

Food for the Flock.

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“THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE AS GOADS,
AND AS NAILS FASTENED BY THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES,
WHICH ARE GIVEN FROM ON SHEPHERD.

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THE RUIN AND THE REMEDY.

IN the Bible only is the full nature of man's ruin exposed and depicted; and there only is a perfect remedy—God's remedy—revealed. If there be any limitation of the extent and depth of the ruin, there must be a still greater misapprehension of the remedy, because the remedy is not merely equal to the measure of the ruin, but, as the remedy is the gift of grace through our Lord Jesus Christ, it must from the mere fact of its source be divine, and far beyond the expectation or sensible requirement of man. It must be magnificent in every part.

Yet the remedy, however great, cannot be appreciated unless the need of it be felt. Hence the need of man because of his ruin must be the first sense, in some measure, in the awakened soul. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;" the awakening of the soul necessarily discloses to it its danger and its misery.

When the extent of the ruin is before the mind of the evangelist, when his heart is yearning for the good of souls, he would feel himself straitened and incapable did he not know that the remedy could in every detail meet the misery before him. If he see only a part of the misery,

he contents himself with offering to and pressing on the sinner that portion of the remedy which will relieve that part. Hence the preacher must know the ruin not partially, for then he will present the remedy only partially. And very often the remedy known partially is, in the mind of the evangelist, that which indicates the ruin, instead of a knowledge of the ruin leading him to ascertain the divine remedy. It is when I am aware of the ruin that I look for the remedy; and, on the other hand, when I have true and right apprehension of the remedy and its scope, I must soon see the nature and depth of the ruin.

Let us take some examples of this in Scripture. There the remedy in divine measure covers the ruin. The famished prodigal son is not only kissed and clothed, but he is feasted in the Father's house. The evangelist must either leave him "a great way off," where the Father kisses him; or he must set him in the Father's house, *beginning* to be merry. Has his ruin been relieved—has the remedy reached the full measure of the ruin and the need, until he is in the Father's house? One might say he was safe from judgment when the Father had kissed him; reconciliation had been effected; the terrible distance between God and the sinner had been crossed by the love that had found a ransom; but the prodigal's ruin requires much more.

The question is:—Am I at liberty to propose to a prodigal part, of the divine remedy and withhold the rest?

Take another case; that in Luke x.—the man who has fallen among thieves.

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him, and departed leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.”

Here man's ruin is fully depicted, and here we shall find the remedy is in divine perfection in every part. Where the ruin is sensibly felt, where the sinner is consciously awakened to his state, he feels he is painfully incapable to refuse any relief, and he feels he wants it. No state could be more deplorable. He needs relief, and yet he would refuse it if he could. If he were not so broken down he would not accept it, so that it is his very misery that makes him fit for grace. He has the wounds, and wounds

only. He has nothing to commend him but his need.

And now he receives wine and oil into his wounds. Christ comes as the neighbour. Under the law, but not confining Himself to the limits of the law, He magnifies the law; and, while He meets man according to the measure of the law, He travels out beyond it into the depth and breadth of God's love. He makes the law honourable in the way He fulfils and magnifies it; whilst He meets with a divine remedy the entire state of the poor sinner. He not only pours oil and wine into his wounds—that is, cures him. This, of course, is the first thing; the man is cured. But were I to limit the remedy to this, while I admit much would have been done for the sinner, yet I should come very short of the remedy given me by God for him.

If I am sent to a suffering person with three or four distinct gifts which the mind of the donor (who is fully acquainted with the need of the sufferer) considers requisite, am I at liberty to give him only one, because that one gives great relief, and to withhold the others? Certainly not. I should err in a double way. I should not fulfil the commission intrusted to me, I should misrepresent the donor, and I should deprive the needy one of the favours given me for him. The remedy reaches not only to the cure of the sinner, not only to an assured rescue from judg-

ment, and unquestionable safety, but it meets him in his powerlessness, as we read, he sets him on "his own beast."

The ruin of the sinner is only partially relieved if he be only cured. It is undoubtedly most necessary, but it is not enough for a perfect remedy, which God in His grace supplies. The cured one is set upon a new power—the power of Christ; he is now to be borne along by the power of Christ, entirely in a new way, not according to man's power or ways. He has tasted of the bitter end of all of man, and as a cured one he enters upon a new course—a new life and a new ability are given him. He may very partially avail himself of it, but this new power is as much part of the remedy as the cure is.

I must not limit it. The sinner should be impressed and convinced of the fulness and largeness of grace. Not only is a cure for the heart's misery sent through the work of Christ, but the life and power of Christ are also given to meet the powerlessness of his state. Otherwise, as we often see, a soul may be assured of cure—of forgiveness of sins—and yet have no idea of the power or walk which should characterise him now as a cured one. This part of the remedy may never have been made known to him. The remedy is one whole, though divided into parts, and I am not at

liberty to insist on one part of it, namely, the cure, and be silent about the other parts of it.

Were I sent to minister medicine, money, and a home to any indigent person, should I consider I had properly executed my work because I had given the medicine? Surely I should, in such a case, have deprived the invalid of two very important items necessary for his state. No one with any integrity would excuse himself for so grievous a defalcation of service.

Now, in ministering to souls, there is not only the loss of the benefits of the remedy if any part be omitted or withheld, but there is a correspondent deficiency or lack of testimony to the grace of God in the life and ways of the convert.

Suppose I tell a sinner that Christ, through His work, will cure his sin-distressed soul, and he receives this truth in faith, he is cured. But, if I say no more about the remedy, this cured soul seeks to drag on in his weak, powerless state, the only real improvement in him being that he has been relieved of the fear of judgment—the penalty of his sins. How differently such an one would feel were I to insist that the same One who had cured him would now confer upon him His own power. For his ruin would not be adequately relieved unless he were given new power.

And this power is not the power merely of

restored health ; such as might be the effect of the cure. It is an entirely new kind of power—a power unknown before—the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily would lead him into His line of things, outside and apart from man, to walk here as Christ walked.

And this power is not only offered ; it is conferred. Thus it is shown in this parable. The relieved sufferer is set on “his own beast,” the figure of the power in which Christ walked here. He brings him to an inn and takes care of him. Then his miserable condition is entirely met : cured, carried, and cared for. If the ruin have been terrible, the remedy is most effectual in every point.

Every convert may not enjoy the greatness or perfection of the remedy, yet it is important to assure every perishing soul of the full nature and scope of the remedy, so that he may be convinced, at least, that there is no limitation on the part of God, though he have not faith to grasp it. There is a vast difference between the state of the soul of the one who, though converted, never heard of the fulness of the remedy as set forth in these parables, and the one who, though he have heard it, has not sensibly entered into it. In the former there is no exercised conscience ; there is no sense of failure, because not enjoying what has been conferred upon him ; but there is a sense of

lack continually—a feeling of wanting something to render him fully happy; for he does not know and has never heard of the fulness of God's remedy for him, and hence he turns to earthly mercies to fill his cup. But the one who has been taught the fulness of God's remedy, even though he do not enjoy it, is continually warned by his conscience of the greatness of the mercy vouchsafed to him. The one may not have, as far as his knowledge goes, the land from which he could produce all he requires; while the other knows he has the land, and that, if he would but till it, he would have all he needs.

How differently each must feel! The one craving and pining because he does not know what would fully satisfy his heart and relieve him of all the *consequences* of his ruin; the other knowing it, and as he uses the gift through Jesus Christ, appearing before men in a new and wonderful condition. Intensely happy, because not only cured of his wounds, but invested with the power of Christ; thus set in superiority to all that affects and overwhelms man here; and consciously, under the care of Christ while pursuing his pilgrimage through this dreary world, he is a beautiful testimony on the earth of what Christ has done,—of God's remedy for man's ruin; so that every one seeing him will greatly marvel and glorify God.

J. B. S.

THE ETERNAL LIFE IN PAUL.

PHILIPPIANS iii

THERE were two things very present to the mind of the Spirit when by Paul He wrote the epistle to the Philippians. The first was eternal life manifested in a believer—a beautiful sight to dwell upon; heartfelt, soul-enjoyed eternal life filled the apostle Paul in all its power and energy. And the second was the contrast with this, namely, that there were dogs and evil-workers who denied the power of it, who were enemies of the cross of Christ. The word is an important one to ourselves.

Just see the beauty of the eternal life that filled the soul of the apostle Paul, and flowed forth from him to others. If there be a worldly person here, I would say to any such: What do you think of that? And to the child of God I say: Is this picture that Paul gives of himself practically true of you?

In the beginning of the epistle he speaks of the treacherous, tricky dealing of some who named the name of Christ: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill; the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." But he goes on: "In nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified

in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die gain." Eternal life had so completely filled the vessel, that the individual was sure that, as it had been, so it should be to the end: whether by life or by death Christ would be magnified. Here a prisoner to the emperor, he says: Whether he cut off my head or let me go, it is all the same; Christ shall be magnified in my body; for to me to live is Christ, and to die, gain.

Then he goes on in the second chapter to show, that if he were on earth the model man, which he was, that that after which he was formed was infinitely superior. The Son of the Father had come down, had taken upon Him the form of a servant, had been made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and for this God had highly exalted Him, had placed Him at His own right hand and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—bow to the Son of His love. There was the perfection of that eternal life, in comparison with which Paul's little bit of fervour, Paul's little bit of whole-hearted devotedness, was just as nothing at all. Still it was beautiful—the eternal life in the vessel, an earthen vessel, a fragile vessel, and the bright light shining out. It was one single thing, and that was *Christ*. When the knowledge of that

got hold of a Saul, he said: I have but one single thing to do on this earth, and that is to so walk that Christ may be magnified.

But now, on the side of the apostle as on the side of Christ, the life that was led down here—in the blessed Lord of course perfect, in the apostle Paul not to be compared with it—what lay at the root of it? He does not come to this till the third chapter; and here he takes up the religion of a fallen nature, and the religion of a risen and ascended Christ. Paul was walking in the power of the latter.

If there be one thing that strikes my mind as I look at Paul's account of what he had been as a Jew, it is the littleness—the *contemptible littleness*—to which he reduces all human righteousness. Just listen to the words in which he shows it out. Item 1: an eighth-day circumcision. Item 2: of the stock of Israel. Item 3: of the tribe of Benjamin. Item 4: an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Item 5: as touching the law, a separatist—which is what the word Pharisee means. You can hardly count what he says next, “concerning zeal persecuting the church,” as part of his righteousness as a Jew. He could say: “As touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;” because if he had neglected anything there was the sacrifice, so that the thing, whatever it was, might be covered over.

But take the whole of it; it was all human righteousness—call it Adamic righteousness, if you like. Could Adam, after he was turned out of the garden, say: Everything that is required of me by God I have rendered, as a creature to a Creator?

And if we take the different items of it. As to circumcision, God gave it first to Abram, and then to all those descended from him. If the descendants were lineal, such as Ishmael, they had a perfect right to it, as much as those descended through Isaac. Then, next, it was quite an accident of providence that Paul was of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, out of all those who had crossed out of Mesopotamia. He was thus a thorough Jew, and not only so, but he had regard for ordinances, and separated himself from all obvious evil.

I will just observe, if ever it is a question of human righteousness, that it is always a question of *time*. God does not give His sentence in time, except so far as saying, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Now could Paul have had the thought that, when he had died and was risen again, all these privileges of nature and providence would come up in resurrection? No! They would not stand a man in stead before the throne of God. They are nothing but the first Adam. And what is the history of the first

Adam? Why, murder comes in at once; all evil comes in; just as if, in a mighty accumulation of water, there come but the least little chink in the bank, in a very short time the whole country below will be deluged. So it was. And is that stream going on now? Yes. That flood has gone on from Adam down, and will, till the Lord comes and takes the kingdom and puts down evil by His own presence. And even then, no sooner is it let loose again than man will go up against the very camp of God Himself. Then comes the great white throne, and the whole rebel family judged according to their works; and what comes of that? Every one of them cast into hell.

There will be righteousness reigning on this earth for a thousand years when He is King; but righteousness will abide for ever and ever in the new heavens and the new earth. When I come to measure that there were seven thousand years granted to man to show out his puny wickedness in, and in which has been shown out, too, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, I say: What will be seven thousand years in connection with that new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness for ever and ever!

Not like Adam, Christ. With Adam it was straining upwards and onwards to get what God had not given him. With Christ it was becom-

ing obedient unto death ; He humbled Himself until that body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea, to lay in his new grave. The first body that was laid in that grave was that of the life-giving Spirit ! He began His course, indeed, in quite a different way. Adam trying what he could get, whilst Christ went down to the cross, took the course due to the sinner, and then lay in that grave till the time marked in Scripture for Him, and then came to life again. Who ever heard of a man taking his own life again ? No one ever did ! There is but one case in Scripture, and that is the blessed Lord. He says : " I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again ; " and He came out of His grave.

And here was Saul of Tarsus running his course, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and He stopped him and let a ray of light into his soul. Others who were with him saw the light and heard the voice, but they did not understand it. He just showed Himself to Saul of Tarsus. And what came out in that scene ? Why, that the Nazarene Saul thought he could blot the name out of the earth of, Saul discovered to be Jehovah up there. He thought honestly that he, with his mighty energy, could blot that name out ; and he, perhaps for the first time in his life, asked, " What wilt thou have me to do ? " Before this he thought he

knew what to do himself; before this he could afford to patronize; before this he thought that this Nazarene was only an impostor; but now he discovered that the Nazarene could act upon him when he could not act upon the Nazarene. Now there was not one single thing to be done. The Nazarene could set him apart to be the instrument for the spread of His name through the whole earth.

And what is the history of that Nazarene?

I have just touched upon the history of that which sprang up a little stream in Eden, and broke into a mighty river to find its end at the great white throne. The rejection of Christ is a part of that history. And then came the peculiar time when He in glory was again rejected by the Jews. The murder of Stephen was the first step in that. In the epistle to Timothy, when Paul says, "Sinners, of whom I am chief," there is not a doubt in my mind that he had in his thought the moment when he was urging and cheering on those who were rejecting the Holy Ghost.

But the stream of time rolls on, and the Lord calls one after another; not by a vision, like Saul of Tarsus, but still something passes from the Lord of glory right down into the soul of that particular person, just as it did to Abram or to Saul. Most of us can say there was a time when we did not know Christ, and a time when

we did know Him. Nineteen years of my life were spent in vanity and folly; but when He revealed Himself to me I was turned right round, and people thought I was mad, as they did Paul.

But the history of that Nazarene! Oh if you look forward to the to-morrow of Christ! His going down into death; that is His yesterday. His now caring for us at the right hand of the Father; that is His to-day. And His coming in glory; that is His to-morrow. He will then put forth His power; His people are waiting for Him; He will change their vile bodies, making them like unto His glorious body, and then take them back with Him to the Father's home, and give them the kingdom. I look at Adam like a little handful of snow rolling down the mountain side and gathering size as it rolls along; but after all, when it gets to the bottom, it is only a little thing. But the Son, the free gift of His love! What a poor portion has the family of the first Adam been, compared with that of the Second!

He says: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." God has found His heart satis-

fied. It is 1840 years since Christ took His seat at His right hand. And as to Paul, everything in comparison with that Christ was but as loss and defilement; so much so that he uses, as his estimate of it, words hardly fit, you know, for polite society. But when a person comes into God's presence he sees it is dung, evil, everything that is connected with that which God has condemned.

“That I may win Christ;” a sweet little word for those who can get it! “That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” What a difference between these two thoughts; what a difference if I can look up and say, Abba, Father, instead of having my own righteousness; if I can say, I know I am trying to meet Abba's mind; I know that Christ has washed me in His blood, and that I am clean every whit. What a thing to appear before the Bema of Christ as a saved person, and hear Him say: Since the day I turned you from Saul into Paul many of my own dear people doubted you—thought you went too far; but now I am going to own you.

“The righteousness that is through the faith of Christ.” I am washed in the blood of God's Son as much the moment I get to Christ, as I am after twenty years' service. If I am a par-

doned sinner, I can say : Well, blessed Lord, thou hast laid down thy life for me, and I am ready to lay down my life for thee. According to the mind of the Spirit He laid His life down for me, and as one who has been saved by Him, I am ready to lay down my life any moment He is pleased to call.

There were two things in Paul : this righteousness of God that he had in Christ, and then the glory in which it was to be brought out. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Well, what when He comes for us? "He will change this vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." I shall appear then according to the likeness of the glorious body that my Lord wears. He will change it; and certainly God will find no fault with what Christ does. I wear the glory of Christ; the body of humiliation which I did wear is now changed, and I appear before Him "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

One little word here I would like to say to any person who is not holding the ground in his own conscience of being accepted in the Beloved. If I appear before God as a descendant of the first Adam merely, it is a question whether I can meet all the just claims of God. But, if I appear before God as washed in the blood of Christ, I

appear before Him on the ground of my ruin, and before God not on the throne of judgment but on the throne of mercy. I say: Certainly I am a sinner, but the blood of thy Son is on the throne, and I come into thy presence not on the ground of reward to me according to my doings—if I did it would be human righteousness—but I come on the ground of Christ at thy right hand, so I come on the ground of mercy.

Do you know how I found peace? I said once to a troubled soul. Depend upon it when God looks upon Christ He sees far more ground of merit in Him than He sees of demerit in you. He sees nothing but exceeding beauty. The whole position—everything—is changed. All is changed between a person drawing near to see what God will think about him, and a person drawing near to see what God will think about Christ. All men are rebels, and God says to them: If you come into my presence to see what I think about that Christ that is there, in the language of a man it would be this: That blood that justifies *me* in dealing with rebels, is certainly sufficient to satisfy *you*. What satisfies me may satisfy you. And that is mercy—an entirely different ground to your human righteousness. It is all the savour of His own perfectness. It is all through that Man that is sitting here on my right hand—the Son of my love, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And He has given Him that name of *Saviour* just to establish our hearts. Supposing you were in glory, and were to see that the Lord Jesus Christ had saved you, but there was no one else saved but you in all heaven—why the name of *Saviour* would be a dishonour to Him! for He would have saved no one. But He is the One who is competent to save.

Just see the course of this man Paul. He says, My eyes are forward upon Christ.—There are two positions for my soul: in the one I look up, and see God's provision for me; in the other I look forward, and I see He will come forth, and I wait to see Him come forth upon that cloud of glory. And, as to the life down here, can I say it is a life of fellowship with the blessed One up there? "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is Christ behind, Christ above, Christ before. That Christ being in heaven, he says, Now one thing my heart wants, and that is Himself. I have not got it yet, but I know I shall come forth in glory, and that when I see Himself I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is.

"Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." What is this perfection here? It is the perfection

of discipleship. He has grasped and apprehended all the beauty of Christ, and, if he be a true genuine learner in the school of Christ, he forgets what is behind, looks at what is before, and then runs. Take a babe in Christ; he is told in the epistle of John to go on and study that part of the book which is necessary to him as a young man. And then the young man is to go on and study that which will make him a father or a mother in Christ. It is "reaching forth unto those things which are before." As to experience—what is it? Nothing but Christ. As to help by the way? Nothing but Christ. As to the goal before me? Nothing but Christ. "Pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

You who truly believe in the Lord, are you really occupied with the Christ of God? Here is a heart and there is a mind occupied with one thing and another. I might pass current down here among you with very little care perhaps, but is it *Christ*? When Christ died He died for me; when Christ rose He rose for me; when Christ went to heaven He went to heaven for me; and now in me down here, there is a new man formed in my heart. Is it that Christ? And is the future characterized not only to God's mind but to mine by that Christ? And if He were to call you home to-night, could you say, The sooner the better? A lady said to me a

little time ago, speaking of her ill-health, "I find I can get no air in which I can breathe." I answered her, "Well, I find *any* air will do for me to *die* in."

I will not say the Lord is leaving me down here too long; I am willing to stay as long as He wills, but it would be better—far better—to depart and be with Christ. If I were told I should go before morning, it ought to be my hearty response, "Even so, Lord, for so it seemed good in thy sight." If any of you were to die to-night, your body would be laid in the grave to wait to be changed, and your spirit would be present with the Lord—that One who has shown His love to you in such a costly way. He is now bearing our names there on high before God; then He will come out, putting forth the glorious power that is in Himself to change the bodies of those that are alive and to raise the bodies of those that sleep, to make them like His own.

How many things had you to do last week? Ten thousand duties! and the sun that rose in the heavens was the light by which they all had to be done. And if you are Christians all has to be done in the light of "Come, Lord Jesus." Thus we may show forth the super-excellency of the work of God as the Saviour-God. All ought to bear that mark.

And I do beseech you by all that meets me,

both here in England and as I pass all over the world, let Christ be *within* you; Christ *abiding* there; Christ *directing everything* there. I maintain that is not the character of the great mass of Christianity of the present time. I fear that if I knew you individually I should say, These dear people want help to teach them to say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die gain."

(C. F. SH.)

The first man does not like to know what and where the Second Man is, and what is suited to Him. Oh! the wonderful resistance of one's heart to the glory—to the scene where the Lord has *His* delight. It is because of the fact that my scene is judged by it—that there is nothing here to suit the Second Man; so one finds out that one has to refuse, on that account, the things that are here.

There is much here that is suited to me naturally; not a thing that is suited to Christ; but I have found the scene where everything is suited to Him. I am in there in Him where the Lord has entered His glory; He has got everything *there*; I have nothing *here*. The only thing that will enable me to take everything quietly here, is to know and see that *the Lord is glorified*.

THE BELIEVER'S PLACE IN CHRIST.

2 COR. v.

THE great thing in these ways and works of God in the gospel is to bring us to Himself. Groaning, burdened, if you like, still we are brought to Himself through infinite grace—grace reigning through righteousness—brought into the presence of God with a full sense of divine favour resting upon us. We are “reconciled to God,” and that is a large word. Being reconciled to God in all that He is in the full revelation of Himself through Christ, our hearts at ease with Himself, else we surely are not reconciled. We are going through the wilderness as regards these bodies, with all the government of God over His children; but there is no question of our place with Him, that in which the perfect revelation of His grace has set us with Himself. Christianity brings us into a new life—makes us partakers of a divine nature.

In Israel it was all an outward deliverance, but all written “for our admonition.” They were brought out of Egypt—their whole state and condition changed; they were brought into the wilderness, but brought *to God* there. And we have been brought out of the flesh and our place in the world as Adam’s children, and are

now sitting in heavenly places—brought to God, with a nature capable of enjoying God.

It is not at all now whether a man is a righteous man according to the law—that is not the question now. The law was of course all right, and, what is more, a perfect rule for a child of Adam, for it took up all the relationships in which we stand, forbidding every breach of any in which God had set us. But Christianity, while putting its seal upon what man ought to be, and giving its highest sanction to the law, comes in behind all that—is another thing altogether; it shows that the law was just man's righteousness, which never could be wrought out, and brings in a distinct testimony as to the condition of man; proves “both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin;” “they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Then comes in the dealing of God with men when they were proved to be such, and this very dealing of God demonstrates fully what man was.

When God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself the world would not have Him: “He sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But they caught him and cast him out the vineyard, and slew him.” Man has been fully proved, as He says: “What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have

not done in it?" They rejected His mercy when He came into the world in goodness, and with the manifestation of a power which was sufficient to heal man of all his diseases; all the effects of what sin and Satan had brought in, a single word from Christ was sufficient to set aside. But, "for my love," says the Lord, "I had hatred." "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." They had not merely sinned against God, but, when God was there in full manifestation of goodness, they rejected Him. Therefore, "now is the judgment of this world."

If you would walk with God in the comfort of His love, you must get it distinctly before you that you are lost, as well as guilty—"dead in trespasses and sins." It is a question of the state that we are in by nature as well as the guilt that we have incurred. But when I see that the old man is hopelessly bad and condemned—when I understand that my whole history as a man in Adam is closed—then I get Christ instead of myself before God.

Guilt is brought out by the cross of the blessed Lord: "He hath made him sin for us who knew no sin." But besides that there is a new place and condition brought in for the believer; a new creation, in the midst of weakness and infirmity, yet in which we walk with God fully reconciled. God is fully revealed; nothing so revealed Him

in His righteousness and in His love as the cross. There it is that all that I need He has met. But He has done more, though I have the treasure in this poor earthen vessel. It is an entirely new thing that He has brought me into. I am redeemed out of the condition of the fallen first Adam into the condition of the glorified second Adam; I am brought into the condition in which Christ stands before God as man; I am "made the righteousness of God in him." All that He is is mine. And this is how Christ says He gives—not as the world gives. When the world gives, it gives away—it has no more the thing that it has given; but when Christ gives, He gives nothing away, He brings us into everything that He has Himself. The peace that He gives us is "*my* peace;" the words that He has given us are "the words which thou gavest *me*;" the joy is "*my* joy;" the glory is "the glory which thou gavest *me*;" and the love is "the love wherewith thou hast loved *me*." He brings us into the enjoyment of all that He enjoys Himself. It is a wonderful thing, this: it is set before us as the object of hope.

There are two ways in which happy thoughts and feelings are wrought out. One is by living in the midst of happy relationships, as in a family. The other thing that gives us energy and joy is having an object before us that we are pursuing in hope. Now God would use both of

these means to produce the happiness of the Christian state in us. As to the place of relationship He has brought us into, we have in it "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." God has given us the same place with His Son—as to the actual glory, of course we have not got it yet; but we have got the place and relationship now, and the joy also, and the object, and the hope of knowing that we shall be with Him and like Him in the glory.

"*We know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." That is all settled. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven." It supposes that my heart is with Him. He had been "not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal;" so he goes on, "*we know*." It is quite a technical expression in Scripture. "*We know* that the law is spiritual." "*We know* that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not." "*We know* that we are of God." "*We know* that the Son of God is come."

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." I do not want to die as if weary of conflicts, and wishing to get out of this world. But I see in this world of death the

power of life come in in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has destroyed the power of him that had the power of death in such sort, that I can look, if the time were come, to not dying at all, that "mortality should be swallowed up of life." That power of life has come in which can change the living saints into glory without anything more. And so it will be, in fact, for those who are alive when Christ comes: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," so that not a trace of mortality remains. Ruin and death have come in, but the power of life of the second Adam has come in, and so completely set aside the power of death and Satan, that, if the moment were come, it would be all swallowed up in a moment. It does not make any difference if we do die, for we shall be raised. But One has come in who has gone into death, and spoiled it completely, and who has the keys of death and hell in His hands. The first Adam plunged me in death and ruin; the second Adam has come in—has gone into the ruin, and destroyed the power of it. If He were to come now, and close this scene, and the long-suffering of God were to cease, we should pass into glory without death at all.

But we have then our present state. Not only the redemption work is accomplished, but we are God's workmanship now for the glory. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is *God*."

He has wrought us for it; "We are His workmanship." God wrought us for that self-same thing, the unseen glory in which Christ is. He predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Here we are in these poor dying bodies, but He has wrought us for this; it is a new creation. It is not a question of my responsibility as a child of Adam, but God's intention—what He is going to do with us; He is bringing us into the same place in glory as His Son. It is not the clearing away my sins, though that was needed, and it is done, but it is God has *wrought* us for it.

