-satisfied, they despised and rejected Jesus, though "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Proofs abound in all the gospels, "How God

anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." Who has not lingered at Sychar's well? That poor woman, weary with toil for bodily refreshment, brought into the immediate presence of One still more weary with His journey to save and bless her perishing soul. What darkness, what deadness were there! With what perfect grace, what inimitable tenderness, what meekness of wisdom does the Lord draw her from herself, and her miserable surroundings, to thoughts of Messiah and what was prophesied of Him. (Is. xli. 17). And Messiah was there! And His love opened up at once such floods of joy, and peace, and blessing in her soul, that she left behind that which spoke of her poverty and wretchedness to spread abroad the glad tidings of His presence. Yes, indeed, the fulness of the holy Spirit for the blessing of souls was in Jesus in the days of His humiliation, and He was then the Giver of living water to any who would ask of Him. (John iv.).

The fulness of the Spirit was in Christ when He rose from the dead. In John xx. 19, Jesus came into the midst of His assembled disciples, and not only gave them the clearest evidence of His resurrection and peace in connection with it, but He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." All the power of life in resurrection, and of the Holy Spirit in connection with that life, was thus communicated from the risen Lord to those poor, timid, trembling disciples. Precious proof that not only was life in Him, but all spiritual energy and power to bring them into communion with Him, and to lead them in their service, forming their ways after Himself. "Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." These words were not said to

the apostles only, but to all the gathered disciples. (ver. 19).

The fulness of the Holy Spirit is in Christ Jesus as ascended to the right hand of God.

"Therefore," said Peter on the day of Pentecost, "he (Jesus) being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Compare John i. 33, Acts i. 5, ii. 1, 4, 1 Cor. xii. 13). The Lord received the Holy Ghost again in glory, and gave the precious Gift to those on earth who believed in Him. (Acts ii., x., &c.). To follow out this truth in all its results would fill a volume, but the presence of the Holy Ghost, as THE GIFT from the ascended Lord, is characteristic of the present time. We can say, "The day of Pentecost is fully come."

But richly as the saints of God are blessed by the presence of the Spirit, and solemn as are their responsibilities, both corporate and individual, because of His presence, in this address we are reminded of what is, alas! so easily lost sight of, viz., that

The fulness of the Holy Spirit is in Christ now. To lose sight of the Lord Himself, while engaged with the privileges of His body, the church, is to practically forfeit all enjoyment of those privileges. Not one single saint on earth, whatever his gift, can be in the enjoyment of spiritual life, or energy, or blessing, but through direct, personal, communion with Him. This is equally true of any assembly of saints, and it is this that gives such unspeakable value to the promise in Matt. xviii. 20. The very end and purpose of God in bestowing on us the gift of the Holy Spirit (and *every child of God* by faith in Christ Jesus has received, and

is in possession of this wondrous gift, see Gal. iii. 26 and iv. 6), is that we may *abide in Christ*. (1 John ii. 27, 28). We possess indeed the Spirit, but the *fulness* of the Spirit is in Him; and in Him alone is that fulness seen in every fruit and every grace, in Him alone is it enjoyed, and by Him alone can those fruits be displayed in the church, or in any individual Christian. Every system, then, that in any degree practically slights the LORD CHRIST as the alone source of life, and of all spiritual energy, power, blessing, order and rule, is challenged in this address. But who will hear the challenge? The world has crucified Him, and refuses to believe in Him, therefore can receive nothing from His hand but judgment. God in mercy still proclaims the gospel of His grace to deliver souls out of it, before He sends His Son again; and *every one* that repents and believes (Acts xx. 21) is delivered, is saved, and is united by the Holy Spirit, given to him on believing (Eph. i. 13), to Christ and to all other believers (1 Cor. xii. 13). Thus mystically the "many members are one body *in Christ*, and every one members one of another." But there is no treasury of grace in the members, nor in any number of members together. In Him, and in Him alone, "all the fulness was pleased to dwell." The Epistle to the Colossians contains the most complete and instructive exposition of the truth addressed to Sardis, and note, it was also sent to Laodicea (iv. 16), a still further development of "name" without reality.

But the world gathered in congregations (national or otherwise), has become practically, in many countries, the church; and multitudes, in matters of eternal moment, assume to be what they are not, have a *name* that they live and are dead. What little life there is

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in any is weakened by contact with the world. Spots and stains from the world and from the flesh are contracted through disobedience (Tit. ii. 12, 1 Pet. ii. 11, James i. 27, Jude 23), and even the works done are not perfect (complete) before God (or as we should read "*my* God"); for they are not entirely of Christ, as assigned to Him and done alone for His glory. A *few* there are whom the Lord approves and encourages to persevere in true, holy separation from everything that defileth, by the hope of soon being His companions, where the world cannot intrude, and (ver. 4, and xix. 7, 8) where all will be holiness, and love, and blessing. Upon the world, let it take what name it may, He will come as a thief, to His own as the Bridegroom for His bride. To the one, with a more sudden and terrible destruction than that of Sodom and Gomorrah (1 Thess. v. 3); to the other, for a more glorious translation than that of Enoch (iv. 17).