Then comes another question for people's souls: "Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." We have not got the glory yet, but we are sealed for it, and we get the knowledge of it. The great and distinguishing characteristic of the believer is that he has the earnest of the Spirit—he is "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." It is most important to see that a believer may not as yet be brought into the Christian's place. But when he is sealed, the Holy Ghost gives him the consciousness of that

place. The effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the believer is to give him the consciousness that he is in Christ, and Christ in him. His place is settled before God, and settled before the world. What he has to do, consequently, in the world, is to show forth in it the life of Jesus. As Christ represents us before God, so we represent Him before the world. That is where we are seen, and this is what is so blessed, and what indeed you should not be satisfied without possessing—the knowledge of this relationship. The babes cry, Abba, Father.

And mark this, that if we have not got the consciousness of the relationship, we cannot have the affections that belong to it. The consciousness of it is that upon which all holy affections are grounded. I might say, If only such an one were my father, what affection I should have for him, for he is such a good kind father. But if conscious of the relationship, the feelings come out at once. We must know the Father as such, and that is not great growth. It is the babes that know that—the fathers are characterized by being well acquainted with Christ. Christ in us, we cry, Abba, Father: “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” I insist upon it, not as a special growth, but as the place of the Christian. My responsibility as a Christian is the

consequence of my being a child. I am to be a follower of God—"followers of God as dear children"—peaceful, blessed, I am now to manifest the life of Jesus in everything—my life showing out the reality of the work, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in me.

Now God has wrought us for the glory. This is the very thing that proves that we never can be perfect here. A Christian is a man who is walking with God now in the full consciousness of his relationship, and who is wrought to be like Christ when He shall appear. Well, can I be like Christ in glory when I am down here? Impossible! But whilst he cannot be like Him here, there is only one object before the Christian, and that is to win Christ, and to be raised in glory—changed into it, if he be alive—but there is no other—*none*! Christ is the object. The only thing that is set before us to attain is a thing that is unattainable in this world, and that is, to be like Christ in glory. We cannot have what is set before us until we are there. I am going to be like Him in glory, and I long to be like Him, and I am trying to be as like Him as ever I can.

My relationship with God and the Father is all settled, and settled for ever. I am a child, and my relations with God flow from that. It is important for us all to get hold of this, that we are not in the flesh at all. Then where are

we? In *Christ*. Put into this totally new place, where Adam innocent was not, as to our life and course here. "The calling above," that is the one thing; the pressing forward, the pursuing; but the very pursuit gives a consciousness that it is not attained. I am a son with Christ, but I am not yet glorified with Christ, that is clear; but I am wrought for it, and I "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." I try to be more like Him every day; we are chastened for it, if need be, in our course; but we *are* wrought for it, and we shall be it when He appears. The moment my mind descends below what Christ in glory is now, that moment my mind descends below what is my proper object as a Christian. If you look for perfection down here you have lowered your standard.

You say: But am I not to be like Christ?—Yes, but not down here. He was a perfectly sinless being—so born into this world, as it is said: "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." But we are born sinful: "By nature children of wrath." And if I say: How can I have a ground for such a wondrous hope as that I should be made like to Christ?—my answer is at once: I know the blessed Son of God has been made sin for me; "He made himself of no reputation, and took

upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The moment I really believe *that*, I can believe *anything* as the result; nothing is too great for Him to do for me. He is to receive the fruit of the travail of His soul; what is the fruit? That He shall have sons with Him in glory. If I am "made the righteousness of God in him," why I may expect *anything*!—We have got these two great parts of the intervention of God for us: God in Christ in this world in grace to reconcile it, and our being made the righteousness of God.

I will say one word here on "the righteousness of God," as many find great difficulty in understanding what it is. The question is: How can a righteous God justify sinners?—Well, the proof and testimony of God's righteousness is, that He has set Christ at His own right hand. When Christ had perfectly glorified God, and that as made sin on the cross, God places Him at His own right hand in heaven; and there only do I see righteousness. But this work, though perfectly to God's glory, was done for us, so that it is God's righteousness to give us a place with Him. In Christ we are thus made God's righteousness. So it is said, "He is righteous and just to forgive." But Christ is gone there

as man, and I am united to Him, and I get, with this righteousness, Christ my life in which I am capable of enjoying all the blessedness of that which I am brought into. I have power to enjoy it, because Christ is my life.

The apostle, having considered the purpose of God, now turns to the side of man's responsibility. That place, as sinners, is death and judgment; where is the Christian as to these? If I die, he says, I am absent from the body, and present with the Lord. In dying for us, He has made death, which closed our path in darkness, the way, as with Israel at the Red Sea and Jordan, of getting out of all the ruin here, and the way of getting into blessedness with Christ. When I take up, not the purpose of God, but that which lies on me in my responsibility as a child of Adam, death becomes a positive gain: I have done with trial, temptation, sin, the world, and begun with Christ in heaven: "present with the Lord."

But judgment must be considered also. We cannot say that is gain, nor that it is ours, as we can of death; but we see here the way it works upon the Christian. All will be manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ: "That every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." We must all give an account of ourselves; nor does the apostle seek to conceal

the solemnity of this. He calls it the terror of the Lord. But does he tremble? He does not think of himself in this aspect of it. The love of Christ constraining him, he persuades other people, the unconverted, who have *reason* to tremble at the thought of judgment. This is the effect it has upon Paul; he presses upon others that, if their sins are not gone, they cannot carry them to heaven.

But it has also another effect upon the Christian—a sanctifying effect upon the conscience: and that is, that we are manifest *now*, not *shall be*. “We are made manifest unto God.” This is a present thing for the heart and conscience. The effect of the judgment in this way is most useful; there is no fear as to the result of the judgment, but the sense of that judgment acts in sanctifying power on the heart. Whilst Christ has put away our sins once and for ever, yet I am manifest to God now; and I am before God estimating things that I do and say as they will be manifest before Him in the day of judgment. How many things would be judged and done with if we were now before God as we shall be in the day of judgment.

These two things are quite distinct: the purpose of God in putting us into the glory of God; and, that He has wrought us for it, and has given us the earnest of the Spirit. I know that many think it is all presumption in people,

their professing to know that they are saved ; but it is not presumption to know God's thoughts when He has revealed them. It is presumption to call in question what God has said. There is no such thing in the New Testament, after the day of Pentecost, as a Christian being uncertain about his salvation. Not that there is not exercise in getting into such a place, but there is no such thing as uncertainty as to our standing when in it. If I see that His blood cleanses from all sin, and that the salvation wrought through that bloodshedding belongs to the believer, it is no good saying, I do not know whether it is for me. If you believe in that work, God seals you with His Spirit. If you have got the Holy Ghost, you will know it is yours. The Lord expressly declares "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Nothing else is owned as the Christian place. How can I doubt, if the Spirit of God dwelling in me makes me know ? and that Christ has positively declared. How can I doubt with the earnest of glory and seal in my own heart ? "We have received the spirit of adoption, whereby my cry, Abba, Father," and I know He is my Father.

And now let me add another word in connection with this which comes farther on in the chapter. "If one died for all, then were all

dead." It does not say "guilty" here; it is "dead:" "dead in trespasses and sins." Death and judgment came in by sin; we read, the dead shall be judged "according to their works;" and Christ came down into this place of judgment that our sins might be purged and put away. But there is another aspect of man here; one in which he is looked at as "dead;" dead as regards God; not a movement in his heart towards God. Nor if dead can you as such awaken any feelings in him. When I discover that not only I have sinned, but that in nature I am a sinner, I find that I am *dead* in sins. I am lost as well as guilty.

What is my state before God? It is "enmity against God." There is not a thing which man will not bear and put up with in one way or another, but he will not bear to have *Christ* brought in. From the lowest and the grossest society up to the most elegant and refined, Christ can not be brought in; it spoils everything. It is not so in false religions: men who have a false religion are not ashamed of their religion; it is only Christians who are ashamed of theirs. As a matter of courtesy, I will listen to anything any man says, but by nature I cannot listen to him speaking about Christ: conscience cannot bear it. If I look at man as we all are naturally, I find nothing but "enmity against God."

But now in Christ I get the end of man's history. I read: "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Why does he say that when the end is not come yet? It is because the breach is total at the cross between God and the world; as to the full history of man's probation the end is come; it was the end before God when once man had rejected God's own Son. I look at myself as man, I am a sinner without law; and I find I have broken the law if I take that as my rule. But when all this was already true, God came into the world in grace, and the world rejected Him. And now, if Christ be presented to me—I mean as a natural man—I cannot stand it at all. My moral history is closed; I am a lost sinner. But in Christ I get brought out of this state altogether. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit." The sins are not only cleared away for ever and always, through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I stand for ever perfect before God through this work, but I am in a perfectly new state. Where are sins?—Gone in the cross of Christ. Where is righteousness?—He is my righteousness at God's right hand. I have got a totally new place; not only are my sins put away, but I am brought into the place of Christ the second Man. Therefore you find it said, not there is no condemnation to those whose

sins Christ has borne—true as it may be; but there is no condemnation to those who are *in* Christ. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” How can you condemn what is in Christ in glory? It is a new creation. The life of God in us; the righteousness of God ours, and we standing before God in this entirely new place. “It is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” A blessed word! It is the very ground of blessing! Here God fully reveals all His holiness—all His hatred of sin. If His *own Son* go to the cross He must bear the consequences. All is righteousness. We are now “after God created in righteousness and true holiness;” our sins for ever gone, entirely gone, and we brought to God in the full revelation of Him as He is—“in righteousness and true holiness”—and knowing Him as thus revealed in Christ. We, as in Christ, are brought to God now according to what God is as perfectly revealed. He will “reconcile all things unto himself—whether things in earth, or things in heaven;” the whole state of things will be reconciled to Him. “And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.” “He hath

reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." Could you say that there, where there was a full revelation of what God is, you see Him as one who has given His Son for you, so that you might be brought back to Himself without a single doubt, without a single question left to settle between your soul and Himself?

"Who hath *reconciled* us?" Oh! beloved friends, are you reconciled to God? We have not got the glory now, clearly; but we have got the work done, so that Christ is sitting down at the right hand of God, the question of righteousness settled, nothing more to do, but all finished. It says of the Jewish priests, that they stood "daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat down* on the right hand of God." He has no more to do for this. He has not merely borne my sins; but "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." And then I get the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that I may know it and my part in it.

What I am in Christ is a new creation. It is not what Adam was. He was an innocent creature, just as God made him. But now we have got Christ substituted for what we are, and we here with the Holy Ghost in us. And, if you have not got that, and just think of the

day of judgment, you are not at ease, though you may have hope through the cross. But if I know that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and if I set myself before the judgment-seat of Christ, I find I have a settled place there. There is no place where the Christian has such a settled peace as standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, for when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. We are raised in glory. What fear can I have if I am like the Judge? God has come in to save, and now sees a totally new thing before Him—the second Man. And though we are here tempted and tried, our place is in Him where He is; we are now in Him and know it by the Holy Ghost. Israel was not put to pass through the desert till Israel was clean out of Egypt. We are first reconciled to God, the soul has peace with Him; and then it seeks to glorify Him in everything it does. You are called upon to have no object at all in your life down here but Christ; of course there are necessary duties in which we serve Him, but no *object*; the Christian recognizes where God has set him as to things here, but I have no object but *Christ* in all that I do upon earth. He is the one thing that I am running after—no other object whatever. If I eat, or drink, or do anything, it is to be "to the glory of God," and "in the name of the Lord Jesus." A man is character-

ised by his object; if money, he is avaricious; if power, he is ambitious; and so on: the Christian is a man who has Christ as his object.

Surely he will find temptations here, and snares, and he will have to overcome; all that is true; we have to learn and to unlearn a great deal that is humbling to ourselves; but we have got our place, and our duties flow from the place that we are in. No duty ever was the means of obtaining a place; if you are my servants, you have your duties because such; but you first get into the place, and then come the duties of it. You first get into your place, and then comes service for Christ in that place. In these days it is all-important that Christians should understand they are to *be* Christians. You have got your own place, and your own relationships, and you are to walk according to them.

(J. N. D.)

THE SAINT, LOOKED AT BY PETER, PAUL, AND JOHN.

1 JOHN iii.

THE Gospel of John comes in, we know, after the other three Gospels. In the first, Matthew, Christ has been rejected as King of the Jews; in the second, Mark, as Prophet; and in the third, Luke, as Son of man, where in grace He is born into this world, "a Saviour, Christ the Lord." Then John comes in, and definitely sums up the result of the trial in those three Gospels. We read: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own [the Jews] received him not." Man would not have Him; the darkness comprehended not the light, but preferred darkness rather than light, and death than life. Though John the Baptist announced the kingdom of heaven at hand, and grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, yet there was no conscience of sin.

John, then, comes to us at the very moment of man's moral collapse; he brings out his guilt as well as his lifeless condition before God. He gives us the revelation of the Father in the only-begotten Son, the Word made flesh, full of grace

and truth. There is no upbraiding, no requiring; but "as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become *sons of God*."

In the first three Gospels the Christ of God is fulfilling prophecies and promises; He is fulfilling righteousness as a man, manifesting perfect love to man and perfect obedience to God, binding the strong man and then spoiling his goods, healing sickness, opening the blind eyes, cleansing the leper, preaching the gospel to the poor, and announcing the acceptable year of the Lord, and then, at the close, when the staves of Beauty and Bands were broken and His people "would not," yielding Himself up as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, a willing victim, when the power of darkness—Satan's hour—was come.

But in John's Gospel it is not that; it is not probation. It is the evidence of what God can do when man's responsibility has failed; it is the fruit of God's sovereign grace and electing love; it is, in fact, the way God displays Himself, and reveals His purposes towards the sinner in the only begotten Son. The Lord Jesus is not here, as in the others, seeking fruit from the vine He had planted and hedged round. Man's side had failed. Here He is bringing man to His side. He is not now healing the wounded man; that had been tried and had failed. Man was now discovered to be

dead, dead in sin, without conscience, without a spark of life, the will alienated from God. So here we find our God a quickener of the dead, calling out things that are not to bring to naught things that were, taking occasion by the sin of man to bring out the virtue and the grace of Christ.

Man, thus hitherto tried and helped, would not have God in the grace of His Son, would not be cured, would not believe himself incurable, would not be saved. The natural man discerns not the things of God—cannot be educated: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” he has no mind for God; he is not *wise*. The Psalmist says, “The *fool* hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Wherever there is a spark of life in another, let us treasure it. It is from above. Let us nurse it, and view it as a precious plant of God’s own planting, to be fed and nourished in tenderness with the sincere milk of the word. Without the Spirit of God there is no pulse, no birth: “Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” All man’s efforts religiously to accomplish this only show out more clearly how his moral darkness can neither comprehend his lifelessness towards God nor appreciate God’s goodness towards himself.

And thus it is according to the teaching of this Gospel. The light from above, in the case

of the blind man's eyes being opened in the ninth chapter, signally gives the character of John's writings. He was a man blind from his birth, not to evidence the effect of sin, but rather to manifest what light could accomplish in the world—the light of life—how God could use it to work His own work, thus making this child of darkness a child of light, and a worshipper of the Son of God.

Mark the mode of this change. It was by putting clay on the man's eyes—the very thing that naturally would only make sight worse. Why did He do this? It was to test the man's confidence in Him, and to make it manifest to him that God's ways are not as our ways. Christ in humanity is always a stumbling-block where there is no faith. The clay used here typifies the Lord come down to earth as a man; it is the sent One in humiliation working the works of God, not accrediting man's pride; it is Jesus as the Servant. God was here in man, come down in gentleness to make man great. And this only made man worse—only discovered his condition. Clay alone could only irritate the eyes, never cure; it can only make him cry out, "Wretched man that I am!"

What made the blind man see was his submission to the way of Jesus; his going to the pool of Siloam, and washing in obedience to His *word*.

Man has always refused the Son of God come down as man, even though it be with grace and truth; man has always been ashamed of confessing Him. Peter was ashamed to be His companion; he denied Him, though he loved Him! That was the clay on the eyes of Peter, and yet it was the light of life; it was Jesus, the despised and lowly Nazarene, come down with the truth of God's love to the sinner and the lost. It made little of flesh. What a marvel of love! God come down to me as I am, to convict that He might save!

He was told by Jesus to go and wash. He was conscious of his blindness, he listened to the word, and sight was there. Faith comes by hearing. And it is just so in the conversion of a Saul. "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see *not* might see, and that they which *see* might be made blind."

Thus in the Gospel of John we get the eternal life that was with the Father manifested here on earth, and communicating itself when the Spirit of God had awakened the ear to hear the words of the Son and to believe Him that sent Him—that soul thus passing from death to life and escaping from condemnation. But the epistle of John carries on this history and character of eternal life, and shows it us as now dwelling in the saints, and to be manifested here in them during the absence of Christ, who is the eternal

life. The eternal life, that was eternally with the Father, in John's Gospel came down in the person of the Son; and in John's epistle is described as dwelling in the saint, first having been here in Him who is the eternal life.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness.” The Word became flesh, and dwelt on earth for thirty-three years, exhibiting in His walk, ways, and words, in His daily history and intercourse with man, what this eternal life was; and, wherever there was conviction of sin by the Spirit, faith opened the eye to discover virtue in Jesus. Nature saw nothing but the carpenter's son, but faith's perceptions could exclaim, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.”

It is, “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God—to them that believe on his name.” We must remember all things were given to Him of God. He made Himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant to become obedient unto death, the death of the cross, and yet “no one knoweth the Son but the Father.” He came down in humanity to reveal God. “No man hath seen God at any time,” and yet this Son of God,

through His word, reveals the Father to the humblest believer. And He not only reveals God to us, but brings down in Himself eternal life to as many as receive Him through the word; so that we are not only born again and become sons, but we have got by this eternal life in us the capacity to know God Himself as the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

But this blessed One, to fit us for this heavenly association with Himself in glory, had to vindicate the claims of God's righteousness against sin and the evil that Satan had brought in. He had to be made sin, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And, taking this place of sin, He had to meet and suffer all God's righteous wrath against sin, even when He Himself was most obedient in doing the will of God—and, still more, had to go through in submission Satan's power and his hour of darkness before He could in victory bring us with Himself as brethren to His Father's house, where we learn all the depths and heights of the Son's and the Father's love; and learn too what an eternal harvest of glory and delight God has reaped from this Son, who became man in the very scene of sin and blight where Satan had for a moment seemed to triumph, but where God found in Jesus, the Lord from heaven, a sweet savour and fragrance that will be precious incense to His heart for ever.

We know, when this blessed One came from heaven with the truth and goodness of God for man, how He was despised and rejected. Not a house in Bethlehem open to Him. This was man's reception of God! How different God's reception of man—of the sinner! "As many as *received him!*" Even the thief was to be with Him that day in Paradise. Those who through grace have let the Saviour into their hearts are made *sons*, and left for awhile here in that relationship to walk as vessels having in them this eternal life, to shine before men, as sons walking in the obedience of Christ before God, and Christ so dwelling in their hearts that the fruit will be love, not in word but in deed; and in truth "He that loveth not knoweth not God."

God is the giver and source of this life, but it is in the Son we get the life, and, though there be different degrees of its enjoyment, as in children, young men, and fathers, the character is the same in each—lowliness, love, and obedience; a beautiful plant, and still more beautiful blossoms from it, and being of the Father's planting it cannot be rooted up.

It is true the Father knows us down here as His children; and we know the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and He bids us, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" and He tells us we are "of more value than many sparrows."

All this is most precious and needful to us as we pass through this evil world ; it enables us, in the confidence of such care, to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. But the moment we take our place in Christ Jesus before God in the intelligence of death and resurrection, and in the power of the Holy Spirit come down from a glorified Christ, uniting the believer to Himself there, and showing us the things that are His as ours, that moment we get a hold of deeper treasures and new resources of the Father's love to feed upon in the One who is now our life, and whom God has raised from the dead and set over all things, putting all things under His feet, and giving Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.

We find that God's thoughts about us, and His affections towards us, are now measured by what is due to the love and obedience of Christ. It is not merely God's care as Creator and Preserver over His people in mercy, but it is as His Son would know such a Father's love ; and "as the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you." In the purpose of God we are now before Him in Christ in love, for His own complacency and delight in us. "If a man love me he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is knowing the love of Christ that passeth knowledge and being filled to all the

fulness of God. It makes us outside ourselves when we look at it!

Having thus saved us and called us with a holy calling, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, and raised us up together with Christ, we should now be here a manifestation of God through the Holy Spirit. Hereafter in the ages to come He will show forth the riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus; but He leaves us here now, as individuals, to learn lessons of His love and patience with us as saints which we could not learn as sinners; to teach us more of our own hearts; to form our spiritual affections by His word and Spirit, so that we may be able to enjoy our privileges as kings and priests to God and His Father more fully when we shall be in His presence in that day. He leaves us here in the wilderness as members of His body, not merely for our own rich and precious privileges as indwelt by the Holy Ghost, but also that we, as the temple of God by the Spirit, may let and hinder the power of Satan, till the time come for God to call us home. Peter says as strangers and pilgrims; John says as sons; Paul, as the body of Christ. But all these are dignities and titles belonging only to those who have eternal life and are conscious that they are not of this world, even as He is not of this world, who have passed in faith with Christ beyond resurrection.

The line of teaching in Peter is plainly shown out if we contrast the opening of his first epistle with that of Paul to the Ephesians.

Peter says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living *hope* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He puts us as going on "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us."

Here while the hope is brightly before us of the grace at the end, and the inheritance before us to be entered upon, and Him whom having not seen we love, and who will then be manifested, yet we are thus while waiting kept by the power of God through faith, even, if need be, in manifest trial, like the Forerunner, for the joy that was set before Him, enduring the difficulties of the path; but, unlike Him, learning in our souls what suits this pilgrim path, and, stranger-like, not fashioning ourselves to our former time of ignorance, but holy in all manner of conversation like Him we are waiting for, building ourselves up on that living stone chosen of God and precious.

But when we turn to Ephesians it is: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." It is this verse in each epistle which gives the

character of the whole. In Ephesians, as we all know, the blessedness, and the portion, and the place at the right hand of the Father are first reached by Him—the One who descended from thence into the lower parts of the earth to put away sin, abolish death, and destroying him who had the power of death, to bring in life, a new life with Himself. And then, raised from the dead by the mighty power of God who quickened us together with Him, He brought us with Himself into the same redemption glory to share this new position as the second Adam, head over the new creation, which, as man, God has set Him over according to the value of the redemption He has accomplished, but which, as God, He also fills with His own glory.

This is the position in union with Christ in resurrection we are now set in, and fitted for, in the counsels and love of God. And all is provided in grace for the carrying of this out in the saints on earth. The quickened ones have the nature of Christ—He is their life; they are united to Him by the Spirit, and when there is faith there is the power of the Holy Ghost to make good in them this fulness of the Head, and, by bringing their souls into the enjoyment of these heavenly privileges, to keep them in a condition worthy of this vocation wherewith they are called.

The characteristic of our position in a glorified

Christ is that, not so much of being occupied with the difficulties of the wilderness, though we know them, as, being in union in life, and by the Spirit, with the already glorified Son of man, each day making us more fully able to recognize what God has given to Christ as our own, and thus able more clearly to set our affections on things above. Through the word we make ourselves more conscious of the treasures already won by Christ as our own, and the trials we have to go through as already passed through and overcome, the old man having been put off and the new man put on.

The ungrieved Spirit will now be able to make the ways and joys of Christ present to the saint; the walk will now be not as children of darkness, but light in the Lord, walking in love, imitators of God as dear children, as Christ gave Himself a sacrifice and sweet savour to God for us. What a sphere of life, and love, and truth! But it flows from the position He has set us in, and will be carried out only in proportion as His might strengthens the inner man, and, rooted and grounded in love, Christ gets His place in the heart by faith, and thus the soul learns to comprehend something of that love that passeth knowledge—that love that has named us and begotten us sons of God to the praise of the glory of His name.

And, besides these characteristics of our pre-

sent place, there flows another from it which is not known by the pilgrim in the wilderness history—our place as soldiers. There are battles to be fought—there is conflict; but these battles are not our own; they are not such as humanly meet us when in the wilderness condition. They are the battles of those who, at liberty from themselves, not conferring with flesh and blood, have been enabled to put on the whole armour of God with a view to the glory of His anointed One, giving Him His rightful place in every thing they do, instead of acting for or from self, owning Him, in their wills as well as affections, Lord and Master, trusting Him in the warfare as Captain of their salvation, willing to be as the Lord's host, going on before the ark in dependence and unbounded confidence in His name, doing as He did.

It is a solemn and glorious position for the Lord to put any of His saints into, and yet this is the way His name and word are kept, feebly indeed as it is. How much do we need the simplicity and forgetfulness of self that would set us free for this service, and ready for the Master's use, whole-hearted and strong in the power of His might to maintain the grace and dignity of His name. These victories can only be won in simple dependence of soul on the word and guidance of Him, who has already led captivity captive.

But Peter never saw Christ in glory; he was a witness of His sufferings only. So he guides the believer on in his path of pilgrimage on earth—having got life in Christ, but not knowing union with Him in heaven—to have fellowship in those sufferings, waiting for the grace to be revealed at His appearing, having received already the salvation of their souls, holy as He is holy, as obedient children. Peter thus meets us as walking on earth, having the difficulties of nature to hinder us, so, in the power of faith, he guides us along by the word of God, and leads us, in the efficacy of redemption, from our vain conversation to this new life; we, being born again, feeding on the word, tasting the Lord to be gracious, and coming to Him as the living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.

John, too, will have us as born again, but as feeding on the bread from heaven, the Word made flesh, eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

How rarely do we find the virtues and qualities of these two lines of truth manifested in the one saint, unlike the blessed Master, who, going about, had not a place where to lay His head—truly a stranger—and yet whose *meat* was to do the will of Him that sent Him. How beautiful and effective is the harmony of the grace and the glory blended together in the one saint,

the knowing how to abound and how to be abased, having the heart so full of Christ glorified as to set it free from self, and thus humble enough to bring others to the same joy.

We are, indeed, pilgrims and strangers here, the cross gives us this character ; but it does not constitute us pilgrims so that we may be loitering ones, nor merely religious ones either. Nature sometimes credits itself by taking up the appearance of a pilgrim, and is satisfied with the piety of it, rather than with the dignity and joy of being a son.

The *true* pilgrim has his conversation in heaven, where his altar is too, though his tent be here. It is a home above that makes a stranger and a pilgrim here. But it is only as we behold the *glory* of the Lord with unveiled face, that we become *changed into the same image* from glory to glory.

This eternal life brings us into the family. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons (or children) of God." How sweet it is every morning to look up to that love beaming down upon us from the Father, to receive into our souls afresh the breathings of it. How sweet to trace it to its source, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And how truly we feel it is bestowed gratuitously as well as undeservedly. God's heart thus working in

His Son for the riches of His own glory, making us fit objects for His own delight according to His own nature. For His love, and reverently we would say it, though His Being be sufficient for itself, His love seeks an object outside Himself to delight in, and this object He has found through His Son becoming man, tasting death for everything, and then bringing many sons to glory that the Father's house may be filled. His goodness and love find delight in their own activity towards others.

“Behold what manner of love!” What a secret spring of intercourse with God to a soul at peace is it to have the Spirit rehearsing day by day this precious word to the heart, in the midst of this evil and unloving world, and giving it the deepening consciousness of its truth, and that because it is according to the good pleasure of His will. “What manner of love!”

And how it introduces us to what follows in the next verse: “When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” And this to be for ever! It is emphatic here: “*Now* are we the sons of God.” Our sonship is a fact that there should be no question about. Faith, and the word, and the Holy Spirit bring into our souls the truth, and sense, and joy of it; but surely many of us may bow and confess how long were our hearts without the reality or power of it. How little did we follow the Son

from the cross, where we first tasted grace, to the Father, where the same grace *immediately* introduces those as brethren who prize the *Saviour* as well as the *salvation*.

It is not a future relationship, but a present known one, and the Spirit of adoption making us cry, "Abba, Father." And this so much so that, because we are such, "the world knoweth us not." It knew Him not, and the Sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of one." May we vindicate this likeness to Christ, and, failing to do so, feel how much it grieves His Spirit, and humble ourselves that He may exalt us.

Two things hinder this enjoyment of our privileges. One is that we do not walk in the light—do not dissociate our thoughts from the habits of flesh and nature. And the other is that we do not abide in the place of love where God has set in Christ near to Himself.

As to the first, it makes us blind, and we forget what manner of spirit we are of. We would be, if walking in the truth, strangers and pilgrims, as Peter says; or, as we have it here, the world would not know us, because it knew Him not.

The world that crucified our Lord ought to be shunned by the saint, as was the deluged world by the dove that found no rest in it. We are untrue to our Father when we touch it. Our life, our ways, our expectations, are all linked

with the holy Father. The moment you are a Christian you must be known in Satan's world as a child of God bearing the impress of Christ. When the Spirit is in activity there is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" down *here*; "singing and making melody in the heart" up *there*.

As to the second hindrance — not abiding where grace has brought us in righteousness as to our union with our risen Head. It is "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." In our epistle the Spirit is the communicator of life, and then the believer is transformed by the renewing of the Spirit; he gets his character from being indwelt by the Spirit, and gets this power to witness for Christ.

In John, if you notice, the hope of the Lord's appearing is that we may be like Him in outward appearance, and even now the hope of it purifies as He is pure. In Peter, the appearing has a wider scope, and the hope is linked more with the grace that is to be revealed in setting aside the trials and difficulties of faith which are then to meet their rewards in the kingdom, the Lord taking His manifested place of glory over all that man and Satan now usurp. In Paul's epistle to the Colossians, when Christ shall appear we shall appear with Him in glory at the same time. But here it is similitude—similitude to Himself; the Son and the sons

the same, and that for ever, not only in nature and outward display, but the same as objects of love to the Father's heart.

It is not manifested what we shall be as to appearance, "but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." In John xiv. it was the *place* that was made known to their troubled hearts: "*Where* I am, there ye may be also." But, oh, the perfection of God's new creation and the deeper affections of His heart! He has vouchsafed to delight His own heart and goodness, not only by bringing us to be *with* Himself in the Father's house, but to be divinely in nature and spirit one with Himself now, and in actual appearance to be conformed to Him in that day. The Father's home must be filled with beings, not only redeemed, but lovely to look on, and so one in holiness and love, that God will find His rest, and pleasure, and satisfaction, in the perfection and purity of His new creation, all its rays centreing in Christ.

"Even as *he* is pure?" Who can tell such purity! The Holy Ghost that begat in the believer this hope of being like Him, can alone, as we steadily gaze in hope at the coming of this lovely One, make the inner man conscious of what that perfect purity will be. All divinely pure, and good, and transparent; light, and truth, and love characterizing everything.

We cannot understand it yet ; but even now we get a wonderful idea of what the spirit is when we think of what a scene of purity those have already entered who have left this scene to be present with the Lord—how entirely apart from all that is material except the person of the blessed Lord, the risen Man, in whose presence they abide in all the divine experiences of rest of that untold existence.

Is it not wonderful to think of heaven *now* ? Only one Man there ! the glorified Son of man. Only one Man in heaven all these 1800 years, and myriads of spirits with Him while He is waiting for the presentation of the Bride. And there is not a man on earth at all. As recognized by God, and viewed by faith, all are dead. "If one died for all, then were all dead." And the saint too is dead : "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In God's sight there is but the one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. How this separates one from mere flesh and sense, and makes one realize that, except as an instrument to serve with, spiritual existence is God's way with saints now, as it will be in unhindered power throughout eternity.

We see thus how John rehearses our oneness in character, as well as in nature and life, to God and the Son, who are so constantly spoken of by him as the same person ; and how he shows that this our eternal life in the Son makes us

the same as the Son in all our ways here, and in our fellowship with the Father there. The new commandment of love is true "in him and in you." Again: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." And again: "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Very precious to the faith of the saints is this in these days of lukewarmness, when Satan would try to bring in something between us and our Head.

But our God and Father has richly provided for our weakness as well as for Satan's devices. He has given us His Spirit—an unction by which we know all things and need not that any man should teach us. "We know (have conscious knowledge) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children keep yourselves from idols."

(w. w.)

If my sins are great my Saviour is greater. If Satan is great, Christ is greater. If Satan brought in a great ruin, Christ brought in a greater salvation—*such* a salvation that, I think, if Satan had had any conception of it he would never have ruined me. (c. F. SH.)

WHAT IS A LAODICEAN?

REV. iii. 14-22.

It is very important for us to understand what is the state of things in the church; and when I say "church" I mean the whole house of God, not the real thing, the body of Christ, but that which will be spued out of the Lord's mouth when He comes. It is very important for us who are on the verge of this, if not quite in it, to understand what will produce it. We may say: thank God, we know we are of the true thing; but still it is a great thing for us to see what produces and conduces to this state of things that Christ will thus spue out of His mouth, so that we may not in any way be helping it on ourselves.

In the beginning of Rev. ii. I find the church has lost her first love, and in the end of chapter iii. He will do without her as a witness. In Laodicea the vessel of testimony is spued out of His mouth. And the terrible thing is that as soon as He thus rejects it, there is another power ready to pick it up—a power that rises and says, This just suits me! The church unfit for Christ is fit for the beast. As soon as Christ has

done with the church, the beast will arise and say, I will carry it, as we get it in chapter xvii.

Now this is a terrible thing—a very serious thing, if we lay it to heart, to see how it is produced; and I think none of us can escape censure on the point, though we may escape judgment. For it is evident that Laodicea springs out of Philadelphia; it is evident that the state of the last of the churches is consequent upon the preceding one.

What then is a Laodicean ?

There are four phases of the church of God which run down to the end; these are Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Thyatira being Romanism; Sardis, the Reformed religion; Philadelphia, the last revival—a most brilliant unfolding of the truth that had been lost; and after this Laodicea, Latitudinarianism. I will explain first what a Laodicean is, and seek to apply it to our consciences afterwards.

A Laodicean, then, is one who has got Philadelphian light and has not got Philadelphian power. You see a Laodicean is not in system; he is neither in Romanism nor in Protestantism, and you must be in either of these two to be in system. I trust this will come home very closely to every one of us. It is a very important thing to get light, and light does lead out of system; but light is not everything. A Laodicean is one who has got light, but who has not that which

the light should produce. Hence the Lord appears to Laodicea, saying, "These things saith the Amen, *the faithful and true witness*, the beginning of the creation of God."

A Laodicean says what even a rich man would not say: "I have need of nothing." I would say to any such, You have got the light, but you have not got Christ in power. A Rationalist said, "I have got rid of the author of Christianity, but I have kept the morality of it," and that is just what the beast might say. What does he want Christianity for? He wants Christianity to so improve the man that he may be independent of God.

The Christianity of the present day will issue in Babylon, that great city where there will be the aggregate of all that suits man upon earth, where everything that magnifies him will be brought together, where man will get on without God. We are not Babylon, and, thank God, never shall be the harlot; but we are warned that we fall not into the state of things that will characterize her. I may say here, there are the two great structures going on at this present moment—the New Jerusalem and Babylon; the one the Bride of Christ, the magnificent display of all that He is; the other all that naturally suits man; every natural beauty will be found in it. The one, all of Christ, where there is nothing of Adam; and the other where

there is nothing of Christ. Just as the bridegroom forms the bride, so is it here: everything in the New Jerusalem will suit Christ. She will come down from heaven, having the glory of God, to show out the beauty of Christ here upon earth, where we have all failed. In Babylon, on the other hand, will be found all that gratifies man.

People often say, What is the harm in this or in that? But that is not the way to put it. The question, whether it be a bit of furniture or a bit of dress, is whether it suits Christ or whether it suits man? Is it meeting man in his natural tastes, or is it meeting Christ in the counsels of God?

God tells us what things are coming to, in order that we should not in any wise contribute to them. What a sad thing it is to think that the light we have may only minister to our condemnation! If you receive the light that comes out of Philadelphia, and do not at the same time refuse the human element, you are actually preparing for Laodicea.

Supposing any one says to me, I know I have received the grace of Christ. I say, That is all very well; but what are you studying? Are you trying to improve people's natures? — trying to make a man good-tempered or temperate? Then you are working at the old creation. And you have got light from

Christ, the beginning of the creation of *God* ! It is a fearful thing in the sight of God to have light and not to walk according to it. In all the great theological works you will not find the new creation taught ; and yet the authors were true godly men. Why then was not the church spued out of Christ's mouth long ago ? Because they had no *light*. Now, when we have light, if it prove ineffectual to produce Christ, we are nauseous to Him. All through Scripture we find instances to prove what I am saying.

I say, then, a Laodicean has light ; but man in nature is his object, and not Christ.

The first example I find is that of Eve. She had light, but she did not act up to her light. The word of God told her not to eat of the tree, and she did. It was a very bad case I admit, but it is a case. I give up the light in self-consideration ; she had the pure light in a state of innocence ; it was perfect light from God Himself ; and what a power of sin was that in her when she said, I will give up the light and please myself. That was Laodicean in principle ; and when the church gets to that state the Lord says, It does not suit me. It cannot be of any use.

There are more examples of this in the word than I could possibly think of or put together now ; but one or two will show you how the principle of the evil comes in. Who was it

helped the children of Israel into idolatry? No one less than Aaron, the brother of Moses. Was there a want of light there? No; he had plenty of light, but he wanted to please the people. He was the one who was to carry out the words that Moses gave him from God, and this very man, whilst Moses was gone up the mountain to God, says: Give me your gold, and I will make a calf for you.

People talk of light, and are boastful of it; but with the knowledge of that light, I say, take care that you keep out the human element. If you are ministering to man in any way, no matter how—be it in your house, your furniture, your dress, anything—you are just paving the way for Laodicea, you are helping it on, for you have got light and are not walking in the practical power of it. It is a point that must be settled practically. The crisis is coming when people will say: There is plenty of light. They are trying to improve man by it, and Christ really is unthought of. Can you say people are more for Christ now than they used to be? I know that years ago saints used to be far more for Christ with less light than they are now.

I turn to another case, in the fifteenth of Samuel. The point to get hold of, and it is a difficult one if a person does not work it out in his own heart, is that we are the people who are to blame, because by giving a place to the human element in

our preachings and teachings, we have produced a type of Christianity which is very human. In this chapter king Saul is sent to destroy Amalek. There is no mistake about what he is to do ; he is not in the least ignorant ; yet he keeps what suits himself, while he destroys the vile and refuse. He could not say he was not able to walk up to the light ; but he spared the best, that which ministered most to man, what most pleased himself.

Again, in 2 Kings v., Gehazi is sent to communicate the truth to Naaman. Gehazi has the truth ; but, when the prophet will not take anything from Naaman, he will. This is the principle. "Went not my heart with thee," says the prophet, "when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee ? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants ?" All to suit himself. Then he adds : "The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." That is a Laodicean. He had light, but he considered for himself ; he had not self-control enough, not self-mortification enough, to keep himself from coveting things that belonged to Naaman.

I turn now to the New Testament, to Matt. xvi. and the Lord says to Peter : "Blessed art thou,

Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The greatest light is shown to Peter ; nothing could have been more wonderful than the Father giving such a revelation to him ; it was light of the highest order. He had been given this light about the church. And, would you believe it, that this very man, in this very same chapter, foreshadows what a Laodicean is ! He has light about the church, but he will not have the cross. Read farther on : " Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Thus it is possible that the person who has the greatest light may make the greatest mistake. Peter wants to spare the man.

How differently the apostle Paul uses the cross ! " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." If this be so, what is left of you ? Why, the new creation, and nothing else. That is what is left—a new *creation*, not only a new *creature*.

The same Person who is going to build this wonderful structure—the church—is the One who will set aside man in His cross. Oh, says

Peter, I do not like that ! Then, says the Lord, you are Satan.

That is exactly the principle of the thing, and this is where we have to judge ourselves. The light is here, and the question is whether I am bringing out that upon earth which will shine out in the New Jerusalem. It was thus that the Lord left His disciples here. He could say of them : " All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." Truly we have failed in this ; but He turns round in the book of Revelation and says : You are the bride to me, though you have failed in everything else.

I make only one more remark. The apostle says in 2 Tim. i. : " All they which are in Asia are turned away from me." It was not that they had turned away from Christianity, but that they would not have Paul's teaching ; they would not have Christ instead of the man here. And when you leave Christ out of Christianity it is Laodicean, and sinks into Babylon ; when you leave Christ out of Christianity Christ does not want the church.

I would warn you to see to it, that the more light you have, the more you exclude the human element. People have gone on for eighteen hundred years, knowing but little and with but little light ; and till the light came the Lord, as it were, says, I tolerate it all. But now all is changed. We can no more speak of ignorance : the light has

been given us. If the light increase, be careful to see that that light produces Christ in you practically.

And now, having shown you what a Laodicean is, I will show you the remedy for it—how the Lord can keep you from being one, and how He can deliver you if you now are one. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." It is not any particular truth he brings in; He brings in Himself. He says: I will make you know me in the intimacies of daily life; I will come and sup with you and then you shall learn what it is to sup with me. I will throw myself into all your circumstances, and then you will come to mine.

We get the practical illustration of it in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of John. First, the Lord walks beside Mary to the grave of Lazarus, and weeps with her there. And then she says, anointing Him for His burial: This world, with all its beauty, is nothing to me! He is gone out of it, and I have buried it all with Him in His grave.

The day we live in is a critical one. I am sure it ought to be a solemn thought that we are a corrupting instead of a sanctifying people, when we propound light without promoting and manifesting Christ, the new creation.

The Lord lead our hearts to understand how we may thus only injure souls instead of being a blessing to them. The apostle tells us in Timothy that unless we have conscience about what we believe, we shall make shipwreck. May we take the subject to heart for His name's sake!

(J. B. S.)

Why is it that the people of God are not in the full enjoyment of the gospel? Many whom one recognizes as fully the Lord's have but little joy in the Holy Ghost. The reason often is that they have not got a clear view of the gospel; and in others, where it has been clearly seen, it is not sustained as it should be for their comfort and the glory of the Lord Jesus.

If I fail as much as Peter, or more than any other, the truth is that Christ is still sitting at the right hand of God for me; all my inconsistencies cannot change that truth of God. They had heard "from the beginning" that "Jesus is the Christ." He says, "Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that, therefore, which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." This is the marrow of peace when

the soul is tried—God's certificate to the soul that the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ belongs to it individually. People say: It is mine because I have had such deep experience; I feel so and so. But God has not said that. He has said that there is the testimony of His Christ, and that if that dwell in me I shall continue in the Son and in the Father.

You have lost peace. Why? Because doubtless you have forged a link of your own, and not had that of God's invention; so that, directly your joy or experience is gone, you are miserable. Keep fast hold of the testimony of God about His Christ. A person keeping hold of this cannot have a single bit of rest apart from the person of the Lord Jesus and God's testimony about Him. There is nothing more gracious than God not allowing peace apart from the way He has given it, for nothing else has sanctifying power. Though only fit for the antichrist, God has taken me up and connected me with his Christ; and, if I turn away from Him, how can I know that all He has is mine?

God's plan is to have a people connected with Himself, with His house on high as their dwelling-place, and for them to act here according to the position that God has set them in there, though they have the flesh within, with its lusts and desires.

And can any thus placed go and connect

themselves with that which crucified the Son—with that whose friendship is “enmity with God”—without losing as an immediate result peace of heart and conscience? Why does a Christian’s peace ooze out? Often, one must reply, because he is walking carelessly through the world, forgetting it is the place where Christ was crucified. My cup of joy can never be full if the world be the place where I am found, and I am walking in its spirit. (G. V. W.)

How do you get the comfort of God? By believing in Him; not by seeing Him. It is: “Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” And then He puts before our hearts that where the children are is *home*—the Father’s house—the many abodes, and He comes again to bring us there, because His redeemed ones are everything to Him. But He tells us, too, all that we have as realizing this while He is away, so that our souls may live in these things, though we are not yet in them. For the Father and the world are now in direct enmity because of the rejection of the Son; the accepted of the Father is the rejected of the world, and it is all over with the world now.

We know what the Father's house is. The Lord says to us : You know where I am going, for I am going to the Father ; and you have seen Him, for you have seen me. So I know where I am going, for the Father to whose home we are going is revealed in the Son, and the Son is the way, and I have got Him. He is the way, for I have found the Father in coming to Him. A poor vessel He is in, but it is one that is cleansed and made fit for God : and God comes and dwells in it, by His Spirit, which is the second comfort in His absence, as it is said : "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

And not this only, but I have got Christ back again. He says : "I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you. Ye see me ; because I live, ye shall live also." He must die before I can die spiritually ; and, if He lives as triumphing over all, I shall live too. We hear it from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, anxious to make us happy. Thus as to my standing before God, I have the consciousness that I am in Christ where God's delight is. As to my standing before the world, it is Christ in me.

(J. N. D.)

We are going to be His companions in glory; and, as to our present case, it is: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." The world will know we have been loved as Christ, when it sees us in the glory, children all dressed, so to speak, in the same way—the same interest shown in all.

And He does it now by the Holy Ghost. I have a present consciousness that I am loved as Jesus is loved. What a thing to say! But there it is, and we know He does not deceive us; and this perfect love flows down into our hearts. What a wondrous place! Do you believe that that is in God's heart towards you? And if I had this Christ in my heart, do you think I could get on with that world that spat in His face? The world is repugnant to the heart that has Christ in it. Which is it?—Christ or the world? Where are our hearts? Has this taken possession of them? We have got the world all around us soliciting them; do they go out after it?

(J. N. D.)

MIDIANITES.

It is remarkable what we find Gideon, the "mighty man of valour," doing, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in Judges vi. We are told he "threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it [margin—cause it to flee] from the Midianites."

There are two words I would draw attention to here: they are "*wheat*" and "*Midianites*."

I would seek to answer two questions: What does the act typify—hiding the wheat? And why hide it from these people, the Midianites?

Now we shall find that wheat in Scripture is looked at as a very precious grain. Barley comes in typically in a lower place (see Isa. xxviii. 25, margin). We read—"He [the Lord] made him [Jacob, His people] suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock . . . with the fat of kidneys of wheat" (Deut. xxxii. 13, 14). "Kidneys" in Scripture signifies the "reins," or inner parts (see Exod. xxix. 13, 22; Job xix. 27; Psa. vii. 9; xxvi. 2; lxxiii. 21; cxxxix. 13; Prov. xxiii. 16), where the instruction of God is carried on—where He tries the reality of the gold we possess.

I may add, too, that "the fat" means the

richest part of not only an animal, but of oil or wine. In Num. xviii. 12, we read of "the best (or fat) of the oil," and so of the wine as well as of the wheat. I am not aware of the expression "the fat of the barley." Again, in Psa. lxxxi. 16, we have, "He should have fed them with the finest [margin, fat] of the wheat;" so Ps. cxlvii. 14. We find, too, that wheat-harvest was a special time of joy (Judges xv. 1), or, at least, in connection with blessing. "Ornan was threshing wheat" when David came to him to build an altar to the Lord. Then we find that "wheaten flour" was used for the meat offering (Exod. xxix. 2; 1 Chron. xxi. 23), though barley was used in a peculiar case (Num. v. 15), where a lower class of meat offering was brought.

Hence, it seems to me that barley, in Scripture, has to do with *man* as in responsibility in the old-Adam family, whether converted or not; and that wheat is typically used of Christ and the responsibility as in Him (compare Lev. xxvii. 3, 16, where the value of a man and a field of barley are identical). In the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. xiv., Mark vi., Luke ix., John vi.), we have "*barley* loaves;" the scene is typical of grace's actings towards man (as in the Jewish remnant) still in old-Adam responsibility. In that of the four thousand (Matt. xv., Mark viii.) we have typified the heavenly and divine One feeding us according to God's thoughts in

our new place—the famine come on the earth. Hence, it seems to me, it occurs not in Luke or John. The *whole* of the last two gospels is this feeding, as it were. Wheat-harvest *followed* barley-harvest (Ruth ii.)—grace, so to speak, and then the *abundance* of grace.

I merely quote all these passages to show the manner in which the wheat is spoken of in the word of God. And we cannot mistake in valuing the “wheaten flour,” when we know that the “thing most holy” of all “the offerings of the Lord made by fire” (Lev. ii. 3, 10) clearly typifies nothing less than “that HOLY THING” which was born of Mary.

Now we find that Gideon has taken his true place in the midst of a ruined people. When “the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel” to act upon their consciences—to teach them to look to their state in all its reality before God—this one man at least fully owns the dreadful condition of himself and Israel, as he severs *truth and sustenance* from the chaff. Like Elijah, who took twelve stones, “according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob,” he identifies himself with the whole nation. “Oh, my Lord,” he says, “if the Lord be with *us*, why then is all this befallen *us*?” The angel had said, “The Lord is with *thee* ;” but this mighty man of valour seems to forget *self*, and link in all his brethren with him.

To me this is all beautiful. When his food is in question, it is the wheat, and not himself, he is seeking to preserve ; and, when he is told that Jehovah is with *him*, and that *he* is a mighty man of valour, he forthwith gathers in all Israel in his thoughts, owning, for the nation, the real state they were in according to the preaching of the "prophet." How interesting it is to see him bringing forth his "present" (or meat offering), in which we see the "unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour"—part, no doubt, of his precious wheat which he had been causing to flee from the Midianites.

We see then, that this great deliverer of God's people is first introduced to us as a preserver of that which supported life—which nourished and strengthened for service. If he lost his "wheat," with what was he to feed himself and his father's house ? It is food, too, of the highest quality he is occupied with—suited accompaniment for "*the winepress*." Others—aye, the very ones who would rob him of his corn—might own him to be a trembling "cake of *barley* bread ;" but, be this true or no, he will not allow the subtle foes, who can find out peculiar ways of vexing "with their wiles" (Num. xxv. 18), to carry off the remnant of blessing.

We shall now examine the second question : Who were these enemies which vexed Israel at this time ? Is there nothing about them which

distinguishes their character from others? I think there is; and I fear, moreover, that Satan will do his utmost to ensnare us by them, to make us not only lose our "wheat," but subtilely to have our souls "dried away" by their artful seductions. We shall find these descendants of Abraham by Keturah, the constant cause of annoyance in helping us to loathe the manna in our wilderness career, and sink under the cares or enjoyments of nature, and, at last, to carry off all our food—the choicest wheat if possible.

No doubt Abraham's sons by Keturah are types of those who shall be blessed after the present interval—not before. They neither typify God's dealings with Israel before the cross, nor his dealings now. In either of these latter they are to be regarded as intruders if they interfere in any way with the commands or guidance of God in offering aid or counsel even professedly to further His people's interests. Indeed, we shall always find them hiding their weakness by association with such powerful aid as Ammon, Moab, or Amalek. We shall find that any effort to bring in the millennium before its time is sure to end in decay of soul and perplexity of action in walk, if we are simple enough to see the lesson taught us as we follow the history of nature-honouring, sense-seeing, and earth-loving Midian.

One of his princes (or priests) was well nigh

the ruin of Moses and all Israel. If we turn to Exod. xviii. we can easily see this. It may be said that that chapter gives us a millennial scene. It does indeed—a beautiful one too, as we view things dispensationally, and behold there a picture of yet future times. But, as we look at the scene morally, and in connection with the day in which God was then acting, all is altered. And has it not always been a source of blundering, then as well as now, when clear dispensational truth is not earnestly sought for? By-and-by other nations will rejoice with Jehovah's people; but a prince of Midian acting out of date is a prince who lays aside his true nobility, and one who will cause weakness and sin in those who hearken to his counsel.

But was not Jethro a converted man? I cannot doubt the fact. And this adds to the danger. A converted Midianite is the most ensnaring seducer from the standard God has set up.

A natural man, and a man in nature, are by no means the same. Jethro is a type of the latter, though doubtless a saint. He cannot see beyond his senses, guided, as he is, by the sight of his eyes. His religiousness makes Moses lend the more willing ear: he is well nigh losing all his spirituality. Jethro can fully appreciate the deliverance from Egypt—from the harshness there endured, and the terrors of that land under

judgment. But, when it becomes a question of rising above the interests of *nature*, of having no resources therein, he is utterly incompetent to act or help. He cannot understand why the people stand by Moses from the morning until the evening, as he sat to judge them. "What is this thing that thou doest to the people?" says he. "Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?" Was not this unnecessary pressure on his son-in-law; especially as he supposed him to be a man in nature like himself? He had doubtless the welfare of his daughter Zipporah and his grandsons at heart. Surely Moses should seek to make them comfortable in that great and terrible wilderness. To stand by and see his son-in-law overwhelmed would be unnatural, surely!

The magnificent explanations of Moses are Utopian in his eyes: "Because the people come unto me to inquire of God," answers the deliverer of Israel, "when they have a matter." No division into the "small matter" and the "great matter" yet. Every matter must go direct to God Himself, and He alone is to settle what is "small" or "great." Thus did Moses. It might be very wearying to nature to have to bring everything to God; and even the same thing occurring might require a different judgment, because the moral state of the person, as well as the thing to be settled, had to be con-

sidered. Man was not under law yet ; and grace treats matters differently altogether ; man being utterly unable to guide or pronounce judgment when the latter has sway. Nature cannot act without marring the beauty of grace's arrangements.

But the man in nature has no eyes for all this ; he would much prefer nature-effort so as to secure nature-ease. If the millennial saint out of date cannot have the desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose, he must cultivate nature somehow or other ; so is it with Jethro : " The thing that thou doest is not good. *Thou* wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee : for this thing is too heavy for *thee*, thou art not able to perform it thyself *alone*. Harken now unto *my* voice."

How sad is all this ! Such, however, is the invariable counsel of even converted Midianites. They make " I " the centre of thought first ; then down comes faith. If a blossoming wilderness cannot be secured, we are sure to build a nest short of the promised possession ; that is, if we insist on not seeing " a desert " (Acts viii. 26) around us, after the opened heavens (Acts vii.) prove our home is above, and " the second Man " is *not here*. If Midianite aid is accepted, we shall have our " great " and " small " matters forthwith ; which at once loads us with care. " Great " and

“small” *sins* may not be allowed in the catechism of Midianite philanthropists; but, believe me, the divisions and subdivisions of the Jethro school are most subtle and perplexing to him who has learned to have God as the resource and arranger of everything.

It was very improbable that the rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, would own any matter too “great” for judgment. By the time the matter would pass through such a jury, it would be proved quite too “small” ever to reach Moses and God. The man who *only* eat a bit of fruit in Eden, and received such a prompt and fearful sentence, was not likely to treat matters to the satisfaction of an inquiring Israelite, who wanted the mind of Jehovah his Elohim. Let Exod. xix. 3, 4, give its own answer to ch. xviii: “Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob (see Isa. xl. 27–31, xli. 14), and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what *I* did unto the Egyptians.” Thus far Jethro saw and rejoiced at. But the words that follow must annihilate all his counsels—“And how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto *myself*.” (Compare Deut. xxxii. 9–14.)