One word as to the promise to the overcomer (ver. 5). There is the book of life (see xx. 15) in the Lord's keeping. None but He can either write or blot out a name there. It is His joy to write the names of all who come to Him (read and study Luke x. 20-22 with Matt. xi. 25-30), for it is His Father's will and purpose (John vi. 27-40). That joy none can take from Him (Luke xv. 5, 6, and John x. 14-18, and 27-29). These and like Scriptures are of vital importance against the enemy's misuse of this verse, for Satan can and does misuse Scripture.

Then why does the Lord say, "I will not blot his name out of the book of life?" Because He will give grace to *the end* to every poor sinner that comes to Him. Count the promises to this effect, and be astonished at the number; and "all the promises of God in

him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God *by us*" (2 Cor. i. 20-22). But the Church in Sardis professed to keep a register of living souls, they had a name that they lived. How they got the name, whether by ordinances or in some other way, is not said; they had it (not by Christ, or they would not be "dead"), and Sardis allowed it. How many might Sardis inscribe as belonging to the Church, who never came in true and simple faith to Christ; deceived souls, perhaps, deceived however not by the book of God, but by the Church. See to it, dear reader. Be not satisfied with a name in the Church's register. The one all-important question is—Have you in all your ruin, wretchedness and sin, *believed on the Lord Jesus Christ* for salvation? Then let the Church inscribe or let it blot—your name stands imperishably in the *Lamb's book of life*; and, as when the Good Shepherd had safely brought his poor lost sheep home, he called his friends and neighbours together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost," so will the Lord present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24. 25). To Him be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both *now* and for ever. Amen.

FROM LUTHER'S HYMN.

Our God is a strong tower,
 A sure defence and weapon;
 He aids in every hour,
 Whate'er distress may happen.
 The old and evil foe
 Striveth to bring us low,
 Great in His craft and might;
 Full armed for the fight;
 On earth none can Him liken.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

And were the world of devils full,
 All threatening to devour us,
 We fear not—to Him dutiful,
 They cannot overpower us.
 Prince of this world in vain
 Round us his darts may rain,
 He us no harm can do ;
 His arts must perish too ;
 A little word can slay him.

Translation.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

FRAGMENTS FROM NOTES—(*Continued*).

It is the heart God wants. He has done all that love could do, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, to win the heart of poor sinners to Himself. He has, as it were, thrown the whole door open to receive us, and thus to draw us into joy and blessing. Oh, the rich unfoldings of grace in that fourteenth chapter of John ; grace laying open the rich glories in the Father's house for those who were ready to forsake the Lord (John xvi. 32). What a contrast we are to Him, and yet He is ever occupied in caring for us, in preparing joy for us. His eye is ever following us, and He knows well every beat of the heart and every thought. And shall I dare to say that He is more sympathising to-day than yesterday, because I *appreciate* it more. Are not the sympathies of Christ ever flowing, and is not our varied appreciation of them as if one lifted up a stone in the desert and the water is seen flowing, and again lifting up a stone and it is seen flowing still ?

It would certainly be a much happier thing to be

present with Him and absent from the poor body, but if it is the will of Him who loves me with a love that wills I should stay here, the sweetness of doing His will ought to be enough. Ought I to mind being here for a while, in the midst of all that tries me in every way, if I am to taste His love in it all? Then why stand still gazing up with tearful eyes, instead of pressing forward, full of joy? It is but "a little while."

There is no selfishness mixed with the cry, "Come, Lord Jesus;" but if He were to rise up and come to-night, would He find many waiting for Him? I believe He would, and bless God it is so. It is distinctly manifest that God is now working. He never came of old without giving a testimony beforehand. . . .

"We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God is dealing with us now, and He would have us go forward with Him. He sets value on these works because they are prepared by Himself. Is it nothing to have God working in us now, to will and to do of His good pleasure? Nothing that He should see in us the expression of the life of Christ? Think what it will be when we see the Lord Jesus, what it will be to have the life of Christ filling the body (Phil. iii. 21), in a scene where all will harmonize. We begin in the wilderness to go on in the glory. The energy of God given to the soul, enables us now to walk in works which are the expression of that energy, and of our vital union with Christ. Is this only in the wilderness? No; it is to be carried on in glory, and for ever.

There is a speciality, too, of providence in connection with every individual. God is great enough to count

the hairs of our head. You and I are too little for this. God is so great that He can count up the cups of cold water (Matt. x. 30, 42). We are too little to do so; we can only lay hold of general traits, and things and services more marked. Who marked the path for a Daniel or for a Paul in their day, and the early Christians in theirs? Who fixed the time of your birth, all your path in life, your sicknesses, your bereavements?—God, the living God. God comes in everywhere, in every thought, and step, and act of life, in every bit of testimony, to speak a right word to one in the street. These are works prepared of God that we should walk in them. The thought of this will give importance to many a thing little in itself; it will give sweetness to many a bitter cup, and stop many an act where self-will would come in and take the rein. Doubtless as you look back you will see much failure, much going after your own will, but can you not see that God was there to turn the page over (Gen. xxviii. 16; xxxii. 24, 30), to mark out again your walk with Him in the path prepared for you? You may be stumbling through your duties and going wrong, the thoughts taken up with this care and that trouble, but having loved you, His love changes not because of what you are. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." . . .