Jethro may “depart” and go “his way,” but we shall see whether the wily snare into which Moses was brought has ceased to affect him and Israel.

Nearly a year after this scene of nature’s

deceptiveness, we find the silver trumpets ordered to be made (Num. x.) ; clear and perfect guidance for God's people is given. They were to act as Jehovah would have them to act. Different blasts of those trumpets—first, second, as the case might need—required every Israelite to study and know the meaning of each alarm. God was the Guide, the Source, the Intimator of every move. It was not only that they had the cloud ; but all was to be done, as to order and system, according to God. How beautiful the words : “ And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. . . . And they first took their journey *according to the commandment of the Lord* by the hand of Moses. . . . And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go ; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.”

Midianite “ eyes ” are still in the midst of Israel, and the test has come as to what those eyes might desire. The words, “ I will not go,” may have astonished him who wanted God's guidance only, and who longed after “ the place

of which the Lord had said." But "trumpets of silver," and such a "place" were not so desirable to that family which had never crossed the Red Sea, but was quietly ensconced in its "own land" and "kindred." The exodus through the sea was needed to make the wilderness a barren land, for Jehovah had spoken of Canaan only as the rest for His people. The sea was the door out of Egypt, and the Jordan must be crossed.

Perhaps Moses supposed that Hobab was won over to his own views. But out-of-time millennialism is very full of "wiles," and is sure to "vex" the true-hearted amazingly. Does not the extraordinary request of Moses prove this? I do not mean his asking Hobab to go with Israel, but the strange dependence he seemed to place on his relative: "And thou mayest be to us *instead of eyes*." Is the one who knew God as he did—who had been so near Him that he could say "I beseech thee, show me thy glory"—who found all his resource in God Himself, amid the total failure of the people—is *he* to be in need of the "eyes" of Hobab?

It is well for us God *does* come in at last, and speak of "alarms" and minute directions for His camp; that He thus uncovers to our gaze the determined earthliness of the Midianite spirit which now surrounds us on all hands. It is not exactly *hostility*—it is a deeper snare.

Terrible result of nature activities! First we accept the plausible counsel of some Jethro, who has large "family claims" on us; and by-and-by we (as in the snare) look to his kindred for "eyes!"

Now mark what follows in chapter xi.; Israel has no eyes for God's food; and Moses formally repeats to Jehovah the very words put into his heart months before by his father-in-law. (Compare Num. xi. 11, 14, and Exod. xviii. 18.) Well might Luke be anxious for Theophilus! He writes a whole book to one saint, and that book proves the millennium has not come yet, and that the saint now is a *heavenly* one. He "*dwells*" not here (Rev. iii. 10), but is a pilgrim and a stranger, his name is "written in the heavens" (Luke x. 20): in this he is to "rejoice." Did he "mind earthly things," let him know that such persons are "the enemies of the cross of Christ." Luke does not warn against *sin*—that is not his theme; but against weak, empty, barren *nature*, which has no heart for God's supper (see chap. xiv.). Man is proved to be the "dry tree;" the "green tree" (treated as "a dry tree," no doubt), passing into the place where all things are of God. The Person who is our object now, has gone to His glory (Luke xxiv. 51); a new *Power* (Luke xi. 13, xxiv. 49) which was promised, is come; and the place whence blessings flow is no longer earth but heaven.

How many saints are willing to own the kernel bad who will not see the shell empty for God. The believer now has died to the sin which corrupted the kernel. Ah! if saints cannot have millennial rose-blossoms now, are not many seeking to have *artificial* ones? What means all the rank and status so largely—though perhaps secretly—carried on among those who have professedly come “outside the camp?” Why this carefully preserved gentility among us? Is it, as well as our sins, really owned to be gone in the cross? What we are pleased to call “niceties,” “necessary things for our position,” &c., are really hindrances to our spirituality, and rob us of our “finest wheat.” “The fat of kidneys of wheat” cannot be tasted and enjoyed by the saint who maintains any principles of dignity or status in walk now. This awfully subtle snare is, alas, but little seen. Others see it quicker than ourselves in our acts and deportment.

To give up “*all*” that we have as in Adam, and to “*hate*” our own flesh, are two things impossible not only to the natural man, but even to the saint in nature (Luke xiv. 26, 33). Hence, Luke is the first gospel which speaks of giving up *all*. We may be able to speak very clearly of our church position; we may know that the systems of man’s religiousness are not of God; we may be most zealous in winning saints into

their right place as members of "one body;" we may say many sweet things about the Lord; we may walk excellently and morally before all; but if we try to retain nature's barren style or parade, and mingle it with our testimony, we are in *Babylon* in character, no matter how largely we may dilate upon being "outside the camp."

I am no advocate for what is called *Communism*. If possible it is more dangerous than the foe of whom I am speaking. Indeed it will be found to be a branch from the same root; for the saint who seeks to pull down others in order to level them, is really trying to elevate himself in the same line of things. Those who are coming down the steps of the rank-ladder ought ever to see the backs of those below. Thus the lower ones will help those above down, as they still go lower down themselves. "Earthly things" out of time, in every shape, in all their subtle snares, are sure to leave us barren; and we may know what it is to be delivered "in war from the power of the sword," to be eased of our fears as to being lost, &c., and to still find a famine in our souls (Job v. 20). If we will insist on finding Christ as our Boaz, we shall get rue bread.

It was not "war" which made Ruth seek the fields of the "mighty man of wealth." All through the book of Judges "war" did not

make Israel give up his idols. When we want redemption "from death," we shall—we must—get Christ's own Person *where He is*. She who was only a Moabitess, who had no promises to sustain her, looked for no millennium; she must have *food*; and she got "bread and wine" in him who spoke "friendly" to her. How few really *have* the "wheat" to protect. We must get it first. Ruth is called by Boaz "a virtuous woman" (or "a woman of valour"): such was Gideon also. Indeed, the book of Ruth is the key to the real man for delivering the people. *Bread* first, and then we have something to guard and to give. Gideon is put first among the worthies of Judges, in Heb. xi. He had "wheat" in the midst of "war" and "famine," and he was the one to crush and spoil the wily Midianites who would feed on the people of God to support "their cattle and their tents." To be sure, he was but "a cake of barley bread," and they were in full force, with the Amalekites and the children of the east coming up "as grasshoppers for multitude." All this mattered not; the *Lord* was with him. Barak might be sent against Jabin, king of Canaan, and Samson's power might be used against the Philistines; a Jephthah might overcome the Ammonites; but Gideon is the man to discomfit the host of Midian.

In examining his history of these entrappers

of the people of God, we shall see that it is just as Israel is about to cross the Jordan they use all their "wiles." All would-be nature-efforts must end *there*. If we read Num. xxii.-xxxi., we shall find there the cause of woe to all the camp. The Moabites seem to be the great foe at first, but *God* says: "Vex the *Midianites*, and smite them" (xxv. 17, 18). They were the root. So, in chapter xxxi, 2: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites."

It is when we are nearing Jordan in our souls' history that we find that *nature* is not the fair thing we formerly supposed. If the Sun has set who came to shine here (John i. 14), we must set too, or rather follow as satellites. In John vi.-viii. we find the Son of God refused by Pharisees, by Jews, and by his brethren after the flesh. In chapter ix. we see precisely the same things happening to him whose eyes are opened, like an evening star following the sun. Alas! we often do not see that we must follow the light: "Come and see" where *He* dwells.

What a lesson we learn from the attack made on Israel near Jordan. The Reubenites and Gadites "had a very great multitude of cattle." They are caught. They do not see all a desert save "the place of which the Lord has said." Nature's life requires nature's food (Num. xxxii). What a strange anomaly! They are to go in to fight for their brethren, and their

wives and children and cattle are to remain where Midian has its possessions. Is not the difficulty purposely left unsolved? personally fighting for the Lord, and hearts and homes in Gilead and Bashan? At "war" among their brethren, and their "wheat" on the wrong side of Jordan! They wanted not "the bread" of the good land, although they *did* want deliverance "from the power of the sword." No danger of "the famine" which Abraham felt; they need not go down to sojourn, like him, in Egypt, either. They had the advantage over the patriarch apparently. Why? Because faith was wholly left out. If we really accept the standing God has set up, we shall have no food if we get away from Him. No standing-ground for us then in Bashan.

Why had Moses to say, "Let me not see my wretchedness"? Because he had no food in nature. This is a "perfect" man; he sells all that he has, and follows Him who is not here—his life (see Matt. xix. 21). If you are to have and enjoy eternal life, all else must go. I am that life, says Jesus; it subsists in One who has been turned out of the millennial earth. A "perfect" man has no reserve fund in his bank to which to turn when he gets away from the Lord. All must go in the Jordan; and then, Elisha-like, he sees, and receives, and gives. It is awfully dangerous to have resources of nature in the

wilderness. The resources of man are in Egypt now ; of the Christian, only in the heavenlies.

I ask you to ponder the thrice-repeated word, "have received," in Num. xxxiv. 14, 15. It is a solemn warning to us. Are we content with no lower receiving than "the *abundance* of grace and of the gift of righteousness?" (Rom. v. 17). We may have received the truth of Romans v. 1, and only be delivered from "the power of the sword." To learn that death is reigning here now ; that nature is barren and powerless for God ; that no millennial joys, or dignities, or resources can be owned of God ; that there is no "bread" for the saint on earth, save as he gets it from above : to learn this is a wondrous lesson. *Then* we are found either perishing "*here* with hunger" (Luke xv.), or feeding on "the fatted calf" in the Father's house. The wilderness is a sieve to nature for us then, and we shall carefully guard our "wheat" from all the Midianites around us. If we amalgamate with them at all, we shall be the losers.

A familiar "How do you do?" may be dangerous in some cases" (2 John 10). The fatter our "kidneys of wheat," the more care is needed, and the clearer must be the eye to know some approaching Midianite. Our wheat is Christ, "the Christ of *God*." It grows not in nature's soil. A spurious thing is seen around on all sides. The real produce of the land—the old

corn—is known only to the spiritual eye, and retained only by him who guards the “wheat.” He may look reserved and even foolish as he hides his food. He may have to hang his harp on the willows, and even weep like Elisha. He may not, moreover, be able to explain why he does not expose his “wheat,” when others, perhaps, like to see it brought forth. He does not only *not* cast his pearls before swine, but he *hides* them from those who may not be “swine” at all. He has wheat, and he knows it: he thinks more of it than of himself. He may have to sit in the company of those who talk of most interesting things, the name of the Lord not being disregarded either; yet he may be obliged to be so careful in protecting his precious grain, that the only way he can preach is by silence; and this silence is often a preaching not easily accomplished: we do not like to look fools.

But are we done with Midianites when we cross the Jordan? We have them only just named in the book of Joshua (xiii. 21.), and that retrospectively; but when they find Israel neglecting to maintain the state in keeping with their standing, at once they make their appearance. Hence we read in Judges i. 16, “And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the

wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people." There is a subtlety in the very way in which they slide in here. Just as they were in the wilderness by nature—not having crossed the sea on the basis of the blood of the slain lamb, so are they found in the land, though not followers of the golden ark over Jordan. Were we not even told it, we might suspect they were at some wily work. But we *are* told. In chapter iv. 11, 12, we read, "Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh. And they showed Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, was gone up to mount Tabor." Again, "There was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite" (verse 17).

Then, in chapter vi., we find Israel delivered into the hand of Midian seven years. Surely they will be easy upon their captives! Surely they will display some feeling for the disinterested ones! Not at all. We read, "Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds." Again, "And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites." In the midst of all this wretchedness, out comes "the mighty man of

valour," Gideon. He owns he is of a "poor family," and "the least" in his father's house. Ah! my friends, it is when we are brought down to this point of poverty and littleness that we are just the ones for God to use against these enemies of all spirituality. Paul was a Gideon when he said to the Corinthians, who would fain reign "as kings" here: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." He would be but the "cake of barley bread" among them.

Does it not seem strange that God told Gideon to say to the people: "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead"? and yet He made a provision for any timidity in the leader: "If thou *fear* to go down, go down to the host and thou shalt hear what they say." The fear of strong nature is not the fear of trembling in the path of faith. The one is the fear resulting from seeing no resource in nature; the other, because self must be distrusted and God wholly depended upon. It is when we have crossed the Jordan in our soul's history we know best what the latter fear is. I do not think the sense of forgiveness through the blood is enough to produce a saint who can say: "I am of a poor family and the least in my father's house." Self must be learned for this. All our bustling service and zeal may hinder this pulling-down

process for many a day ; but no one is a servant till he can follow the Master ; and no one can follow Him until he learns what death to the scene here is ; and none can know this latter without sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Such is the order. We may imagine our service is indispensable ; that the Master cannot do without us, especially in ruined affairs. This is all a delusion. And what is the result ? We not only have no food to guard from the Midianites, but we do not even *see* them—who they are or what they are. We actually join *with* them in our so-called service, and find their aid by no means comfortless. We seem to do much more than “poor” Gideons who are the least in their father’s houses. Our work seems energetic, successful, and rapid ; the souls we bring blessing to, get peace quickly, that is, peace from “war,” never from “famine.” They are “up and doing” like ourselves. But alas ! the assembly of God, built amid the ruins of man, on the basis of the cross where all his power is ended, suffers incalculably, and the testimony of the Lord is forgotten.

This “mighty man of valour” was to deliver an impoverished people. Jacob was “made thin,” even in Gideon’s days (Isa. xvii. 4). As I have said, they wanted deliverance from the death of famine, and not only from war and the sword. Ah ! we may see many rejoicing in the

latter, and their deliverers rejoicing with them, while neither the delivered nor the deliverer have ever known what real destitution is. It is a happy thing to see such rejoicing; but when the need of a redeemer from *death* is experienced by the soul (it may be long after we have tasted the joy of peace from war), some one of a Gideon character is needed. A Luther will not suffice; for justification by faith and peace with God will not satisfy the one who needs a Boaz, having realized the famine in Moab, and having heard a Naomi discourse of Bethlehem's power. The man who would not have a hoof left behind in Egypt, may be ensnared by a prince of Midian. And Israelites, who, like the Reubenites and Gadites, have professedly carried all they possess out of *Egypt*, can make a home this side Jordan. Such will have their names omitted among the princes who divide the Lord's possession (see Num. xxxiv. 17-29), will ensnare some half tribe with them (verses 13, 14), and will be the first to be "cut short" by the Lord (2 Kings x. 32, 33).

Ah, how many saints find the wilderness anything but "waste and howling!" They make it a beautiful garden for themselves and their families, even though they personally go on to fight the Lord's battles; great warriors with their corn and cattle, wives and children, not "in the house of bondage," but in the subtle and

ensnaring regions of the Midianites. Those who have accepted the standing the Lord has given for His people at any time, may have to learn what "a famine in the land is," and may be sighing for the time when they shall be so rich as to be able to purchase a grave like Abraham. But those who are decoyed by would-be millennial saints may, indeed, taste the joy of being warriors, and of deliverance from the power of Egyptian miseries; but the famine and "the place of which the Lord had said" are unknown and unrealized. They may have all this rejoicing as they receive their possessions ere yet the faithful follower of a Joshua has received anything that satisfies him at all. Let such, however, know that the "silver and gold" of Joshua xxii. 8, will certainly be given. The blessing of *Moses* falls short of this (verses 1-6).

Such are these foes who vex the people of the Lord with their wiles, who beguile them from their allegiance to Him who would lead them above empty nature, beyond the Jordan. They will use at last the most evil powers to help them to carry out their wily intentions, even though such powers may go beyond their first thoughts. They will support "their cattle and their tents" by robbing true Israelites of their corn and sustenance. They will leave such without any flour for their "present," and call him a

"barley loaf," so poor and little do they consider him to be. Well; it is just the character to have if we want to hide our "wheat." To be "poor" and the "least" enables us to move on "despised and rejected" by Midianites. We then have leisure to learn what it is to prepare "vessels" which are ready to be broken to pieces to manifest the power which wholly annihilates such foes (Judges vii. 19; 2 Cor. iv. 7). The preparations are of the Lord; but if we are to be fit warriors of the Gideon class—in a time of "war" and "famine," we have to find out that a "pitcher" is but a *vessel*—it has no *will*.

There are three marks about the man who is suited to rout the Midianites. First: It is not personal *safety* only which occupies him; he is a searcher after, and a preserver of, the finest *food*—no matter how "impoverished" the times may be. He has "wheat," though ostensibly a "barley loaf," and will seek for nourishment for those with him also (Judges viii. 5). "Bread" he *will* have; the will of God he *will* do. Second: He is so little in his own eyes, that he feels God could easily do without him; he will own his "winepress" insignificant (Judges viii. 2). He is nothing. Hence, third: He will not move on in service at all, until he has clear and unequivocal *guidance* direct from God Himself. His words, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest

with me," may be confounded with the seemingly similar words of 1 Cor. i. 22. His determination to have the mind of the Leader (Judges vi. 36-40) may be termed want of faith by many. Alas! it only proves that such readers of character are more content with *usefulness* than with getting *Christ*. Wheat-threshers in "perilous times" never move on till they are sure of their Lord's mind. Others may *do* a great deal; but great doers are seldom wheat-preservers, though Gideons are always wise workers, and have best fruit for the Lord's eye.

Let us remember that the higher the quality of our wheat, the more our souls long to feed on the food so richly given us "in heavenly places," the more our eyes need to be opened to beware of those who make the wilderness a resting-place—who can settle down amid their cattle and tents, in a place where the beauty and taste, the flowers and verdure, of a now barren paradise are sought. These beauties and glories are really gone, hence all the artificial efforts of Adam-man must come in instead. May we beware of the Midianites.

S. O'M. C.

“BEHOLD, A GREATER THAN SOLOMON
IS HERE.”*

LUKE xi. 29-36.

THERE are three experiences necessary for full saintship; that is, for the saint to be really in his true place upon the earth. First, that his conscience should be relieved; second, that his heart should be satisfied; and third, that his body should be full of light. These are the three things that constitute a man really for God upon this earth.

It is not that a man may not have grace: that is not the point. The moment he believes that “Jesus is the Christ” he is “born of God,” however feeble he may be; but it is another thing if that person is here for Christ on the earth. It is not a question now of knowing Jesus is the *Christ*; it is, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the *Son of God*?” He may be saved, but he is not victorious over the organization here unless he know Jesus as the Son of God—unless he know the dignity of the Person who has done this blessed work for him.

We get here Christ presented to us first, as

* This and five addresses following are consecutive.

greater than Jonah; second, as greater than Solomon; and third, that He is the light when the eye is single—the body then is full of light.

Now the first every believer knows something about: that is, Christ the ransom for our sins. We all know something of the Jonah aspect. Jonah was the type of the Lord entering into death for us. He went down into the deep; the floods compassed him about; all God's billows and waves passed over Him; the weeds were wrapped about His head; the bars of the grave were about Him. A soul never really gets the sense of remission of sins unless it see that Christ entered into death for it. He said: "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." We know as sinners that the judgment of God is upon us, and the conscience never gets relief, though there may be a work of grace in the heart, until it sees the blood of Christ. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." This is so elementary that it is almost unnecessary to speak of it, but this is our first point—the Jonah aspect of Christ. "There shall no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonas;" that is Christ in humiliation. It is the first thing for the soul.

Many a person thus having got the first, tries to get to the third without knowing the second. A soul says: I am relieved from my sins, and

now I am seeking (though he may not say it in so many words) that I may glorify God in my life—that my body may be full of light. The candle is lighted within, and I want to let it shine out.

The conscience being relieved, the first thing the person begins to think of, and properly, is his walk. And I am not objecting to this, but I do not think he gets it in this way, though he may desire it; and a great many, by seeking it thus, become legal. It is not difficult to see that a relieved conscience says, What am I to do now to please Him who has chosen me? But I want to show you that, though the desire be right in itself, you must be prepared for the carrying of it out, and that, if you skip the second you will never be in the third rightly. And this is very important, for I have met people who would have the third but who would not accept the second; and, if you act thus, you will find you will fail. It is no use trying to walk in order to get a satisfied heart; you must have your heart satisfied first, and then the walk will come in its right place.

I am left on this dark earth to set forth Christ where He is not. That is the seventeenth of John: "I am glorified in them." He has left us down here to show forth His light and beauty—to be the real representatives of Him here.

Now, to Saul of Tarsus it was said: "Arise,

and go into the city, and it shall be *told* thee what thou must do." Many a one has a right idea, but he does not know how to carry it out. He feels he ought to do something—take off this, or reduce that. But then you may be doing it all legally; you may be doing the right thing, but you have not got the right way of doing it. It is only as I carry about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that my body becomes the practical vessel for carrying out His life here. "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It is the body that is to be the vessel, and not anything that is in the body in itself; it is to be the earthen vessel to carry out the grace of Christ; it is not a self-acting machine, but the machinery itself is placed at the disposal of Christ.

So we have the relieved conscience; the satisfied heart; and the body full of light; and the main point for us will be, what the satisfying of the heart is. But let me premise this. It is a very great snare when a person who has got hold of the truth of Jesus as Solomon, does not bring in upon himself that which would cause his body to be full of light. The Corinthians failed in this; they got hold of the truth of a Saviour in glory, but they did not use the cross practically. When I find that I have a Saviour there, then I turn back to the cross to set aside everything in

myself which would hinder the outshining of that glory which I have received from above. Hence the apostle, though he had brought out before them the glory, had to say to them, You have neglected the cross. He had to write the epistles to the Corinthians because they did not reckon as dead all that would hinder the outshining of the grace they had received.

Having thus dwelt a little on the first point, I now come to the second, which the Lord brings out here; even that Christ is a greater than Solomon.

When I look at the death of Christ, and ask the question, What was the necessity for it? the answer of course is that sin was the necessity. But supposing you were cleared of that altogether, what would you have to guard against then? I do not believe that any saint stands up for what is really evil; there is a much more difficult thing for the heart to be proof to than what is evil, and that is what man calls good. How do you get clear of that? That is what really puzzles the heart; it is not able to stand against what is good. Thus the things that are good in themselves are the things that are the greatest difficulties here; and about which we must have exercise of heart.

The Lord, when He told His disciples about the great supper, said that the two hindrances to souls getting to it were what you would all say

were good things: mercies, and natural ties. There is no harm in them, and yet they are the difficulty. Is there evil in mercies? Is there evil in a bit of land? in oxen? Of course not; and yet they are the difficulties! And, "If a man hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters"—Hate what God Himself has given him?—Without that "he cannot be my disciple."

No one stands up for bad things. We have a bad nature and we are prone to evil, but we do not *stand up* for these; but where is the person who does not stand up for *good* things?

The fact is you want to get your heart satisfied; and if it were satisfied with the higher order of things then it would not be satisfied with the lower. It would then be proof against the lower order. Many a one who knows Christ as Jonah, does not know Him as Solomon. Of course if you do not know Him as Jonah—as the Substitute—you do not get relief for your conscience; but you may know this, and at the same time the good things here have power over you, because you do not know Him as Solomon. And besides this I do not believe that a man's *conscience* is really at rest until he knows Christ as the One who satisfies his *heart*. He is not a man of divine power until he can say: My conscience is relieved and my heart is satisfied, and now take my body and make it full

of light. Therefore it is an immense thing for the soul to understand Christ in the Solomon aspect. I turn to the eighth and ninth of John to show you this in doctrine.

The eighth chapter of John is a case of sin. Well, says the Lord, “He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;” I will clear all the sin away. And He closes with saying: “If a man keep my saying he shall never see death.” That is, that in Christ’s work that side of the question is entirely answered; the evil is cleared away, and death, the penalty, gone.

And now, in the ninth chapter, quite another thing comes out. There is nothing in this world that can compete with Christ—not the bad part of the world, but the good part of it: the eighth chapter is the *bad* side, and Christ clears it all away. He says, “Neither do I condemn you;” and then comes a man who, having got his eyesight, learns that there is not a single thing in man that will stand for Christ in the *good* part of the world. All classes of society are brought forward, with nothing morally bad. First his neighbours, those best acquainted with the man; they pass him on to the Pharisees. These own the fact of the work having been done, but pass him on to his parents. The parents say he must answer for himself; and then the nation casts him out.

Then the Lord finds him, and says to him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." What has he got? He has got the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, outside of all men; in Him he has found an object to delight and detain his heart outside the good of men—not the bad. The bad all cleared away by Christ's own work, "he shall never see death;" and now, on the other hand, having got light, what do you find? Why, that there is nothing in man in sympathy with Christ, and that you have in Him what is superior to man, and to every class of men.

Now, I say, have I lost in all this? No, I have gained immensely; my heart is detained by an object that controls it, and that is worship. It is not the mere eyesight—many a one delights in that—but it is delight in the One who has given me the eyesight, and who, in giving it, has dimmed everything on earth to me. It was nothing to him to tell him to give up his neighbours; he could say, I have got the Lord Jesus Christ. It was nothing to him to tell him to give up his parents; he could say, I have got the Lord Jesus Christ. What was it to him to give up the Pharisees? to give up his nation?

There is nothing that enriches the heart like giving it an object worthy of it. And do you pity him for all that he has lost? He can say: Why, miserable man that I was! I searched all society, and found in it nothing that was worthy of God—nothing that would satisfy my heart; but now, instead of that, I have something that fills me, and satisfies me; and, having that, I have seen the end of all here; I have found out, not only what the bad ones are, but what the best ones are, and they are all cast into the shade; I have got One so vastly superior to them all that He detains my heart.

So far for the doctrine. I now turn for the practical side to Phil. iii.

I say it advisedly, that I do not think a person has full relief in his conscience about his sins who does not see Christ in glory, though I believe he may have his sins forgiven, and have assurance too. Do you think assurance never gets a shake? When it does, the reason is that you have never yet seen Christ in resurrection. For instance, a friend may have settled some matter for me with my father, but on hearing it a question arises: How does my father feel about me? I do not believe any soul is fully established until it knows that the Father finds pleasure and full satisfaction in the way in which the work has been accomplished. And the glory in which Christ is,

expresses the satisfaction of the Father in the mode and manner in which my debt has been discharged. You never get your conscience thoroughly settled until you see Christ in glory, because until then you have never been at God's side of resurrection. It is a weak way of expressing it to say that Christ's resurrection is the receipt for our debt, as is generally said, and, of course, in measure true; the receipt is only applicable to the debtor, whereas the question is, what is God's thought about it? His feeling towards me is that of a tender Father who says to me, You see your Saviour in glory.

I was a short time ago visiting a sailor who was dying, and who had doubts as to his salvation. After a little conversation I said to him: "If you have a Saviour in glory, all must be straight with you." When I went out of the room he said to his mother: "Mother, you never told me that I had a Saviour in glory! I am not a bit afraid to go now that I know that!"

The testimony is that I see Christ raised from the dead, and not only raised, but raised *by the glory of the Father*; and, as thus raised, I speak of Him as the One who is able to make your hearts superior to all the good things of the world.

First, the apostle asserts in the seventh verse: "What things were gain to me, those I counted

loss for Christ.” Now, what is gain here, does not mean temporal things—it means character ; as he says : “ Touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless ”—a perfectly amiable person. Can you say that you do not value your amiability, but count it loss for Christ ? It is a fact that it is harder to correct a man with what is called a nice nature, than a man with a very bad one ; an amiable person is the most difficult to move, because he is so satisfied with himself.

Paul never knew Him anywhere but in glory, and he says, “ I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him.” See what an object He was to eclipse everything. There is no question about Christ having put away all the bad things, but can you say Christ eclipses the best, and the brightest, and the most beautiful things on earth to me, because He has so satisfied my heart ? That is knowing Him as Solomon ! and that alone is what will really satisfy the heart of any.

Do you say : What heart-breaking work it is ! I must give up this thing—not have that thing ! what miserable work it is !—No ; but, I count them but rubbish ! I give them up, not because they are wrong, but because “ I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ! ”

There is no way of getting a person out of the good things here but by showing him what is

superior to them. So, if you say to me, That is a beautiful view, I quite admit it; but if it is to satisfy my heart, it cannot, for it will pass away; the only thing that can satisfy my heart is the Christ of God—"the excellency of the knowledge of *Christ*"—not of *salvation*—but "that I may win *Christ*." I might illustrate it by supposing two portraits. In the first I have all that is good in man—Adam: all the most beautiful tints that you could put upon canvas. For instance, the young man in the gospel whom Jesus loved, and who had "kept all these things from his youth." Mind, the Lord never asked him about anything but what was in relation to his fellows; there was not one word as to God. And that is what self-culture is; we find many who have that, and call it holiness—the being suitable to your fellows; but that is not being suitable to God. You may have a man outwardly everything that is right. This is the first portrait. The other is a picture of Christ as He was on earth. The first may be lovely in the eyes of man, but this is lovely in the eyes of God; and this is the one for me. What the apostle sets forth is that he prefers Christ to man at his best.

But there is still one more step: I am going on. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of

the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I have the goal before me, and I am pressing on; so the word “mark” is used, which shows that I have seen something towards which I am pressing, for how can I go on to a mark unless I have seen it? Just as a marksman could not aim straight at an object unless he saw it, so it is impossible for any one to go on straight through this world unless he has seen Christ, his mark. Then I can afford to leave anything here behind, for I have an object before me, and I am going on to it.

I have now given you both the doctrine and the practical side of my subject. We will now look at the experience of a soul reaching it, to show you how you are to get it if you have not yet got it. How then do I get it? Evidently before you can bring Christ *out* you must get Christ *in*. You say, I have got relief for my conscience; but I hope you agree with me that, besides this, you must have an object for your heart.

I turn to 1 Kings x. to show you how it is attained. Here we get the story of the visit of the queen of Sheba—who we know is “the queen of the south”—to Solomon. She had heard of his fame.

Now the first thing is, do you *desire* to see Solomon? That is what the queen of Sheba did. And what is more, she said, I will not

rest until I have seen him. She had very far to go to get to him: she came to Jerusalem "from the utmost parts of the earth." You have not got this long journey to go, but you will certainly have to go through the exercise that it represents. It is very easy for a soul to say, I should *like* to know Christ in glory; but it is a very humbling fact that every soul possesses what it *values*. The queen of Sheba's ministers may have said to her, You surely are never going to take all this long journey merely to see a man whom you have only heard of! But she said: Solomon I have heard of, and Solomon I must see. I can never rest until I get to him!

I know I can say that the first effect on me of finding Him was, that the things that I had been in vain trying to get rid of just dropped off without my giving them a thought; they dropped off without my knowing it. Some have one kind of attraction here, some another. Things lost their hold that I had thought I never could give up or do without. Some things, of course, are uncomely, and those we are told are evil and we must drop off; but it is the things that are not evil I mean. Why should I not be able to say, like the apostle, The things that were gain to me, those I count loss for Christ? I have seen something that puts everything here in the shade.

Thus I am clear of the badness by the blood of Christ, but I am clear of the goodness by Him in glory. It is not the sin of this world; it is what man calls goodness that most balks the saint in his progress. But what are good things here to what I see in the glory? The day is coming when all here will be burnt to ashes, but I have seen that which will never fade away; I have seen that which will endure in all its brightness for ever; and though I can see the beauty of this, it does not hold my heart a bit.

Well, the beginning is half the battle! Is there any one here to-night who says, I am determined to go? Is there any single one who, like the queen of Sheba, says, I will never rest until I have seen Him? Like her set off to seek Him, for “he that seeketh findeth.”

Now when she got to Jerusalem she might still have stopped short of the full thing. There is a still further test as to whether a soul is in earnest. If you have not true desire of heart you will stop short of the second thing that she did. Having at last reached Solomon, she communes with him “of all that was in her heart.”

I have known a believer who said, I would not let Christ have the key of my heart. Now would you give Him the key? As I say, I have known a person honestly say, I would not. How can you expect to have your heart satisfied when

there is something there that you will not let Him see?—perhaps some earthly idol there—and you will not make Him your confidant. If you tell a person your secrets you give him power over you. This is the difference between love and wisdom. Love begets love, but wisdom makes me confide. Do you know Christ as "the wisdom of God"? Can you say, I talk everything over with Him—all my motives, and thoughts, and wishes. I know He has such perfect wisdom that I tell Him everything?

And lastly, the third thing that we find in the queen of Sheba. All the things that concern Solomon are now before her heart. "When she had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." Let me notice one very interesting thing as to this. It was not any future things as to him that occupied her; it was *present* things. It is *now* that we are let into the interests of Christ. Supposing I got a little glimpse of what He is now doing, became, so to say, a cabinet minister of His in —; understood what He was doing, and how He was working out things here—what a sense it would give me of my position; how it would alter everything here to me! So she never

thought of her camels or her gold; there was nothing wrong in them, but her heart was full of his things, and she never thought of her own. And so of any one of you who has ever been in the presence of the Lord; it was not that you were occupied in giving up this thing and that thing, but that your heart was *full*, and they all vanished. You were not thinking of the bereavement you had gone through, of the lack of things around you, of the distracting circumstances in your home. No; all had vanished, and you were entranced! “There was no more spirit in her;” or, as the apostle puts it, to God he was beside himself; or, as the real force of the word is, *outside of himself*.

Now is this an impossibility? It was once said to me that it was—that it was “a splendid impossibility.” The person who said it lived to know that it was not. It *is* splendid, but it is *not* impossible. The person who has it is the only one who can be occupied with the third experience. I am so entranced with the beauty of this One whose perfection I have seen, that I am seeking to get rid of everything in me that hinders it shining out of me—that hinders my body being “full of light.” Be it society, love of painting, music, scenery, all the nice things here on earth, no matter what, take them all away from me, so that I may have the out-shining of Jesus in my life.

The Lord give us to understand these three things that constitute real pilgrimage, that we may be to His glory as we walk through this evil world for His name's sake. Amen.

(J. B. S.)

The world always throws out its baits according to our intelligence of God's mind and corresponding walk. What was a bait for Lot was not for Abraham. A saint must give up the mind of the Lord before he can be sensibly affected by the world. Lot got below the mind of God as to what a pilgrim was before Sodom could have any attraction for him. Abraham, who had the same flesh in him, kept the mind of God, and Sodom failed to tempt him.

(C. E. SH.)

CHURCH ORDER.

LUKE xxiv. 13-36.

THIS chapter tells us the beginning—how the Lord led His disciples on to the new ground on which they were to understand His relation to them and theirs to Him. In the last verse I read we find Him, “in the midst of them.” Therefore it is a matter of immense interest to us to know how it was brought about then, so that we may see how it is recovered to us now. But we must first understand that it has been lost, otherwise we cannot talk of recovery.

What then is the true order of meeting for the saints? or, to make it simple, what is “church order”?

Now, there are hundreds of notions as to what it is, so that it is evident it is lost, or there could not be so many. This is the question then: What is the present relation of Christ to His people on earth?

This twenty-fourth chapter of Luke is plainly the beginning, everyone will admit. And next we must admit that very soon after it failure set in. We see this in the seven churches of Rev. ii. and iii., where things go on from bad to worse until in Thyatira we get to Popery. After this

we get Sardis : "Thou hast a name that thou livest." Things were better in appearance. Luther and Calvin tried to reform the church, but they never got at what had to be revived. There was in that sense a partial recovery at the Reformation ; but in Philadelphia the truth is recovered. Every student of Scripture admits that Thyatira is Romanism, Sardis Protestantism ; and that these four last churches go on to the end. Finally we get to Laodicea, "neither hot nor cold," and spued out of Christ's mouth. I think then that you will admit there is ruin, and that it is proved by the diversity of opinion that exists. There was certainly no second opinion in Luke xxiv. As I have said, differences began soon after, and became greater and more confirmed as we go on to Thyatira and Sardis.

But now a point of great importance. When the greatest darkness has set in there is a revival. Mark this, for it is always God's way. When the ruin is irretrievable then He comes in.

You can trace this principle all through Scripture. At the very beginning in the garden of Eden the ruin was irretrievable, but before God turned the man and the woman out there was a revival. Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living, and the Lord made coats of skins and clothed them. Wondrous grace of God in the midst of all the ruin !

We find the same in Gen. xxxiii. ; Abram was called by God out of Mesopotamia, and Isaac actually sent his son back there ; but Jacob returns to the land, and in that sense Jacob is a revival. He has a new name given to him, and everything is bright for a time. He is pious: his altar he only calls El-elohe-israel: It all turns around himself. This is just the snare into which those who are now being revived are liable to fall in the present day—retaining the name of power without the character of it. Jacob ceases to be a pilgrim.

Another snare comes out in Haggai. The remnant, the captives, have returned from Babylon to the land, and it is a wonderful thing that they should have returned at all. But, while they were at first set upon building the temple, when they were opposed and hindered, they became occupied with their own blessings. There was a revival when all was in ruin, but there is a snare in that revival ; and as we see Jacob lose the true place of a man restored to the land by the grace of God, cease to be a pilgrim and settle down at Shalem, so in Haggai we see the remnant cease to care for the house of God, and be occupied only with their own individual blessing. The temptation to us is to settle down here ; and, while pious, like Jacob, to think nothing of the house of God like the people in Haggai's time, though seeking the good of our own souls.

Thus we see that God does revive, and that when the ruin is irretrievable; and that before it actually does occur He brings in a revival. Having established this point I come to another.

But first I must make one remark. The word "revival" is often wrongly used. A "revival meeting" for unconverted souls is quite erroneous, for there is nothing there to revive. I can revive a sleeping saint, but I cannot revive an unconverted sinner. And when a word is wrongly used there is sure to be a wrong thought at the bottom. So in this case. The great thing that is wrong in this idea of revival meetings is the thought that there is something in man to work on.

Now what is true revival? The recovery of what has been lost; and the first thing to be recovered is the first thing that was lost. You will find, every one of you, that when you begin to fall away it is the best bit of truth that you have that you give up first; just as in a storm it is the top shoot of the tree that goes. A man who talks to me of heavenly truth being impracticable, that man is going to give it up as sure as can be; he may not be lost, but he is going back. Satan always addresses himself to the best bit of truth you hold; when you are growing cold you will find that it is the most advanced truth you hold that is in danger.

Just turn to Col. ii.; there the apostle says:

“I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you.” What is this great conflict for? It is to get them to the top. The apostle from his prison has written to the saints three epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. In Ephesians he shows them the wonderful place the church has in Christ; but in Colossians he is eager by the Spirit of God to carry them up to the mark. Do you know what the desire of Christ is for you? Do not tell me you know what He *did* for you; the question is, Do you know what He *desires* for you—what the Holy Ghost is aiming at in your soul? It is that you should be complete in Christ—it is that you may actually know that you are united to one another and united to Christ.

He says: “I have great conflict for you;” it was a great point to be assured of this wonderful position. To walk in it is the desire of Christ’s heart for us, the aim of the Holy Ghost and the labour of the servant, for it is the accomplished purpose of God. And what has become of it? It is lost. Look at all the sects around us. They have kept their own order, their own forms, or their liturgies, but that is not what the apostle had conflict about, and if it be not, then it is lost; and the thing to be recovered is the thing that was lost.

I will prove to you that it was the best thing that went first. The church of Ephesus, so

richly endowed, so highly gifted, lost their first love. They lost true affection of heart for Christ. It is the spring of everything to know myself united to Christ; to know the saints "knit together" unto Him, and He in our midst, the One who keeps us in happy harmony by His Spirit. This was what they lost, and the point of departure must be the point of restoration. This is the thing to maintain. It was what the apostle Paul was struggling for. And nothing stimulates me like knowing that it is the desire of the heart of Christ for me, for then I know that I have the Holy Ghost to back me up—to be my power. The apostolic fathers never had it. You may read the folios in any library you come across, and during 1800 years past, though you will find most beautiful thoughts, you will not find what is church order—what is the relation of Christ to His people, and of His people to Him. This, then, is what had to be recovered, and I come now to *how* it is recovered.

You are not a Philadelphian if you do not know the relation of Christ to His people, and of His people to Him. A man may be saved in Sardis, but he will not be a Philadelphian; and if you are not a Philadelphian you are not entitled to the favours Christ bestows on Philadelphians. By Philadelphian I do not mean merely a man out of system, but one who understands his relation to Christ.

The way in which the Lord first recovered it for His people was by bringing a devoted servant to see:—I have a Head in heaven, and, if I, so must other saints; and one Head necessitates one body. This was true recovery. In Colossians the apostle says: “Not holding the Head;” the Head was lost to the church. But this was recovered, and the true relation of Christ and His people is made known. You must admit the fact that for 1800 years it was lost. If you say, How do you prove it? I answer, Show me anywhere that it was known. And, apart from history, you may see it from the attitude in which the Lord stands in the midst of the seven churches. John did not know Him: “His eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters.”

Let me then describe to you what a Philadelphian is.

We read in Rev. iii.: “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; . . . I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” That is a Philadelphian. He is one for whom the truth has been recovered. And the truth that has been recovered is not a particular truth; all along

there have been different attempts to recover different truths by earnest men, but now it is *the* truth that has been recovered. Irving made much of the Holy Ghost's power and of the Lord's coming, but he became a heretic because Christ was not his simple object. Christ is the One who has accomplished everything, and the Holy Ghost is the One who establishes in the soul what has been accomplished, and that is a very different thing. Getting hold of Christ is like getting the magnet, whilst a person occupied with only one truth or two is like a man who has only got some points of the compass.

The truth then has been restored to us ; but I say take care lest you make too much of knowledge. I believe that many a one accepts the truth who has never been led into it of God. These *tend to Laodicea*. A person may be able to explain to me most thoroughly and completely the ground of meeting for worship, may be able to teach me how solemn a thing it is to give out a hymn or read a Scripture if I have not been led of the Spirit to do so, and yet he is on dangerous ground unless he has been led of God into it.

I find next that the Lord, in all revivals, always restores the best thing that has been lost. Jacob really had a very bright view of heaven. And when the whole nation was going off into desolation, God's own grace in dealing

with them comes out. The Lord Himself is the light that God brings in: "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up;" and yet very soon the house was "left desolate."

And so in our day, when the Lord restores true knowledge of Himself, the remarkable character of His grace is that He actually begins with us in the very same way in which He did with the disciples at the beginning. This is why I have read Luke xxiv., which I now turn to for a little.

I believe no person ever finds this true ground without being educated. I do not believe a soul can get it out of a book; the Lord only can teach Him. The Lord educated His disciples at the beginning, soon though they may have lost what He taught them; and at the beginning of our present revival He took just as much pains to educate souls.

Now there are three great lessons in the education of a soul that is to learn church order; and, as I have said, he will not get them from this or that theological folio, for they are not in them. In this chapter the Lord leaves on record for us how He taught them to His disciples.

First we find: "Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

What was the first thing that God opened your mind to? Was it not that Christ is the object of all Scripture? The immense thing brought before the soul is Christ. Some little while ago I came across a man who said to me: "I have been reading the Bible for fifteen years and never saw Christ in it, but now I find it is all about Christ." So in the meetings years ago, the prominent thing brought out was that everything in the word related to Christ, the Holy Ghost thus taking the same pains with us as He did with the first disciples.

Secondly: "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." "He was known of them in breaking of bread." I do not mean that it was the Lord's Supper; but there is the simple blessed fact of the soul being able to say, I have by faith seen the risen Lord; I have by the Spirit of God known the risen One. It is not a question of the amount of knowledge, and it is not conversion.

These two (their hearts had burned within them by the way), now that they have seen Him, go straight back to Jerusalem, and, whilst they are telling the tale of what had been done in the way, and how He was known to them in breaking of bread, we reach the third thing, which completes the education of a Philadelphian: "Jesus himself stood in the midst."

Now if you turn to John xx. you will find a parallel passage. Here we see the Lord first sending Mary Magdalene with the message: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." She represents another condition of soul to that of the two disciples. We find two different states of soul and of knowledge, one represented by the two going to Emmaus. If you had asked them *their feeling* about Christ they would have said, Well there is only disappointment as to it all; "we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." But Mary's state is different. She is mourning because they have taken away the One she loved. She has not union, but she has affection, and she finds it intolerable to be here without Him. You will find many varieties of these two states of soul. But my point is, that He first sends Mary Magdalene with a message, and then the two disciples with another, and thus having prepared them for it, He stands in their midst and says, "Peace be unto you."

And it is thus He comes, when two or three are gathered to His name as on Lord's-day mornings, into the midst of the assembly, to impart to us the virtues of His own elevation. Have you got the sense of such a thing as this? It is wonderful to realize it—the fact that the

risen Man, with all the proofs of triumph, with all the proofs of victory, should come into the assembly and say, Here I am, your peace! I have come into your midst, having risen out of all that was against you, and everything must now pass away but myself; I occupy the ground that I have cleared.

Do you think people would come in late, and behave themselves carelessly, if they knew that they were in the presence of One whom they had known privately, as did the two going to Emmaus? I say that church order was understood there. We must go back to the very beginning, and this is the beginning. I must go back to the babe: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a *little child* shall in no wise enter therein." I ignore all human development—all church history. Whether it be the disappointed ones walking to Emmaus, or the loving hearts like Mary Magdalene, they must all be educated and revived. Then you have church order. He says to them: If you open that door to anyone, I will ratify it; if you shut any one out, I will ratify it. He does not say, I will shut him out of *heaven*, but I will stand by what you do. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

I trust you have now no difficulty in understanding what is revived. Christ in His true

relation to His people has been revived in their hearts. The way He works is by educating the soul until it can say, I know what it is to be in this wonderful circle of which He is the centre. My Lord is there, and the state of my soul is that of dependent expectation. It is not a very bright meeting that I am looking for, but I am going to be where Christ is in the midst. And He cannot be "in the midst" of one individual alone; there must be the assembly—the two or three gathered to His name. And there He enters, saying, All care, all trial, everything must now give way, that there may be fellowship with the Father and Myself.

What has been lost is what has been restored to us; it is not anything new we have got, but it is that same cardinal truth which was lost. And, having this, you are a Philadelphian—no power apart from Christ. And He says to the faithful, I will stand by you. This is the wonderful reward of a Philadelphian.

The Lord lead our hearts really to understand it. How delightful to find out the interest that Christ takes in us! May we know His relation to us, and our relation to Him.

(J. B. S.)

THE SCOPE OF TRUTH.

PSALM xlv.

THE subject we had on the previous evening was the present great revival of truth—the way in which the Lord has led back His people to the knowledge of His mind as they had it at the beginning; so that, in fact, as some one expressed it lately when speaking on this subject, “extremes meet.” We have had to go back to the first start of that which has since grown into an immense thing; we have had, as it were, to cancel “the mustard tree,” while the Lord conducts us back to the bud of it—to the twenty-fourth of Luke. I do not believe that any true soul has reached this point without having gone through a similar exercise to that of those we find in that chapter; taught by the Lord, he has reached the point where he discovers, not his salvation, but his relation to Christ and Christ’s to him. He, as we saw, first opens to them the Scriptures, is next known to them in the breaking of bread, and lastly stands in their midst. I fear some have taken their place in the third, who have never known the second.

But this church order was almost immediately lost, because the central point, *Himself*,

was lost. To Ephesus He says : " Because thou hast left thy first love I will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent ; " I will take away the power and ability to set forth light to others. And now, when ruin is irretrievable, He has brought in this revival. It is the most wonderful thing. Here we are amidst the débris of everything, and He says, I will bring you out again, though not in the illustrious and distinguished character that you bore at the beginning. I must take things up again where I fell off, just as Abram went back to where his altar was " at the first." And it is most exhilarating to the heart to know that the Lord takes the very same pains with me as He did with His disciples at the first. I trust now that it is simple to you the fact of your relationship to Him—that of the body, united to Him and one another—and that this is the true place of His people. Having seen this, I come to a second point: it is not everything that truth is *recovered*. As I heard it quaintly said, Ezra built the temple—recovered the truth—but Nehemiah built the walls to *preserve* it; and this thought suits me as an illustration of what I mean. There has been the recovery, but now the thing is to *preserve* it.

What then is the nature of this preservation ? There is a little word in the second of Timothy

that will help us if we turn to it. It is: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me." The word translated in our version as "form" would be better rendered by "outline."

Now notice that he does not say "hold fast the sound words," nor does he say "which form I gave you." I hope you understand the difference. He wants them to get hold of not only the words, but of the *scope* of them. It was the outline they were to keep. The words, he says, you got from me, but have you got a certain knowledge of the form, of the outline, of the scope of them?

And this is of great importance. You will find that every failure and defalcation of the people of God has been marked by this—that they have lost sight of the scope of the word that God has given them. I find that Satan often comes in and upsets a soul about a word, but I say, I am not going to stand about a word; I know what the scope of the whole thing means. Just as one would say to a child, You have not taken in my *meaning*; so you will find at any time that failure arises when you lose the sense of the scope of the words.

I will take just one or two examples to bring out what I mean, before going on to show how a soul being occupied with Christ learns what will suit him. In Eden, Satan occupies Eve with the penalty for eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and deceives her as to the

nature of the penalty. She loses the positive meaning and scope of the word, led away and diverted from it under the impression that she will not suffer for going contrary to it.

Noah might plead that he was not forbidden to plant a vineyard—that there was no word of God interdicting it; but, if he had kept to the form or scope of the word given to him, he would soon have seen that if he in any measure relaxed the reins of power he would forfeit the position to which he was called.

Again in Gen. xxxiii., I find Jacob returned to the land, and in that sense a revival; he had learned the power of God at the night of wrestling, having re-entered the land where his fathers had “sojourned as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles.” But he loses the scope of God’s word, he settles down in the land. “He bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father.” He might say the word of God had not forbidden him to do it, and there was no harm in it, but he was called out to be a pilgrim, and he now had lost that character. Oh! but I am a pious man, he might say, I have my altar. I do not give up the light and the truth that I have! True, but you have given up the *form* of the word, you have given up the great outline of your calling. God brought you back to set forth the fact that you are a pilgrim and a stranger here.

It is an immense thing practically. Even all learning amongst men consists in being able accurately to distinguish one thing from another. I say I know the size and the shape of two things, and I can distinguish the one of them from the other, though there be but little difference between them. Any one can distinguish between two things that are very different. I remember hearing of a learned professor who mistook a very small bird for a large one because it had identically the same coloured feathers in its wings. In appearance it was so, but he had not an idea of the true *form* of the bird.

Thus I often find a man interpreting a passage in a gospel or an epistle, and failing in the interpretation, because he does not know the scope of it. A man does not know the geography of England because he knows the one county of Middlesex; he must know the scope of the whole country. "Sound words which you have heard," but the question is, have you got the scope of them? When any one insists on a text for this or that it is evident he is only thinking of Middlesex; but if he were to leave out Middlesex in his delineation, I should be able to detect him by the sound words. I get the scope from the whole tenor of the sound words, but I can detect omission by the sound words themselves.

There is another example in the thirteenth of

the first of Chronicles, where David gets a new cart to bring the ark of God home in. He had heard of it being done before by the Philistines; facts were in favour of it; history stood up for it; and there was no text to forbid it; and so he has the cart. And the worst of these things is that they always go well at first; there is no harm in them. And so it goes on all right until the oxen stumble, and then the smash comes. David was led away by expediency: he did not understand the scope and nature of God's counsel. So we find he has to fight the Philistines who brought the leaven in, and when he has thus cleared himself morally he says: "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites." When the world comes in as the Philistines here, the mind of the saint gets clouded as to the counsel of God, and, unless there be very positive interdiction, he cannot see how he trenches on God's ways by adopting a human expedient.

One example in the New Testament. In Gal. ii., Paul takes Titus, a Greek, with him to Jerusalem, but he would not have him circumcised. He says, I will not give way on this point, that the truth of the gospel may continue with you. And after that he adds, Neither will I give way before the old apostle. When Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; I must

stand up for the truth of the gospel, I must keep it up to its full scope, up to the mind of the Lord. If I yield, either in the case of the young disciple or of the old apostle, I shall be giving up the form of sound words.

It is an interesting point to consider. You will find when you come to deal with people, that they have not got the scope of truth at all; they have lost the form. "Form," as I have said, is a very inadequate word; it is really more the *delineation* of a thing. Nothing makes it so plain to my mind as a map. I must keep the whole thing in my thought, or I get into confusion according to divine order.

And now I come to the second part of my subject for to-night, which is more interesting, and will more touch our hearts.

What, then, is the object of all we have been looking at? It is that, if in the things of man it is so important I should be able to distinguish things as they are—that I should know their true form and size—how much more important is it in the things of God? And in these I must get everything from God Himself. I am entirely dependent upon Him for my knowledge and understanding of His mind. This is why I have read this Psalm, in which I find how, by being in His presence, I may get what suits Christ. It is: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine

own people, and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty."

But, you say, how am I to get into this place? I turn to Matt. xxv., to show you how the Lord brings His saints to it. Here the church has lost its hope; it has gone to sleep; there is no activity of life. The Lord comes in and wakens us up by the simple fact, not of His *coming*, but by the words, "Behold the *Bridegroom*; go ye out to meet him." It is not only that I know Him as the Head, but that I am in the sense of the relationship of the Bride. Supposing a person came into this room and announced, "Behold the Bridegroom!" what an effect it would produce! How we should all immediately adopt what we think would suit Him! I am going to meet Him. My waking up to this fact and my going out to meet Him necessarily create in my heart the desire to suit Him. He does not terrify you; he does not threaten judgments on you; but He counts on your heart. The cry is "Behold the Bridegroom!" This at once awakes us, and, as we go to meet Him, the practical effect is, that we seek to be what will suit Him.

I turn next to Rev. xxi., where I find the Bride "all glorious within." This book opens with the failure of the vessel of testimony: it is spued out of Christ's mouth; but at the close of the book He lets me into His secrets, His

thoughts about His Bride; He discloses to me the very garments in which she will stand before Him—the very moral condition, which will not only please Himself, but which set forth what they have who are ready for Him. You may say, But we are not the Bride yet; and I admit that we are not; but still from this picture of the Bride, I can show you what will suit the Bridegroom; and I say that I have got a wonderful secret when I can say, *I know what will suit Him.*

Here I learn what will suit Him. I find in Rev. xxi. what the Bride will be when she *does* suit Him, and I hear of the beauty which pleases Him in the forty-fifth Psalm. “Forget thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty”—the greatest moral beauty.

In that day, when we shall be like Himself, surely we shall be that which will please Himself. And here He lets me know what that is, and if I am going out to meet Him I have already got some of that beauty, and I am not going to adopt anything that will not suit Him. This puts me into a peculiar position here. I cannot do what David did; I am not going to have a cart, however useful it may be, for I have got the form, or scope, of what will suit Him.

In the description of the Bride we are given

seven different things. First: "Having the glory of God;" "Her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;" I believe this is Christ in humanity. Second: "A wall great and high"—to keep out everything that does not suit Christ; everyone knows that walls are to keep things out. Third: "Twelve gates"—to let in everything that *does* suit Him. The description is so simple that I need not go through it; what I want to dwell upon is the eleventh verse: "Having the glory of God." This is shining on the earth in the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is this that lets us into the secret of our power. Though I admit that it is future, that we have it but partially now, yet we may have it in measure: why, else, is it given to us here? If the bridal garments are brought home before the bridal day, what is it for, but that they may be tried on? And so, at the end of this book, the Lord allures the heart by showing it the moral nature of that which will suit Him.

But how am I to get it? It is by "having the glory of God" I see what will suit Him. With unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the "same image from glory to glory." Christ is in glory, and I must be in it too, in spirit, before I can have it, and then I am transformed; and I thank the Lord that, though I may have but very little

of Rev. xxi. about me, yet I do know what suits Him; and I can tell others what that great moral costume is, and that the church will come out soon in all the divine beauty that I see here, and be the exhibition to the earth of the second Man, of whom it is said that, "if all the things which he did should be written every one, even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written;" and thus be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

But I may look round and see very little of these bridal garments!—Still, I say, I will not have anything else.—But I shall look so little—so nothing in the eyes of men! I shall have but very little clothing!—Better have only one *stitch* of the "raiment of needlework," than the most beautiful broadcloth that was ever woven! I do not want to be anything in the eyes of men; I am going to meet the Bridegroom, and I want to suit *Him*; and, as has been said, "when we are in our true position we are not a testimony to our greatness, but to our weakness."

Now you never can become suitable to Christ but by being in His company. It is the bridegroom that makes the bride; and you must acquire from Himself what best suits Himself. As I may say, it is company that teaches manners. If you are not in His company you may read the Scriptures as much as you like, be

able to describe to me from them dispensations and so on, but it will all end in affectation, and not in Christ's ways. I want you to accustom yourself to being in the presence of Christ; and the effect of that presence is to demand the entire removal of everything that is not of Him. There I am with Him in a scene where nothing can interrupt my communion with Him. It was in the glory that the ten commandments were written upon the tables of stone; and it is in the glory only that Christ can be written upon the heart. And the reason we see so little of it in people is that they have been so little beholding the glory of Christ. This was just what made the difference between Martha and Mary. Martha was occupied with the human good thing; Mary was learning, by being in company with Himself, what suited Him. Children are often very like their parents, because they keep their company so much; and that is just the principle.

What I look for is that we may practically so get the sense of this, that we may really know what suits Him. If I want to know whether such a thing suits the Lord, and I have to acknowledge that I do not know, the reason is that I have never been near enough to Him to get His mind about it. And I may always get it, if I only go to Him for it, for I believe the Lord is always to me in the aspect

that suits me at the moment. If it were not so, He would be indifferent to me. I have to do with that blessed One where He is; and, as I am in association with Him, I become identified with Him in the circumstances in which I am placed, so that I am able to act in them, in a measure, as He would have done. Is there a storm? I shall be quiet in it. But if I am not with Him, it will only be a legal effort on my part; it will be my saying that I have power to imitate Christ. It is only as I am with Himself that He gives me power from Himself to be that which is suitable to Him. All the Scripture in the world will not make me able to be what I ought to be without the grace of Christ. And therefore being in His presence is the first thing that is marked in this marvellous unfolding, which I cannot but regard as the most wonderful thing for the Lord to put before us--this picture of what the church will yet be in this world, where now she is only a failure and a disgrace.

May the Lord teach us to learn what suits Him, and give us grace not to accept of anything, no matter what it be, that does not suit Him. I may appear very insignificant in the eyes of man; I may have uncommon little of the Bride's garments; but I say, I value nothing but what suits Christ; and I would rather have but one stitch of the raiment of needlework--

and remember it is tapestry-work, done stitch by stitch—than the finest manufactured garment that man ever saw. I am going out to meet Him, and, if I have the real Bride affection in my heart, I can think of nothing but what will suit Him. I quite admit how little I may have of what does; but, let me say, anyhow I have the *form*, and I will not give it up, neither will I take any substitute for it.

(A. W. W.)

It is only as you feed on the old corn of the land that you can really eat the manna. There is no power to be conformed to the life of Jesus on earth except as you “behold the glory of the Lord.” A soul only in the wilderness may know the High-priestly care of the Lord, as in Hebrews, but he cannot be “changed into the same image.”

There is a great aptness in the word “earthen vessels;” for thus in the very nature of the vessel there is that which obscures the shining out. So then comes the process of breaking the vessel that the light may shine out. The question is, How is it to be broken? So we get all means of breaking it in the words: “Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”

There is first the "ministry" that we have received—"the gospel of the glory of Christ;" and then there is the shining out in the vessel—the "bearing about in the body." *Testimony* and *life* are the weapons that God ever uses to defeat the enemy, as we find it in Gideon; first, the blowing with the trumpets, and then the breaking the pitchers. The exhibition of the natural life in a saint must obscure the life of Christ. Many afflictions would be spared us if we were always in self-judgment—always "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

(ED. D.)

There, with adoring hearts and unhindered spirits, shall we find ourselves surrounding the Lamb of God, who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and behold, not only the glory of God in the face as we never saw it before, but ourselves changed actually into the same image, and still able to look, and wonder, and forget ourselves, as we learn the infinite depths of the Father's delight in the Son.

(W. W.)

A READING ON GALATIANS II. 19-21.

You get four things brought out in this passage: the law, the cross, Christ the life, and Christ the object.

First. It is the righteousness of the law; the rule and measure of what man as a child of Adam ought to be — loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, and doing nothing forbidden in the ten commandments.

People forget the *character* of the law; it comes and requires obedience, and pronounces a curse if you do not keep it. It is very different to come and exact a debt, and to come and pay it. The law only *exacts*; and the moment we have got a sense, not merely of being outward sinners, which a man may escape, but of the law reaching the inner man, it is all up with us: “sin revived and I died;” “I through the law am dead to the law.” Just because the law is perfect, it says you must not have lusts; but I *have* when under it, and I like to gratify them too; and, if not, cannot get rid of them. Then it *kills*. And that is just what we want as to the old man.

But then there is another thing. If it kills, it *condemns* too ; and that is why it is said to be a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation. But the way God has set about it is this : “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God ;” and the way to that is, *He* did it through Christ ; He took the condemnation, and I have got the death, and lost the condemnation.

He takes the law in its nature first, and through it I am dead. But being by Christ, and the crucifixion of Christ, I get the death, but not the condemnation ; that Christ took ; and then I am to reckon myself dead. Not merely Christ crucified for my sins, but I with Christ—the way of getting rid of the old man and the condemnation together. The old man condemned in Christ, and I dead : “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.”

Very well then, I say, I am dead.—Then there’s an end of you !—No, say I ; “nevertheless I *live*, yet not I, but Christ.” It is death for the old man, and I have got another life : “not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

We have got thus three things spoken of : the law, the cross, and the life. Now there is the fourth, the object. “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” As it is said in Colossians : He is “all” as the object of life, and “in all” as the power of life.

It is the same thing here in other words. His only object in living was Christ.

What is "the faith of the Son of God"?

The faith which has Him for its object.

Is "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (James ii.) the same thing?

Yes. Some take it as if it were the faith Christ had; quite true, He did live by faith in perfect dependence; but when you say, "the faith of God"—which it is, where translated, "have faith in God"—you cannot take it as God's faith.

It is sweet to see how Paul's heart turns to what the Christ is whom he knows: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." God speaks of my loving Him, but I must know first that He loved me: "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

It is a distinct thing to hold ourselves dead, knowing that we died with Christ, and to say he died for our sins. The Red Sea and the Jordan give us His death for us, and ours with Him. At Jordan the ark went down, and stayed there till all Israel had passed over, and then they were circumcised; the reproach of Egypt was never rolled away in the wilderness, it was at Gilgal.

What is "the reproach of Egypt"?

They were not dead—had not put off the body of the flesh. Worldliness is the reproach of

Egypt; we are "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world." If the world sticks to a Christian, he is going on as one who is not dead. It was a reproach for Israel to be in Egypt; he ought to be in Canaan. Till a person is dead and risen he does not get out of Egypt. If I see dress, money loving, etc., I see Egypt in people. There are plenty of other things, of course. I cannot bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, unless I reckon myself dead. Through Jesus, I have died with Him and am in Canaan; and then comes the practice. They went and won victories, and came back to Gilgal. So you will find with us; if one has been blessed in ministry, and does not come back there, he goes back in his soul.

Does the Red Sea go beyond forgiveness?

Yes; it is redemption: "stand still and see the deliverance of Jehovah." He is a Saviour, and He takes them out.

As to doctrine; will it go as far as Colossians?

Not quite.

As far as Romans?

Yes. But you do not get the full result in Romans.

Is the Red Sea being risen with Christ?

Yes. The Red Sea and Jordan coalesce. The wilderness is no part of the purpose of God. It is of His ways. The wilderness is not spoken of

in Exod. iii. and vi., nor in xv. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection, which deliver us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, which brings us into a new position—into Canaan. All is complete, in a certain sense, at the Red Sea—they are brought to God; but there is a new position in heavenly places not revealed there.

Where would Colossians come in?

Colossians takes a man as risen with Christ, but does not take him into heaven. In Ephesians he is in heavenly places, just where you want the armour. People do not understand what that means. The moment the Israelites cross Jordan, the man with the drawn sword meets them. Satan says: I will not have that.—But I am *the Lord's host*. It is no question now of saving me, but I have to act for the Lord in spiritual service.

There are two distinct things in which the Ephesians' starting-point is completely different from Romans. The starting-point in Romans is man's responsibility: he is guilty, all the world is guilty. There are proofs of sin both in Jew and Gentile; man is looked at as alive in sins. In Ephesians he is dead in them; a different thought altogether. Alive in sin in Romans, but, for that very reason, dead towards God—not a movement in his heart towards God. After a man is dead he neither speaks, nor

moves, nor feels. I want to be dead to sin, and alive to God, and then everything changes. The point is to get sins and sin dealt with; the fruit cleared away, and the tree dead; and this is fully brought out in Romans: "Propitiation through faith in his blood;" and then, "Reckon ye yourselves dead to sin."

In Ephesians I get nothing of the responsibility at all, nor a man being justified, but the counsels of God according to the good pleasure of His will. Dead in sins, quickened together with Christ, and so you can get all the fulness of blessing in Ephesians. Christ comes into that place for us, and having put away our sins, in coming down to death, God raises us all up together. In Ephesians you do not see Christ till He is *dead*: "Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies." It is a new creation; there is nothing about being justified, for I am a new creation.

In Colossians you get both (Col. ii.); only he does not pursue it on to put us into heavenly places. "The hope *laid up* for you in heaven" (Col. i. 5)—not yet *in* heaven: "Seek those things which are above" (iii. 1)—*seek* them.

In chapter ii. you get both things: "In him dwelleth all the completeness (I put it so to connect the two words) of the Godhead." He, all the *completeness* of God, and I, *complete* in

Him. "In whom also ye are circumcised in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." True Christian circumcision is practically realizing that I have died. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get Romans and something more. Then in verse 13 I get Ephesian doctrine as to our natural state: "You, being dead in sins, hath he quickened together with him." But it is not carried on to sitting in heavenly places. In Romans he speaks of being dead with Christ, but does not go on to show us risen with Him. The moment I am risen with Christ, I am getting into the same place as Christ; not merely justified as an individual before God, but on the way into the new place of being united to Christ in heaven.

"You being dead in your sins hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." I was dead in my sins, and Christ dies and puts them all away, and the sins I was guilty of are all gone. He has forgiven us all trespasses *because* He put them away; and then God comes and takes Christ, and takes me, and raises me up from the dead; and He goes further and says: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Now you are to have your affections on things above, not on

things on the earth. Ephesians takes us on from having our affections in heaven, to being ourselves in heavenly places.

(J. N. D.)

“He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” It is not he that *has* believed. You see thousands of believers that are as dry as chips because they are not *believing*. It must be a present thing. It is only as I am connected with the source that the waters can flow out from me. Then there is no dryness. The knowledge of God in His ways and in His word never make a person able to minister refreshment. It is only *Christ* in him that can do that.

(E. P. C.)

SEPARATION : ITS POWER AND EXTENT.

It is often necessary to compare existing practices with first principles, in order to discover the directions of our failure, as well as the source of the dangers to which we are exposed. On the right ground, we are constantly liable to the deception that we are truly separated, because we have been led by the grace of God to take an outside ecclesiastical position. It cannot therefore be too often repeated that the position we occupy as gathered out to the name of Christ, is condemnatory of everything from which we have separated; and hence, that, while it is our privilege to "occupy a small circle with a large heart," a heart that embraces all the children of God (for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John v. 1, 2), there should never be alliance or associations with the activities or institutions of "the camp" in any shape or form; or the expectation of any other than a hostile and persecuting spirit, whether from "the camp" or the world. Our place is outside, and the power of our testimony will be

in proportion to the reality of our separation ; for it is only when we purge ourselves from the vessels of dishonour that we can be vessels “ unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work ” (2 Tim. ii. 19-21).

We propose, therefore, to consider the question of separation both in its source and extent.

Every one will admit that Christ Himself, as risen and glorified, apprehended and known in the soul by faith, is the only power of separation. Indeed when He was upon the earth, it was the revelation of Himself that gathered souls out of all their associations, and drew them after Him in His lonely and separate path.

An illustration or two may be cited. “ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. *And they straightway left their nets and followed him* ” (Matt. iv. 18-20). So also in the case of Levi. The Lord passed by, and said, Follow me. “ *And he left all, rose up, and followed him* ” (Luke v. 27, 28). In both of these cases we have busy men, diligently occupied with their business, and yet one word from the Lord Himself detached them from all their surroundings, attracted them to His person, and led them

onward in the difficult, narrow path of discipleship. It was undoubtedly a word of power which was spoken to them; but it was a word which revealed, to some extent, the character and person of Him who had spoken; and hence they were enabled to leave all for His sake.

The history of the apostle Paul is the most perfect exemplification for us of this principle, because he, even as we, had to do with a risen and glorified Christ; and because, too, he was a most religious man. For not only was he in "the camp," but he endorsed it with all his heart, and became one of its most uncompromising agents in opposition to Him who had "suffered without the gate," and in the attempt to sweep His followers from the face of the earth. His character gave influence to his hostility, and deceived, no doubt, the minds of many of the simple, for he was sincere and conscientious. But when on his way to Damascus, Christ in glory appeared to him—revealed Himself to the soul of Saul—and thereby disarmed his opposition, subdued him at His feet, and converted him to be a "chosen vessel" for His service.

Having thus, in the grace of God, apprehended Christ, or, rather, having been apprehended by Christ, having seen Christ in the glory, he saw the worthlessness of all besides. Everything was now measured by Christ, and hence

he tells us, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. iii. 7, 8). He was thus detached—separated—from all that he had held dear, even from his fondest associations, and immediately and gladly went forth "unto him without the camp bearing his reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13).

Two effects, indeed, followed. He judged himself and his ways ; and he judged also his associations, and, seeing that both the one and the other, in the light of the glory which had been revealed to him, were evil, he renounced them all—himself, his ways, and his associations. Henceforward it was Christ alone that was before his soul ; and consequently he refused everything which was unsuited to Him. (See Phil. iii. 8-14.)

This is the history of every truly separated saint ; and there cannot be separation where Christ Himself, and, it might be added, our union with Him, is not apprehended. There may be, indeed, and often is, ecclesiastical separation ; and there may be, and often is (for there were in Sardis a few names which had not defiled their garments) personal separation ; but real separation—that is, separation according to

Christ—combines both. If, therefore, we see ecclesiastical separation merely, without the personal (or the personal without the ecclesiastical), it is the evidence that Christ Himself is not truly known. For if He were known, according to what He now is, and according to the place He now occupies at the right hand of God, what is suited to Him would also be known. Hence the need of such a soul is Christ—Christ more fully ministered.

It is well for us to remember this, and especially when we are grieved at the lack of separation which is often so apparent in those who by profession are “without the camp.” For whatever it may be that evinces its absence, whether it be unjudged houses, dress, books, or personal associations, all these things are but evidences of states of soul, signs of a partial and defective knowledge of “Christ Jesus our Lord,” and therefore a call upon us for patient and diligent ministry. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever ; and hence, if our separation be less than that of His servant Paul’s, it can only be because our knowledge of Him is also less.

If then the principle be accepted that Christ Himself, known by our souls through the Spirit, is the only power of separation, another may with equal confidence be affirmed, namely, that the measure of it is the place into which we are brought. Every believer is brought through the

death and resurrection of Christ into the presence of God ; yea, His place is our place, for we are seated in Him in the heavenly places (Ephes. ii.). It is not only that our acceptance is perfect (Ephes. i. 6 ; 1 John iv. 17) ; but our place is in the light as God is in the light (1 John i. 7) ; for we are brought home to God according to the perfect efficacy of the finished work of Christ. Or, to sum up these expressions in another form, we are united to Christ in glory—associated with Him where He is before God.

This being seen, another thing follows. If I am associated with Christ in glory, I see at once that I must be identified with Him here on the earth ; if His place there is my place, so is His place here ; and *that* is where He suffered—“without the gate.” These are the two aspects of the place into which we are brought. Before God it is a place of perfect nearness—of association indeed with a glorified Christ ; before men it is a place of rejection, ignominy, and reproach ; in both cases it is identification with Christ. This is seen from Heb. xiii. 11-13. The blood of the sin-offerings was carried into the sanctuary ; the bodies of the beasts so offered were burned without the camp. “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

Now it is by the combination of these two aspects that we reach the measure of our separation. *Morally*, it must be according to our place before God ; *positionally*, it must be according to our identification with a rejected and suffering Christ on the earth—"without the camp." Let us look a little at these two things.

First.—Morally, then, our separation should be according to the place in which we are set before God ; and, since we are brought into that place through the death and resurrection of Christ, it is a place of perfect separation from all evil. The difficulty, however, lies in the application of the principle ; but there are three things clearly noted in Scripture in connection with this subject. We are said to be "dead to sin" (Rom. vi. 2) ; "dead to the law" (Rom. vii. 4) ; and "crucified to the world" (Gal. vi. 14)—of course through and in the death of Christ ; and it must ever be remembered that there is no separation before God, excepting through death. For our present purpose we may omit "death to law ;" so that "death to sin," and "death to the world" will embrace and define the moral character of the Christian's separation.

Romans vi. gives us the first of these—the obligation being founded upon the profession of death with Christ. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto

Christ Jesus were baptized unto his death?" And then, after stating what this involved, the apostle says: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 2-11). Such is the obligation resting upon all believers; an obligation which, whatever may be the sense of failure, will be acknowledged by all, for no real Christian will contend for liberty to sin.

The second—"death to the world"—is involved in every passage which speaks of our being dead with Christ, *e.g.* Col. ii. 20; iii. 3; Rom. vi.; Gal. ii. 20, etc., because by His death He has passed (and we in that death) out of this scene into a new sphere, altogether and completely outside of the world. Hence our obligation to be practically dead to (and this is entire separation from) the world—an obligation which was realized by one who could say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (or whereby) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14).

Stated then in its baldest form, our separation from the world should be as complete as the separation of a dead man from it. For the Christian has passed, in the death of Christ, clean out of all that constitutes the world, as completely as Israel had passed out of Egypt—morally, the world—when they had crossed the

Red Sea. Hence the retention of a single trace of Egypt is not only a dishonour to Christ, but is also a practical denial of the place into which we have been brought before God.

If it should be inquired what constitutes the world, the answer is found in 1 John ii. 15-17. There we have the positive and absolute exclusion of the world, and the things that are in the world, from the affections of the believer, and we are taught that the things of the world consist of all that the flesh can desire, all that can attract and please the eyes, and all that I can take pride in as a natural man.

Let us, then, ask ourselves whether there is anything in our houses, dress, habits, or manners, that ministers to the flesh, the eyes, or the pride of life ; whether we have applied the cross to these several gateways to our hearts ; whether, indeed, like the apostle, we have applied the cross to the world, and also to ourselves, and thus effected a complete separation by death.

It is sometimes the case that while we are personally faithful, personally separate, we are not so faithful in the application of the cross in dealing with our children and our households. Thus there may be sometimes seen in the houses of saints, who are personally separate from the world, splendid pictures, worldly books, and music, together with sumptuous furniture ; and these things, if not excused, are often said to be

retained because of relatives, or for the sake of the children; and in this way, the believer's responsibility for his household is forgotten or overlooked. No; there can be no exception in anything that pertains to me or my responsibility from the application of the cross; for the obligation equals my place before God, and hence the separation must be absolute and complete.

Second.—Our positional separation is expressed by the term, "without the camp." Judaism was the camp in apostolic times, but Christianity succeeded Judaism in responsibility on the earth (see Romans, xi.) and has failed in that responsibility as completely as its predecessor. The camp therefore includes the whole of organized Christianity, all that Christianity has become in the hands of man; all the religious systems and denominations which men have made. Hence, again, now, as in former days, we have to go forth unto Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. xiii, 13.), and the position we occupy, as gathered out to the name of Christ, is the assertion of this necessity, as well as of the obligation of complete separation from all that composes the camp.

But the question that needs to be put to-day is: Are we really occupying our place of separation? We are bound to have a *heart* for every child of God (1 John v. 1-3.), and we must be the more careful to insist upon this,

because of the need of separating from their evil ways, systems and doctrines. But it must never be forgotten, that, if we are in the place of separation according to the mind of the Lord, *we are bound to maintain in our individual walk the same character of separation as is professedly maintained by the assembly*; in other words, the individual path should be in harmony with the path of the assembly.

Hence, if without the camp, is it according to God that I should link myself individually with those religious institutions or associations that form part of the camp? If, with those gathered to the name of the Lord, we refuse fellowship with those who hold, or are associated with, evil doctrines, is it pleasing to the Lord that I should connect myself individually with such, or allow the members of my household to be associated with such? If I am on God's ground, is it according to His will that I should seek fellowship with, or use, those who are not, for the publication or dissemination of truth? These questions have only to be put to be answered; and yet who does not perceive the dangers that are gathering in these several directions.

In Sardis, while there is corporate association with evil, there are individuals as already seen, who have not defiled their garments. In Philadelphia the danger is in the opposite direction; and indeed it is often seen that there

are individual members of the assembly, who, while on the ground of separation, are yet associated with many of the evils, out of which we have been professedly brought. The reason is not far to seek. In the course of time there are many who have been attracted from different causes who have never passed through any exercises of soul, and who consequently have never understood the need for, or the power, or the measure of that separation which such a place demands.

It cannot, therefore, be too earnestly insisted upon, that, if we are "without the camp," the position thus indicated must govern the individual believer as well as the assembly, or that the separation in the one case must be as complete as in the other; for if we have gone out to Christ we cannot remain with Him, be in fellowship with Him, or have Him before our souls, unless we constantly and faithfully occupy the outside place.

There is another thing to be remembered, namely, *that our separation must cover the whole area of our individual responsibility.* This has already been touched upon, though not formally stated. Whatever, then, the circle of my responsibility before God, the whole of it must be brought under the principle of separation.

Thus take once more the case of households. Abraham is commended because, the Lord said,

"he will command his children and his household after him," etc. (Gen. xviii. 19); Eli, on the other hand, is judged, "for," said the Lord, "I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. iii. 13).

The difficulties in the way of fidelity in this direction are often extreme, especially where different members of the family are connected and interconnected with the systems around; and it needs great grace to render, on the one hand, what is really due to natural relationships, and to be, on the other hand, faithful to the Lord. But we have to do with One who is all-sufficient for us in every emergency, and who, if He permit the storm to arise, can calm it with a word; and hence there must be no compromise, no excusing of worldliness, or laxity of associations on the ground of family relationships. These, it is true, must be maintained inviolate, as long as they can be maintained together with fidelity to Christ. But, if by fidelity to Him these relationships have even in appearance to be slighted, the result must be received as a part of the reproach of Christ. It were sad, indeed, if family claims, obligatory as they are within their own sphere, should be allowed to nullify the testimony to which we are called, to be put in fact before the claims

of Christ; or if, when the two are opposed, they should be adjusted for the sake of peace.

In the increasing darkness and confusion of this evil day the Lord looks for increasing separation and devotedness; and if by His grace we do not respond to His call, we may fear lest He adjudge us as unworthy of the place of testimony in which by His wondrous favour He has set and hitherto maintained us. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 19-21). Ed. D.

The Holy Ghost can reveal nothing to me that is not mine. (J. N. D.)

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

IN these chapters something of the Jews is brought forward, just to show out the blessing God was bringing in in Christ, in contrast with all that had gone before.

Here it is the Pool of Bethesda — angelic ministry. Though the people were captive, and the ark still gone, God had preserved a remnant to present Christ to them; He kept them till they had rejected His Son: and there were the remains of blessing still with them. He was still the Lord that healed them, and angelic ministry was still there.

A man was here at the pool, but the character of his sickness was such that it had taken away his strength, so that the sickness from which he wanted healing had taken away the power to use the means of being healed. It was not a question of being willing—he was willing enough; but this disease had taken away the power of using the remedy.

The great thing we have to learn is, that “when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We are slow to learn this—that we have no strength. The first

man you meet in the street will own that he is a sinner, but if you tell him there is no strength in the flesh, he will think you are going to condemn him to be a sinner all his life.

I do not know a more precious word in the spirit and character of it than this portion. The poor man had been ill thirty-eight years. The Lord asks, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" He had the will, but explains he had no strength. Christ *brings* the strength with Him. This is what is so distinctly and definitely brought out in contrast with the law.

It was the Sabbath-day: the Jews draw attention to the fact, and the Lord takes up the blessed character He had as *Son*, and says: "My father worketh hitherto and I work." How can God rest where sin is? where misery is? He cannot have His rest in a world like this. Christ had come to *work*: but what makes it so blessed, beloved friends, is this truth, it was not man's work and man's strength; the Father and the Son are the workmen in our salvation. God might have cut off Adam and Eve, and there would have been an end of them in righteousness, but His nature would not let Him do that. He sets about to *work*; we see the Father and the Son working in grace; the Son had come to *work*.

Instead of cutting off the sinners or leaving them in their wretchedness, God had made

Himself a workman in His grace, and the whole thing was changed. The law required man to work, just as the Pool of Bethesda required a man to be quick enough to get himself into it. But in the gospel, it is God who works. "My Father worketh." What an answer to their wretched malice, in accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath! The Father and the Son working in grace to save man, because God had no rest when he was in misery and sin.

But though a vivid picture of the principle of grace in teaching the Lord goes beyond this, and shows it is really life-giving.

They charge Him then with saying He was equal with God, which He did say, because He was one with Him, but He never puts Himself out of the place of servant, which He had taken. He unfolds to them His Father; the Son would do nothing by Himself; He was a divine Person, but He had taken the place of servant, and He had one object in everything.

In verses 21-23 he goes into the work of the Father and the Son in two distinct things.

There are two great ways in which the glory of the Son is displayed. The Father quickens, and the Son quickens whom He will; and now mark: we are dead in sin and the Father comes and quickens, the Son too. But it is not so when it comes to *judgment*. The Father has not been incarnate here, spit upon and trampled on.

The Father judges no man, and He has secured in this way that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, by committing all judgment to Him. They have blessed fellowship in quickening souls, but, having come down as Son of man, having been outraged and insulted by everything man could do when he got the chance, all judgment is committed to the Son. Every knee shall bow, things in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, no matter how wicked or how infidel and rebellious, he will have to bow to Christ just the same as any saint, though in a very different way.

Thus we get the Father and the Son both giving life—a divine work and power exercised in our favour; and then we get judgment—the way of securing honour for the Son; the Father judges no man, but puts it all into His hands.

And now comes this solemn question, beloved friends: In which way have *I* to do with the Son? In quickening or in judgment? as the blessed One who loved me and gave Himself for me, washing me in His blood, or as the One who is executing judgment because I would not own Him?

To this God gives an answer in His own blessed way: "He that heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." Those that believe do not come into judgment, do not come

into Christ's second way of dealing. The thing is *done*. Christ has wrought in His blessed quickening grace, and the judgment is *over*; we are not called in question because the place, the life, the condition we have, are the effect of the work of the Father and the Son, and He will not call *that* in question.

Whenever a person has heard His word—believed Him that sent Him—*that* is eternal life, and he has *got* it. If the Shepherd's voice has been heard, I say, Yes, I know whose voice that is; it is the voice of the blessed Son of God. As He said to the poor woman at the well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." I know the Father sent Him that I might have life. Not by my wishing, for it was when I was a sinner.

If I have heard His word, the voice of the blessed Son of God, I shall not come into the judgment. All stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, everything will come out there, and so much the better; but there is no question of judgment for the believer, because Christ has borne the sins for which he would have had to be judged. The Person who is to be the judge has first of all been the Saviour. When I come before the judgment-seat of Christ, I say, There is the Man who bore all my sins!

But more, we are glorified when we get there: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." We are glorified and brought there *like Himself*.

The one who believes has been quickened, does not come into judgment, and *is passed* from death unto life. Not only that when he was living in sins he learned to hate them, and put them away, but he is brought into a new state altogether: "Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And then He goes on to the display of still further power: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice." There is the resurrection of life; the power that quickened the souls, now raising the bodies; He carries on and completes as to the body the work which He had begun in the soul. People talk of fitting themselves for heaven; you never find such a thing in Scripture. "He *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and therefore the thief, when he died upon the cross, confessing Christ to be the Lord (a most glorious confession of faith, for He was rejected and forsaken of all) goes straight into paradise, and I suppose he was quite fit to go there. I am not saying a word against growth; there are abundant Scriptures for that, but you will not find one of them in connection with being fit for heaven.

“The resurrection of life” is the carrying out fully this blessed work of the Father and the Son. The bodies of the saints are raised, and all is complete; and then comes the resurrection of judgment. Of believers it is said: “He shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body.” But this is not the case with those who have been walking in evil: they are raised for judgment.

I do not know anything that has done more mischief than the thought of a general resurrection, because it throws back the question of the justification of the Christian to a day of judgment that has not yet come. There is no such thought in Scripture. “Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming.” “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” The resurrection of the saints, as explained in 1 Cor. xv., is the fruit of the quickening power of the Lord Jesus, applied to the bodies of His saints. It is the resurrection of life; we are raised in glory. Scripture does not throw us back into uncertainty to be judged; and why? Because the Lord is my righteousness. God’s righteousness is shown in glorifying me. Whoever is judged for his works is infallibly condemned. But if I have no righteousness for God, He has righteousness for me, and how can that be a thing to be called in question afterwards?

But if I am in Christ and so accepted, He is

in me, and here is our responsibility. And this I press, if we are alive to God, let us see this life come out. The only thing we have to do here is to live Christ. Responsibility flows from the place I am in. I am to glorify Christ in the place that I am in as alive to God in Christ.

And then He takes up their responsibility in rejecting Him as come in grace. He had shown the operation of sovereign grace in quickening, so He shows how they had neglected every testimony: His Father's, His own works, John the Baptist, and their own Scriptures. In the folly of their hearts they rejected Jesus, rejected or neglected Him, and they have to be judged.

We have got the quickening power of the Father and the Son, that exercised in giving divine life, and in consequence no mixing up of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment.

But there is another thing that is important for our peace, the knowing it *now*. "He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life." The Spirit gives power to the quickening word.

It is a blessed thing to find we can know this now. If I have heard Christ's word, and believed the Father, who in unspeakable grace sent the Son to be the Saviour, I *have* everlasting life, and I recognize not only that I was guilty through my sins, but *dead*; and *when* dead, *quicken*ed,

and have passed from that state, out of it, into life; and if Christ come soon enough I may not have to die at all.

How little, beloved friends, have we realized the completeness of the work Christ has done; we do not believe that He has so completely overcome the power of death that we need not die at all. We may be all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

We have to learn ourselves and God's faithful patience and grace, and God knows how long to leave us to learn this—but we have *got life* in the Son. An unconverted man has not got life at all: he is dead in his sins, though that is not the first thing that reaches his conscience, but his *guilt*. But when we come to learn our state, it is important we should know what we *are*. In the flesh the tree is bad; but I have got life in Christ, and that is another thing.

Do not confound things and think of a future judgment which is going to settle everything. It will settle nothing: it will manifest and *execute*, but it settles nothing. "He that believeth not is condemned *already*, because he hath not believed on the name, of the only begotten Son of God;" and if he die in that state he dies in his sins.

Do you believe there is no good in you at all? It is a most bitter thing to say. No one denies there are amiable qualities, but you find them in animals too. Who would be morally in a better

state before God : a person with a shocking bad temper, who was looking to God earnestly every day to control it, or one with a good temper, who was pleased with himself ?

God tells us we are dead. It is hard to learn, for our experience contradicts it. We are to "mortify our members"; and I have got power and duty too, for Christ has died. There comes this every-day conflict, but I have both the title and duty, and power to say : I am not a debtor to the flesh ; "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." It is all settled : Christ died. Then I am dead, and I have got Christ for my life ; and having Him for my life, I have Him after He has put away all my sins.

Now, do you honestly say, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh—*dwelleth no good thing* ?—Do you believe that of yourselves ? You will never get full liberty till you do, and you will never know what it is to be settled and steady in your soul till you have learned it ; for then you get not only forgiveness and justification, but *deliverance*.

It is a very different thing to contend with the flesh when it has got the upper hand, and when you have.

Do you say : Yes, I am a poor nothing, but I have passed from death unto life ; I shall not come unto judgment ? I have heard His word, I

know that the Father in unspeakable, unutterable love, has sent the Son, and I have heard Him, and got everlasting life.

And oh, see, beloved friends, the infinite blessedness of it, to be walking with God in the full sense of His unclouded favour resting upon us as it did upon Christ !

And we want to know more : First, of the place by faith, and then of the power where God has set us through this astonishing work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That, while He has put away all the sins the flesh produces, He has given us eternal life, and here we are called to manifest the life of Christ in everything, as dead to sin, crucified with Him, and always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Not only to avoid open sins, but to be the epistles of Christ, that men should read Christ in us as they did the law in the ten commandments on the tables of stone. We shall soon find what we are—poor feeble creatures—but that with Christ we can do all things. We need diligence in seeking His grace, but with Him there is positive strength to overcome.

The Lord give us simplicity of heart to see the fulness of His grace, and then to live to Christ here through all the circumstances of life ; the only object before us, the only motive in the thousand things we have to do—*Christ*.

(J. N. D.)

We are walking in company with a triumphant Christ, as a triumphant people. And you cannot be in triumph yourself without leading other people into it. Walking in triumph is a blessedly infectious thing; and, on the other hand, getting down under the power of troubles is equally infectious. Nothing will so pull down, make miserable, and blight a soul as getting under the power of church troubles. When we get thus weighed down we cease to have power over them, and they do not cease to have power over us. But the Christ we are in company with is a victorious Christ. As the hymn says: "Thy life in us each victory gains." It is the life of a victorious Christ that we have. (E. P. C.)

You cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and there is a great deal of pitch in these days. Thinking with the world, and talking like the world, the heart gets into the colour of the world. It is not Christ. But the heart that is set free lives in the things that Christ's heart delights in, and lives in the atmosphere where Christ's heart dwells, instead of being dragged after a thousand things. (J. N. D.)

CONSECRATION.

EXODUS xxix. 1-32; EPHESIANS iii. 14-19.

THE first thing after I have learned what Christ is for me in His work—after I have seen that He has accomplished everything as to the putting away of my sin before God, and that I belong to the One who has accomplished it, as I was say- in the first lecture—the first desire that then rises in my soul is, that I should be a manifestation of this Christ to whom I belong—that I should be a “body full of light.” As we then saw, we have first the conscience relieved, next the heart satisfied (which we went into fully at that time), and, lastly, the body full of light. To-night it is the body full of light I wish to speak to you on, and that, properly, is *consecration*.

I know the erroneous way in which this word is used, but I hope to-night that we shall see plainly what is the scriptural thought of it. In the margin, “consecrate” is translated “filling;” and I hope to show you the manner of it, what it really is, as we look at the way in which consecration is figuratively brought before us in the chapter I have read.

The first thing we find is that Aaron and his sons are robed. Figuratively, afterwards, they go through the whole course of the work of Christ. There is the bullock, which is the sin-offering, burnt with fire without the camp, which, I trust, every soul here has learned: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." This is the groundwork of everything. Then I come to two rams. There is an identity between these two rams; understanding them, you will understand what consecration is.

The first ram goes up wholly to God. "Thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt-offering unto the Lord: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." It is all taken up—every bit of it. This is Christ gone up to the right hand of God. You will all admit this; it is seen at once. But whilst He is gone up there, and I am united to Him in spirit in all His beauty and perfection, I am also left, as to my body, in this world, to be for Him down here. The same Christ who is gone up there is the Christ who is down here in His saints. Up there I am in all His beauty and perfection in the holiest, sustained there in all the sweet savour of that One whom God has taken up. And this we surely all know, otherwise we have not got the sense of our acceptance with God. So it says, "As he is," not as He *was*. "As he is, so are we." It does not

say that we shall be as He is, but that we are at this moment. It is perfectly true that I shall be like Him in the glory in heaven, but that is not what this passage says. It is, "As he is, so are we, *in this world*"—not in heaven. It is that my acceptance is as Christ's acceptance; we are "accepted *in* the Beloved," not *through* the Beloved. The idea is that we cannot be placed in any higher place; and any place except that one up there would neither be commensurate with the work He has wrought, nor satisfy the heart of God for me.

Thus I am left down here on this earth, with no question as to my place up there; and it is Christ up there that is before me, and not either what I was or what I am in myself. "They that know the joyful sound shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." It is there that I am according to my Father's pleasure.

But then comes the third point of which we were speaking, which is the second thing brought before us in the chapter we have read in Exodus—the second ram—that I am to present Christ here, and that Christ is the One who occupies me. Everything depends as to my being here on what I see there. My appreciation of Christ up there determines my expression of Christ down here.

People ask, What is consecration? I answer, The person most consecrated is the person who

has most of Christ. And now let us mark how this is brought out in Scripture.

See how it comes out in Paul. He says that he sees Christ; that he has to do with Him where He is: "With open face beholding the glory of the Lord, changed into the same image from glory to glory;" and so he adds, "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus," and "the life of Jesus made manifest in his body." Thus is fulfilled what the Lord says of His disciples in John xvii., "I am glorified in them." Nothing in ourselves, like a briar once in a hedge, but which, having been grafted, now bears beautiful roses. The rose, though it takes all the life, all the power, of the briar, yet never accepts the slightest tinge or character of the briar. Thus the Lord says, "I will use in you all that I myself have made." If I look at the stem—at the nature—I say, that is a briar; if I look at the top of the tree, I say, I cannot see a trace of the briar. As in Paul: he is the same Paul, but nothing of Paul now comes out; it is all Christ. The new life establishes itself there; it draws in all the force of the person as he is naturally, therefore the Lord has the credit of it all.

Turn to Romans xii. Here we read: "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

service." People read this, and fancy that they are giving God something; but this is not the fact at all. I will explain to you what it does mean, by turning to the seventh chapter. Here you find that you have the new nature, but you have also with it a very unpleasant guest, which makes you cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" As another has said, "The body is the *flesh* when there is a will in it;" and when there is no will it is Christ's. Well, I want to subdue the flesh, and who does this for me? Why, Christ. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And I say to Him: I was a sufferer from this noxious guest, but now I have got deliverance; and as it is you who have done it, I give that body to you, which is the least I can do. I give you nothing but an empty house, and you may make the most of it. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is your *reasonable* [not legal] service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." It is not reformation, it is transformation. I find my deliverance in Christ, and now I would present my body to my deliverer; but that body is only an empty vessel, one which He must fill Himself, and His filling it is consecration.

Hence consecration is not that I have given Him anything, for I have nothing to give. People talk of consecrating their talents, their

property, and so on, and I know in a certain sense what they mean; but the fact really is, that I put aside everything in me which would hinder the expression of Christ flowing out in me, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in my body. For this the apostle prays in the third of Ephesians, "that Christ may *dwell* in your hearts:" the true force of the word is *domicile*. That He may so dwell there that we "may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of God's own favour—the full scope of blessing; "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Christ is that fulness, and having Him thus dwelling in the heart is real consecration. Such a man has nothing in him but Christ. Go to him about anything, and it will be Christ that will come out; mark, *Christ*; not the man himself improved.

We find parallel truth in John xv. and xvii. In chapter xv. we get service; but in chapter xvii. I am to represent Christ where Christ is not. As has been said, Christ first places us as Himself before the Father, and then sets us as Himself before the world. As such I do not come out as a better man myself, but I come out *Christ*. What a wonderful display of divine power! God, so to say, says: My secret is,

that now that Christ is cast out of the world, I will have thousands of souls living Christ in the scene that has rejected Him. You have, as it were, cast out the sun, but I will have thousands of planets deriving light from it. Thus, "Christ shall be magnified in my *body*," not in my *heart*, mark; for "the life that I live I live by the faith of the Son of God." "It is not I, but Christ who liveth in me."

What did the apostle seek for the Galatians? Was it to get them clear of their sins? He does not say a word about them. It is that "*Christ* may be formed" in them.

I know what wonderful results men have brought about by tillage and gardening, and how they have brought common plants into a very uncommon state; but, supposing, that by cultivation I could bring myself into the most wonderful condition of perfection, I would much sooner have Christ than anything that could be brought out of me. I look up into the heavens, I go into the presence of God, and what do I find there? Why, that I am there before God in all the beauty of Christ, and I am delighted—as delighted as I can be. And, having seen my place there, I come down here—what for? To show out the beauty of a *man*? Not at all! I have learned *Christ* up there, and I only want to be *Him* down here.

And it is not a future thing, either, it is

altogether a present thing, though, of course, the future must be settled first. If your future be not settled it is no use my speaking to you at all; but, the future being settled, it is the present that is all-important. And what is the present thing to be? I say it is to be Christ. The future is that which cannot be altered, cannot be improved, cannot be lost. Oh, but your realization of it may be clouded! And so it may. If you walk carelessly you will lose your peace—forget that you were purged from your old sins. But ~~when~~ your soul is restored—when you get your peace back again—what peace is it that you get? Is it a new one, or is it the same that you lost? Of course it is the same that you lost.

So I go a great way with the Wesleyan. I will talk to him as much as he likes about the present. If you say to me that everything depends as to the present upon my walk, I say I agree with you. But if you go on to say there is fear of my being lost in the future, I say I cannot go with you there. I say as the aged shepherd says: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruit-

ful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." There must be the continual adding, or you will not keep up the testimony. Do you think if Jonathan had gone on adding to his testimony to David that he would have perished on Mount Gilboa? not he! But I do not agree that he is lost for ever in consequence. That is the Wesleyan doctrine.

I say it is important to maintain that the first great thing we learn is, that believers have perfect security as to the future; that is settled, and we need say no more about it. The work of Christ now is to occupy me with the present. It is clear that I am up there in all the beauty and acceptance of Christ, and nothing but Christ, and now I am to live down here, not as a comely and excellent man, but as that Christ in whom I am set before God. And the High priest who sustains me up there in all the brightness of that scene, is the same One who has to do with me in all my weakness down here.

I come now to the division of this ram into different parts. It is divided into four parts, and these four are necessary to constitute us true expressions of Christ down here. There is the blood, the ground for the oil, first. It was sprinkled on the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot—all that is external in you; the blood is the ground for the Spirit of God to rest on. The second part is offered up; it was first

waved for a wave-offering before the Lord, then taken and burnt "upon the altar for a burnt-offering for a sweet savour before the Lord." Next there was Moses' part. And lastly, there was a part which was fed upon by Aaron and his sons.

We will look now, for a little, more carefully at the second division, which takes in from the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth verses. In this division is the fat and the inwards, which there is no difficulty at all in interpreting: it is Christ. In the case of the peace-offering in Lev. vii., all the fat was offered up; it was the excellency of the ram; but the right shoulder was retained, and became the part of the priest who offered up the fat and the blood. But here, in the ram of consecration, I have God's portion; to Him is offered up the excellency of Christ, both as to strength and as to beauty, and I have in it no actual part except that of contemplation of what is given to the Father. The fat and the right shoulder—the excellency of Christ—are waved in their hands, burned, and taken up to God. And, as we thus contemplate God's part in Christ, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," and our "joy is full." I look at it, I am occupied with it—with the practical contemplation of the Son of the Father—though I cannot feed on it; it is something in Christ that is beyond us. "We beheld His glory,

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The excellency and the grace of Christ are put before us for our contemplation. If your heart has never been thus occupied with contemplating Him as He is, you do not know what it is to "sit down under his shadow with great delight." It is after the saint is set in heaven in the highest place that that prayer in Ephesians comes out, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"—that you may be *filled* with Christ in this highest place: "filled with all the fulness of God;" that you may "know the love of Christ which *passeth knowledge*"—which you cannot take in, but which you can contemplate.

I think I may say if you do not contemplate Christ, you do not feed on Him. I am brought into communion with God about it, though I cannot enter into the greatness of it. I do not actually *partake* of it; I cannot appropriate Christ in His magnitude, but I contemplate Him. Knowing myself up there accepted in the Beloved, here, as I go along, I am occupied with looking at that Christ. It is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," as Paul says; and he never got to the end of it. A person who does not thus contemplate Christ may be very zealous as to his conduct, but it will never be anything but a lower kind of conduct. When I look at the Son of God in the Gospel I contemplate

Him, not as a person at a distance, but as One to whom I am united. The church, in Scripture, is often looked at as Christ's feet; so I say, I belong to Him. As a member of His own body, I contemplate Him.

Do you contemplate Him? I have heard people talk of reading some biography, and express themselves with the greatest delight over the lovely life of the person written of. Well, *I am studying Christ*; I am contemplating His excellency, learning to see Him as God saw Him. But you can never get up to it. No, I cannot; but I can contemplate it, and as I do so be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

We get next, in verse 26, Moses' part: "Thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave-offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy part." The breast was, then, Moses' part, and not Aaron's and his sons at all. It gives great help to the soul, and a godly tone, the abiding sense of Christ's thoughts about one—His sympathy.

But I pass on to the fourth division: "And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." They *feed* upon it. Now feeding is appropriation.

I will try to explain the difference between appropriation and contemplation. In the contemplation of Christ, the saint knows very well that he will never come up to what he is contemplating, but is he, therefore, to say he will never be able to do anything as Christ would do it? No; I may be but an atom, but still I am a member of that Christ, and His life is mine. So I eat the left shoulder, though I never eat the right. I appropriate the strength of Christ, though I can never do the thing in the magnificent way in which He did. Peter walked on the water, but does he do it with the dignity and the power of Christ? No. Christ is the right shoulder, in all the dignity and quietness of power. Peter is only the left: he looks away to the winds, and begins to sink into the waves.

Thus it is not a question of my being a better man than I was, or of my having a better nature than another man, and therefore it often comes out with most power when there is the worst nature. The question is whether I, in doing anything, am going to do it as Christ would. You say, How will you find that out? I answer that I believe the contemplative soul will discover it. I believe Mary had much more of it than Martha. Martha did not know the right way to carry out her good intentions. But Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word," so she learned what He was from Himself.

The nearer I am to the Lord the more I know His mind; and that is to me the great interest in reading the gospels. He stands out there before me in the wonderful unique majesty of God, manifest in the flesh. You say, I am reading the gospels. But I ask, What sort of a view are you getting of Christ as you do? Is it a natural one, such as you could get in that book lately published, "The Life of Christ"? It is a spiritual view that you need. I study to get a fuller and more perfect view of Christ at the right hand of God, and as I read I learn how *God* sees Him. I contemplate that which has all gone up to God, and in this contemplation know what practical fellowship with the Father and the Son is as I walk through this world. I may not have chapter and verse for an action, but the more I am in His transcendent company the more I get to know what will suit Him, and I say, No, Christ would not write such a line as that; and I rub it out. In business, in my home life, I say, Christ would not do that; and I will not. And so Christ becomes my standard. It is not that I have given something to Christ, but that I myself am more occupied with Him, have more His mind.

So consecration is not that I have given more of myself to Christ, but Christ has got more possession of me.

As to what feeding on Christ is, I need surely

scarcely try to explain. As food is the only support and strength of my natural body, so I look to Him for the support and strength of my soul. And I have nothing but Him to sustain me. "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

And now, in closing, let me ask you to think for a moment what a wonderful position we are set in on this earth. When ruin has come in, the only thing to meet it is the highest truth. When the captives returned from Babylon, they kept the Feast of Tabernacles first of all; they commemorated amidst the ruin the wonderful position God had set them in on the earth. And what do we commemorate? The wonderful position God has set us in in heaven. There is not a single thing to disturb the calm, settled delight that the Father takes in me there, and down here I am contemplating the blessed One who has taken me into His own scene, am also feeding on Him, and am left to be the expression of Him before the world.

Just to think that we are walking about here on this earth, in our homes or our business, with one standard before us—Christ! It is the one who is most happy in the enjoyment of God's presence who is the most susceptible to things here, and to the way in which they act on him. You will not fail as you seek to set Him forth, but it is an immense comfort to know that in

your thus seeking to be like Him you will be cheered. There is this difference between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit : that in bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit you are always happy, whereas, in doing the works of the flesh there is always bitterness. Even if you are successful in what you aim at, it leaves a taint of its own bitterness behind it.

“Christ shall be magnified in my body !” What a wonderful triumph ! The body that Satan had the dominion over at first through sin, this very body, brought back by grace to God, becomes the medium that is to set forth Christ. He says, I am possessor of it now ; if it go into the grave I will raise it up again ; and whilst it is here, I will so work in it by power that, whatever be the character of this perilous world, it shall be in it a representation of myself.

What could be a greater delight to you than to know that you are representing Him here where He is not ? There can be no change as to what is mine up there where He is, but now, down here where He is not, I am called to be an exposition of Him whilst He is away. The Lord lead our hearts, beloved friends, to understand what a wonderful calling ours is, and enable us to be more and more expressions of the grace and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, for His name's sake. Amen.

(J. B. S.)

DEPENDENCE.

1 SAM. vii. 3-13.

THE last evening we were upon the subject of consecration, which, as we saw, consists in simply receiving Christ, in having the hands full of Christ, and the heart full of Christ. It is not giving Him anything, for we have nothing to give Him; hence, as the apostle says, what is needed is "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The believer is thus formed by Him for His own purpose.

What comes next after this is, How is this consecration to be acquired? A person may see very plainly that what he needs is Christ, but how is he to find what he needs? The way to find it, and the way the Lord makes it known to the soul practically, is by dependence.

In Judges and Samuel this comes out very distinctly. In Judges everything has been tried in the way of restoring Israel from the state of failure and degradation into which they had fallen; the knife, the ox-goad, the nail, the lamps in the pitchers of Gideon, and lastly, the strongest man. But all had been a failure. And now we come to a new kind of power: Samuel is born. His mother, feeling the

wretchedness of Israel, cries to the Lord; she is a woman of a sorrowful spirit; and the Lord gives her her petition: Samuel is born in answer to prayer. Thus he comes out from the first in entirely a new light: he is the answer of dependence upon God. In the chapter we have read we find him saying, "I will *pray* for you unto the Lord." I do not desire to interpret the passage, but merely point out that he prays, and that as the result, "the Philistines came no more into the coasts of Israel, all the days of Samuel." This puts prayer in a very remarkable place.

Satan at the fall introduced into man's heart the lie that he could depend on himself—that he could depend on himself more advantageously than on God. That was the real point in the fall. Into the wonderful circle of favour in that garden Satan comes, and tells the woman that eating of that fruit they should be as gods; she takes and eats, and so self-dependence comes in and renunciation of dependence on God—that dependence which is what faith in the soul is. The prodigal when he comes to himself does not begin to think of what *he* is, but of what the *father* is. His thought was of what was in his father's house. The point of the departure was the point of restoration. All dealing with God must be of faith. Ananias hears that Saul of Tarsus is a changed man: "Behold he *prayeth*."

Instead of everything around you in this world expressing the favour and interest of God, it is "a famine;" everything is gone; it is the very opposite of the garden of Eden. But, this being discovered, the light of God dawns in the soul of the prodigal. He says, "No man cares for my soul;" and then he thinks of God: "I will arise and go to my father."

Thus, as I have said, in Samuel a new light springs up. Rationalists talk of love, but love cannot precede faith. Let us see what comes out in Samuel, after the test of Israel, too, in the book of Judges. Judges ends with Samson: immense bodily strength; doing wonderful things, but dying in the long run. And now comes in simple dependence, and achieves the most wonderful victory. And in this I see the way in which the soul learns Christ.

It is in a double way, for I have to do with two scenes: the holiest of all up there, and down here on the earth; in spirit there, practically to walk here. As in Paul, you get him taken to the paradise of God, which was the consummation of the work of Christ. Adam had lost man's paradise, but the apostle of the Gentiles was conducted into God's. But he was not to stay there; he was to come down here again, which I have alluded to before. I pass into the holiest. It is the simplest way of expressing my standing before God. It is not

worship in itself; it is where worship takes place; but it does not tell me what worship is. There is now "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way;" not *and* "by a new and living way" as is often said. It is "through his flesh" that we have got into the presence of God, and it is an immense thing to know this.

I wish to show you that you have no dependence upon God when you have dependence on yourself. Man lost dependence upon God and got in its place self-reliance, which is so greatly thought of among men. When in the presence of God, Paul could say to God, I am beside myself—*outside* myself—it is ecstasy. If a natural man do that he is almost a fool, but in a spiritual man it is realizing his new creation. When you are in the presence of Christ it is not your cares nor your sins; they all vanish; go they must where He is. You have not really learned what the presence of Christ is, unless you can say, I knew that *He* was there, but, as to myself, there was nothing of the human thing in me ministered to, and I was perfectly happy. Spiritual ministry brings Christ to your soul, and so brings Him to you, that, whilst it rebukes *you*, it gives you *Christ* instead of yourself. As the Lord said to His disciples, there was "no bread," but they had Him, though nothing else, and would that do? This is the grand charac-

teristic of being in the presence of God, and I press it, for people often think they are in spirit with Christ simply because they are, as they say, "so happy." Look at the disciples going to Emmaus; their hearts burned within them; and they did not know that He was there at all.

What is needed to keep us in His presence is practical dependence. See how it comes out in 2 Cor. xii.: the apostle comes down from paradise, from not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body, and what does he find? why that Satan is here, and that he has got flesh. What does he need then? I say, he needs to know the power of Christ down here as he knew it up there, and for that he must be as clear of his flesh down here as he was up there. People say, I was very happy in my room reading, and I came out and immediately lost my temper. The fact is you were trusting to your enjoyment of the Lord, instead of to the Lord Himself. I was in a scene up there where I so enjoyed Him, but, having come out to act down here, I find that I have this flesh, and I get wearied and put out. I have, then, to learn now that by dependence I can be free of all this down here, for I was free of it when I was in the presence of the Lord. That is the lesson I learn. I find the Lord sufficient to sustain me.

If you turn to Matt. xiv. you will see there the way in which the Lord introduces us to the

wonderful place of dependence in which He would have us. The Lord is here as rejected, and two things come out as the consequence: one, that He feeds the poor of the flock in the desert; the other, that He walks on the water. Upon this, faith leaves the ship that was made for water and walks with Jesus on the water. That is the place of dependence, that is the new ground. But are we to do that? Yes, there is no other place promised you here.

When the apostle comes down from paradise he finds he has a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. "For this thing," he says, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me," but, He said, No; "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" I will make that power shown out in you. Hence Paul comes out with that extraordinary paradox, "When I am weak then am I strong." I ask you whether any natural man on earth could explain that? When I am weak then am I weak, is what man would say. But the fact is when I am weak in myself, and have got nothing to depend on, then I depend on Christ. This being so I ask Peter, What then makes you sink there? Why, it is Simon makes me sink, is his answer. Is it possible for you to be kept up in such a place? Yes it is, if I have my eye on Him.

The Scripture is careful to tell us that he *did*

walk; it was not in the majestic way that the Lord did, but he did walk, at any rate a little. Wonderful to see a person superior to circumstances wherein he himself is the thing that would sink him, but instead of sinking, superior to them all. Just look at Stephen; he could look up to the bright glory and was thus superior to the whole thing down here, his soul perfectly free to intercede for his murderers; a wonderful prodigy of divine power in a poor earthen vessel here; Christ's strength perfect in his weakness.

Well, I am set in His presence absorbed in the joy and delight of it. Would we knew more of it! When I come out from that presence I find that I sink; I discover my susceptibility to all things that are here. It was not that Paul was conceited about what he had had revealed to him up there, but the thorn was given to him for fear he should be. It is all very well for anyone to say, I have been enjoying such a time with the Lord. I say, It is all very well to do so, but come down now and live it out here. Yes, but I find nothing here to support me in any way.—You do not; but that is just that you may keep your eye on Christ. It is confidence in self that is the ruin of the believer. Peter never would have gone into the high priest's house and denied his Lord if he had not had confidence in himself. Therefore it comes to a question of *power* here. While I learn up there

the sweets of His presence, I learn down here His power, so the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in thee, who passing through the valley of Baca makes it a well," because he is down here. Go to any believer you like, and ask him, and he will tell you that he wants power.

Now, you never get a supply of power; you have it only as you keep your eye on Christ. So Peter was walking very well one moment, but the next his eye was off Christ, and he sank. "Without me ye can *do* nothing." Many persons quote it as if it were *be* nothing. It is when you come to do an act that I see where you are, because the act always declares the prominent power. If you have lost your place with Christ you sink. The act always discloses your state. Just as with Samson. He said, "I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself." Ah, but you cannot! it is no use: "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

When you come to act, you find you are in a scene from which you can get nothing, and the power for action must come from above. The Lord has gone to prepare a place for me, and says, I make you acquainted with the Owner of that place—the Father; and everything you shall "ask in my name I will do;" it is *do* there. But it is only as I am dependent upon Him that I learn the goodness of Christ there in His *own*

scene, and learn Him here in His power because of my need of it. It may be humbling to say so, but it is true, that the measure of the strength of any person in this room is the measure of the strait he has gone through with God. The water will not bear me up. Well, what sinks you? It is *yourself*. There is no acquiring of Christ, but by the displacement of myself. The moment Peter saw the water boisterous "he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!" The Lord says, Where is your faith? He does not say anything else about him; the point is that he is not really dependent. So it says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;" why? "That he may exalt you in due time."

Well, it is a great thing to get hold of the fact that, if you are to enjoy Christ, you cannot be dependent on self. I would guard you against what would only minister to what is natural and not what is spiritual. It is possible to be worked upon and buoyed up, and yet all the while only *self* that is acted upon.

I turn now to another Scripture, as a kind of rule for prayer which the Lord has given us. It is in Luke xviii. I will just trace through the characters that we find in this chapter. First there is the widow, with an adversary from outside. Then the publican. Then the little child. And lastly, the young ruler who has kept the

law, and who is very rich : he is neither publican, little child, nor helpless and oppressed.

Now what is the Lord teaching us here ? Why it is as if he said : When you are resourceless you are better off than when you have resources ; or, in other words, you are better off without a boat than with one. Here is a young man who *has* a boat ; he has everything both within and without to depend on, and yet he cannot get on a bit. He turned away very sorrowful. With all his resources he cannot go. On the other hand, what could be worse off than a widow with an adversary ? Where could you find a more pitiable sight ? And yet she gets her desire ; she is avenged of her adversary. Then the publican ; he is better off than the Pharisee who has got a boat ; he goes down to his house justified rather than the other. Then the little child, whom the disciples would thrust away ; the Lord says, This is the very one that I want : " Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." In Mark it adds, " He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." It is the very helplessness of the objects that is their attraction in His eyes. In another place He tell us, " Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Poor, helpless little things, says God, they cannot take care of themselves, so I will. Do

the angels always take charge of them ? you ask. I do not know ; but this I do know, while they are helpless God does, just because they have no boat. The lesson of the whole chapter is, the one on water without a boat is better off than the one who has one.

Peter exclaims, We have given up everything and followed thee. To this the Lord replies with this meaning: You have done very well, and you have gained by it. Never did any give up for Christ that he lost anything by it; on the contrary, he gains inconceivably ; “ manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

We will now look a little first at private prayer, and then at public. In Luke xi. we find an example of private prayer, in the story of the man who went to his friend at midnight. Now I hope you will not misunderstand me when I say that there is no such thing as praying without fasting. I am not upholding Ritualism when I say this ; I will explain my meaning ; but I repeat, there is no praying without fasting. Suppose I am praying for the Lord to enable me to give up some particular weakness. Then, says the Lord, you must not minister to it. If you incline to be a politician, you must not read the papers. But would not that be on the principle of making a teetotaller of me ? Would it not be self-culture ? No, if you only gave up

the papers it would be ; but if you look to Christ He will give you Himself instead of what you give up. Woe be to the man who has a passion for anything when he ministers to it, even while he prays against it ! It will be a sore time for him ere he gets free of it.

Mind you, I do not believe in fasting without praying ; but they must go together. It is impossible to have Christ without the renunciation of the man here. You *must* “avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” You must come to that stern purpose in yourself.

If you go to a teetotaller and ask him if he has a taste for sobriety, he will say, No. But I want a man who can say, Yes ; for my heart glories in the excellency and beauty that I have got in Christ. That is a person who has not only got rid of the negative, but who has got hold of the positive.

In this man who goes to his friend at midnight we see one who has nothing himself. He says, The credit of my house is at stake ; I cannot venture to go back to it and see how things are there without the bread I ask of you. I am resourceless there, but I know where the resources are. I am not laying this down as the *way* to pray, but as the ground-work of prayer. I lay it down because many think they can relieve their consciences by praying about a thing which they are not quite easy about doing ; or they

will pray about a thing, and thus try to avoid doing what they know they ought. I always dread people who say, "Let us have a little prayer about it." I always expect they want to get out of what they evidently ought to do, like Balaam. It is strange that it should be so, but it just shows how deceitful the heart is.

In Phil. iv. we get the principle of prayer. The great subject of the chapter is, joy in the Lord. In the third chapter the point is that the apostle gets rid of himself; but in the fourth chapter the question comes up, What about things outside him? Well, the answer is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." As to the cares, whatever they may be down here, the true orderly way, the normal way, the way in which every soul ought to be found, is simply taking all to God with thanksgiving, remembering how He has helped you in time past, but with the distinctive point that, whilst men know your moderation you do not make a *point* of telling them of it, though you do not make a secret of it. The English reader might think the word in the fifth and sixth verses was the same, but it is not the

same thing. I do make my requests known to God. It is not merely that I send in a message to the Queen through a Secretary of State, but I have got an audience of Her Majesty. Just so. I do not know what will be the result, but this I do know, that I have poured my request into the ears of God. This knowledge gives a peculiar tone to a man. It is not as if the queen had read in the newspaper something that had happened to me, but I have been allowed to tell her the whole story of it myself, and I know that she has been interested in it. She did not tell me what she felt about it, but she heard it all.

And so the poorest and most simple person in this room may have the greatest favour ever conferred upon man on earth—the peace of God. It is not that He has answered you—that He has given you what you wanted—but that He has taken it in; and that because you have been occupied with Him you have got into His state. You came into His presence writhing under the state of things from which you were suffering, whether as the widow, or the publican, or the little child, and you have gone out possessor of His own peace, and of power to carry you through all that is against you. You have confided it all to God, and you come out from His presence in the very state of God Himself. Was there ever anything more wonderful than that a poor creature here can come out from God's

presence in the state of God Himself — in peace?

Now I turn to another more special passage in 1 John v. But first a little word upon the third chapter, as to the practical hindrances to prayer. If I do not act to others according to the grace of God, I shall not have His grace act towards me. God has love in His heart. You cannot go to Him if you have not acted in love yourself towards your own poor brother. Your heart condemns you. But suppose you can go to God and say, I have acted out all that I have of your love, and now I come to you. Very well, says God, then come. So, “whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” And in the fifth chapter, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” It is very distinct that *He hears us*. I can understand at times that such or such a thing is according to the will of God; I ask according to that will, and the Lord says, I have heard you.

But one word I say to guard this. Though He has heard you, and will answer you, you must be prepared for His answering you in His own way, and that way always comes about by putting you down; what He does will never be for the exaltation of man, it will in some way

make little of him. As with Jacob, he said, *Now* you will bless me. And God said, Yes; I can bless a cripple. And, when the sun rose, that active man of the company was lame: "He halted upon his thigh;" he was diminished among men, but blessed of God. I see it everywhere. A man *must* be diminished if he is to be blessed of God; he must suffer persecution or something.

As in Psa. cvii., "They that go down to the sea in ships," when the stormy wind rises, "they mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. Then *they cry to the Lord in their trouble.*" Here we get prayer. And what is the result? There is a marvellous interposition. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." And so it is. The Lord comes in in a wonderful way for His praying dependent people. He loves to surprise us, and He surprises most the one who depends most on Him. He says to that one, You shall see that you have not trusted me in vain.

And now just one word as to public prayer. Private prayers are, I believe, the most humbling things: a groan, a desire, a wandering thought, and a return; and public prayers should partake much of this character. They should be direct,

a real utterance to God *for* the assembly—avoiding sermonizing and contemplations which the assembly would not use ; then there would be a sense of direct prayer. I do not understand a person praying in the assembly without a direct purpose in it.

And direct prayer is not a thing that necessitates a long time. You can pray a great deal in five minutes. John prayed a very good prayer when he said, “ Lord, who is it ? ” And as to *how* to pray, a beggar gives us a true example. He never takes his eyes off you ; he looks at you the whole time, thinking, not of himself, but of the effect he can produce on you ; and you cannot escape giving, if you pay attention to a beggar ; the only way is to avoid his story, unless you are hard-hearted.

Blessed be His grace who delights to give when we are ready to receive.

(J. B. S.)

God never allows the faith of man to go beyond the grace of God. It may reach into it, but it can never get to the bottom.

(J. N. D.)

OUR MISSION.

PSALM lxxxiv.

WE now come to the subject of "our mission."

There are two things which come out very prominently in the Psalm I have read : the first, our place *with* God ; the second, our place *for* God ; and these two hang together. I first have to learn what God is for me ; if I do not know that I shall never know how I am to be for Christ. It is the root of the ignorance of many converted souls ; they do not know what God is for them, and so their efforts for Christ are defective. Therefore it is a positive rule, that you must first know Christ for you.

This opens out very interestingly at the Lord's appearing for the first time in the temple on earth, as a little babe of eight days' old, greeted there by two saints. Simeon said, Christ is for me ; now that I have seen Him let me depart in peace. Anna, on the other hand, now speaks of Him to all who look for redemption in the city. And these two states of soul should characterize all saints everywhere.

If you wish to get the two combined in one person in a very matured way, you see it in Phil. i. Paul goes beyond Simeon, and beyond

Anna. He says, I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, and that is greater than Simeon; but, To abide in the flesh is more needful for you, therefore I will remain, is more than Anna. Either *with Christ or for Him*.

Now, our subject for this evening is, What it is to be *for Christ*, or in other words, What is our mission. But, as I have said, if you have not learned the first point,—Christ for you—you are not qualified for the second—being here for Christ.

I shall first, then, say a few words on what is the origin of your mission; for how can any person be true to a mission if he has not got the origin of it? The Psalm we have read starts with this: the Psalmist brings us to the tabernacles of God, even before the bright light shone which has opened up our way into the holiest. The first blessedness—"Thy house"—is one unbroken scene of delight; everything there awakens praise. But, in the second I am in a scene of opposition, where it is a valley of tears; it is not heaven now, the courts of the living God; it is earth; and your mission, as you pass through, is to "make a well."

The first thing to be clear about in the mission is the origin of it—its starting point. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." It is clear from this that you must be first out of the world; how else could you be sent into it?

And it is said to the *disciples*. It was "the disciples" who were assembled together, and to them He says, "Peace be unto you," as He sends them forth on their mission. When He said the second time, "Peace be unto you," it is that they may have peace in a double way; not only up there in a sphere of glory and praise, but also down here as they go about their work. That is the force of the second peace; it is the peace connected with the mission. He Himself as He walked down here had peace superior to the character of things around Him. He walked in peace, and He would have them do so too.

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." This is the origin of their mission and of ours. You must first put yourself outside the world with Christ, that you may come into it for Him. It is then you know the origin of your mission. We shall presently come to the purpose of it, but we must first be clear as to the origin. It is from above, and given, too, to a person who comes from above. And this not to apostles either. I want you to see clearly that every one of us God has thus sent.

I know a scene outside this world—a scene of unbounded delight in the Father's house: that is my home; but I have also a place of business down here in the world. A man is not settled who has not got a home; his character is formed by his home. And just so with the saints. If

you do not come from your home above you will never be a good workman—a good missionary here. I use the word mission, because it is true that every one of Christ's people is sent into the world to do some particular work that no other person can do. All the flowers in the garden are different, and so are all the stars in the sky, and they do not clash. If I look the whole sky over I shall not see two stars clash; each has its own sphere. And I believe if those who are sent from God were more distinct in their service, that they would never clash—I mean as to imitation or envy. I ever find it the case that the man who is laboriously occupied with what God has given him to do, is never envious of any other man.

Well, then, first settle the fact that you have got a home with God, and then say, I am sent into this world from my home.

The second question for us is, Whom am I going to serve now that I am thus sent? Having got my origin above, I find that I come into this world to make a *well*. It is to serve *man* that I come. And yet it is not to improve him; it is not patriotism and that sort of thing; it is not the amelioration of society I am occupied with, though my mission has to do absolutely with man. I am to “do good unto *all* men.” I do not think any servant of God would differ with me as to the fact that it is man I have to serve.

But then comes a great question: What would be the character of this service? As I say, I come from heaven, and that more distinctly even than an angel does, for I am saved by grace, united to that One who sends me, and have thus reached the consummation of His finished work. Having eaten the passover, and been at Gilgal, I come forth a fit person to be a channel of mercy to this poor world, as we find it in John vii.: "He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." It was the feast of tabernacles—what answers to the harvest home in this country. Man was the object of God then on the earth, celebrated in this feast; all had been gathered in, and men rejoicing in the good gifts of God were found dwelling in booths.

Then on the last day, that great day of the feast, typical of that time spoken of by the prophet, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The great thought in the feast was, that man was the object of God upon earth, and Israel commemorated this fact. But now, the Lord says, I will produce in you a far greater thing than this feast celebrates; man, instead of receiving from the earth—instead of being contributed to by it—shall contribute to his fellows on the earth; instead of seeking water

for his thirst from this scene, out of man himself blessing shall be ministered: "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Just think of it for a moment. The Lord announcing, When I am glorified, instead of blessing the earth and man through it, I will give to my people the Holy Ghost, flowing out of them for blessing. Nothing can be more wonderful than that I am sent into this world of misery, to be in it *a well*.

Having then seen the origin of our mission, and that man is the object of it, the question arises, How am I to serve him? and this is where, among Christians, there is a great disagreement. One thought is, that I serve him with what is called charity; and "charity" is doing for him what pleases him. One gives a penny to a beggar, and calls it charity. Charity, then, is ministering to a man where he himself thinks that he requires it.

But the divine idea of charity is that, when I serve, I serve according to the nature of Christ Himself, and that which I minister when thus serving is Christ Himself. Suppose I go to see a widow and orphans, I might console them immensely by what always consoles a bereaved heart, by telling them how the departed one idolized them and so on, and they would be wonderfully consoled by that; but it would be only by what exalted themselves; it would be all

natural. I asked some one the other day, "Would you like to be sympathised with as you naturally feel, or as you ought to feel?" The answer is simple. Thus the Lord, when He sympathised with a bereaved heart, brings Himself, a divine person, into the terrible chasm that death has created, and consoles the heart with Himself.

The great point is, What do you minister? Nine-tenths of the reasons why people fail in their ministry is, that though they are occupied with man, the right patient, they are not ministering the right thing to him; they are doing what no doctor allows, anyhow not till the patient is quite prostrate, and that is doing for him what he likes—what suits his tastes.

The next thing is, that there is a definite service for each, and each should know what his service is. In Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii., and Eph. iv., gifts are treated of; the difference between the three being, that in Corinthians it is the body; in Ephesians, it is Christ, the head of the body; and in Romans, it is the individual responsibility. In Romans we begin with prophecy, which is the highest gift in one sense, and we end with "showing mercy with cheerfulness"—something that is within the reach of every one. Could not every one of you show mercy with cheerfulness? Do you, any one of you, think that you are outside the hallowed

circle? You are not. And, let me tell you, I would sooner have the last without the first, than the first without the last. I would sooner show mercy with cheerfulness than prophesy; the highest moral quality is the gift common to all. We can all have this, though as I say, there is a special service for each one of us; something distinct, something definite within the reach of every one of us, so that we may not clash; and, as it has been said, if the Lord has a service for you, you will never be happy until you are doing it. And this service, if it be but to give a drink of cold water to some one, must be done according as Christ would do it.

I do not say that you must be always speaking to some one or other. You may be an old person like Anna, though indeed, as for Anna, she went about a great deal, speaking to all them in Jerusalem who looked for redemption. But whatever may be your service, you can anyhow show mercy with cheerfulness.

There are two spheres in which we serve, and in these two spheres every person can judge in a measure as to what is his mission. The one is corporate; the other, individual. In all my individual service I never lose the fact that I belong to Christ's body on earth. No one can interfere with my individual service until in it I do something which interferes with my place

in the assembly. An evangelist says, Oh, I may go and preach anywhere that I choose! And so you may; but if in your preaching you say anything that is wrong, you will offend against Christ and against the assembly, and the assembly, or those in charge, will pull you up about it. Thus there are the two circles, the individual and the collective.

As to the former, I will take any sphere you like. For instance, the position of a child in a family, or that of a wife; some one under control. How shall such know their mission? Well, it is a very delicate point, and requires great wisdom and holy care lest, while trying to do Christ's service, you clash with the ordinance of God. I say to a child or wife, In doing what God calls you to—in carrying out your mission—be careful that you do not go against the ordinance of God. Perhaps some one says, But this is very difficult; how are you to do in the case of an unbelieving father or husband? I admit that it is very difficult, and if the clash comes, let not the subject one be the one to make it. As Christ's servant, I should not be the one to wish to bring it about. It is a matter which needs the greatest care. Whilst I insist strongly on your having a mission, and that Christ has sent you into the world to carry it out, I also insist that in doing so you respect the ordinance of God; and, until

that ordinance so come in the way as to make it a question of obeying God rather than man, you must submit to it.

I believe if people gave up their rights, there would be much less difficulty about it. If a child in an unconverted father's house would only say, I am content to be nothing—to be a servant—they would get on all right. Look at the exhortation to a slave: “Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” What could be greater than that? Is your question, How shall I serve? Serve as a wife, as a mother; serve where God has put you. Everything depends upon your fulfilling your responsibility individually.

Now mark how this comes out in the assembly. A man who is not true to his individual responsibility is sure to be a hindrance in the assembly. The corporate must be affected by the individual. It is the lack of individual responsibility that is at the bottom of the dullness in many of our meetings. You ask, What then do you do in a dull meeting? I try so to preserve my individual responsibility that I may be happy in my own soul whilst all around me is cold and dull. I am not going to run away in a panic. If others are dull, I am not going to be, and thus only add to the general misery. If my eye get injured or hurt, it grieves my whole body, and just so in the assembly. When people complain

to me of dull meetings and the like, I always answer, Why do you not brighten up at home and come to the meeting brighter yourself?

I will now go a little into gifts—as to the way in which God prepares people for service. I trust I have made it clear that in one way each saint has a gift; to every one is given the gift of grace; and in the measure in which each receives this grace from Christ, so he walks. As to different paths of service, a man's ability in it will soon tell me whether the path he has taken be the one to which he is called or not. But, whilst I say this, I do not believe that a person is thoroughly fitted for his work before he takes it up. The Lord never employs a ready-made servant. If I engage a coachman, I make sure before doing so as to whether he is able to drive; I make inquiries as to his fitness. Not so the Lord. He acts in just the contrary way. He sets us to drive at once, without our ever having tried before. But, whilst He acts in this way, He still puts His servants through a period of *probation* before He gives them their work.

Of course, besides this, the Lord gives positive gifts to His servants. Saints sometimes ask, How may I know that I am gifted? Well, I believe, from looking at Scripture, that besides conversion, the Lord reveals Himself very distinctly to the soul that He gifts. This revelation, I need not say, is different in different

cases ; but I will mention two or three examples of it. Moses has a purpose to serve, but without a word from the Lord sets off in his own strength to deliver the children of Israel, and, as the consequence, has to flee into the wilderness. There he goes through what I call probation ; and, at the end of that time, the Lord reveals Himself to him in the burning bush, and sends him with His power to do the work he had vainly attempted before. No question but that Moses was God's servant all through, but he had not gone through the probation, nor acquired the mind of God for such a service.

We see the same line of things in Samson's history. He had been a Nazarite from his birth, but it was a special time at which "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan."

The same thing in John the Baptist. He was "in the deserts till the day of his showing to Israel."

And in the case of Paul himself ; he was, I suppose, two years in Arabia.

Any of us who know anything of what service is, know something, too, of what probation is ; and know, too, what a time of sorrow and of self-repudiation it is.

It is a moment of immense importance to the soul of the servant when God thus reveals Himself to him—when he gets what I call his *base*.

This is a military term used for the spot at which the general keeps his resources, his ammunition, his reserves; on which he falls back in case of need, and from which he works. What is the base of the servant? It is the distinct revelation from God to his soul that he has a special support from Him in his service here, and a servant is never established until he has this base, on which he falls back in time of need.

And one more example yet more remarkable than these that I have mentioned — that of Isaiah. We are told that he had the word of the Lord, and the vision up to the sixth chapter; but then, he is not thoroughly established; he cries “Woe is me, for I am undone!” when he gets into the presence of the Lord of Hosts. He has not got his base. But here he learned that he had to do with God in His glory—in that glory which He was about to withdraw from Israel—and then he “saw his glory and spake of him.”

And I might even go on to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and see how He fell back upon His base in the midst of all that was disappointing here, as He said, “I thank thee, O Father; even so, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

What an immense place of rest it is! What quietude of soul it gives, when I *know* how the Lord has sent me, and how I am to act in the

place to which He has sent me. After that day on the back side of the desert Moses had not only the mission of a servant—that he had before: he would deliver his brother when he saw the Egyptian smite him, and he would deliver poor women when he saw them oppressed; but he has now a base upon which to act. This is the first point I mention in connection with gift.

The second is, that a gifted person is not only clear of everything, both in himself and around him, like Jonah was, but that he also has the nature of Christ, that charity of which the apostle speaks which is the nature of Christ, and sets forth the manner or the right way for doing a right thing.

And then comes *preparation* for service; not now probation, nor nature, but preparation; and preparation always goes on. In saying this I do not speak of special gifts. We all require to be prepared, no matter what our mission.

Preparation does not consist in providing for what you will have to do. Divine preparation is often the opposite to what human preparation is. I am not objecting to any one preparing for a lecture—to his having information, that is, understanding the Scripture on which he speaks; but that is not what I call preparation. Divine preparation is, that though you do not know what is going to happen, yet you are able to act with God in it no matter what comes. I believe,

as a rule, that when God prepares me for what is coming, He does not tell me what it will be. Do you say, How shall I prepare for to-day? I answer, Get so into the presence of God that you may come forth into things here with His power and in His Spirit, so that, whatever comes, you may act for Him in it.

See how beautiful is this preparation in Moses. He is there upon the mount with God, looking at the heavenly tabernacle, and he comes down to find idolatry in the camp. Is Moses prepared for such a thing as this? Yes; he was so taken up with the heavenly things—with what was suitable to God—that when he came down he saw at once what was worthy of Him. He took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, a great way off. Divine preparation is got up there; then when you come down and see the contrast of everything here, you will know the right line to take—you will know what suits God. Thus Moses was the man for the crisis; he came from God into it, and was coloured with what suited God. It is not how *man* would act in the circumstances, it is how *God* leads, and that is *preparation*. All secular employments are but discipline to make us the more effective missionaries.

The Lord lead us, beloved friends, not to lose sight of the wondrous, stupendous fact that we are all sent into this world—sent from the

Father's house to be channels of mercy in this sad world. It is for this I am sent, full of Christ, to contribute to a world of misery. I have a home outside it, and I come to make a well in it ; and there is not a drop of water in a well, as every one knows, that has not come from above. It is wonderful that we should be sent into this world to be exponents of the grace of God ! All I say is, whilst you seek thus to be for Him, keep within the banks, whether wives or children ; within the banks is the best place for you, just as in a parched land the banks of the river are as beautiful and verdant as possible. And remember meanwhile that you have a place outside it all with Christ, a home there, whilst you come into this world as your place of business ; your business being to show forth the grace of Christ.

(J. B. S.)

Until in my heart of hearts I own what a man is down here who is united to Christ at God's right hand, I never find out the things here that I cannot go on with ; until then Christianity is but a negative thing to me.

(J. B.)

“WE ARE MADE MANIFEST.”

2 COR. V. 1-10.

ONE of the remarkable things about the truth of God is that it lays hold of the conscience, and acts on it far beyond the intelligence of the person. In this way a statement, in itself inaccurate and incomplete, in the mind even of the person who makes it, is directed to the very point needed to touch the conscience.

This is the case with what is often said about this chapter. It is a solemn thing to have everything thus turned out before God and man. There is a time coming when language will no longer be able to disguise what we really feel; all will be brought into the light—will stand in the presence of it; everything will be made manifest, not only to the person's own conscience, but in the presence of other men, too. There is this in the passage, but there is a great deal more.

“We must all *appear* before the judgment-seat of Christ;” that word implies our personal presence—the judgment-seat and every one there; but besides this all is “*made manifest*” there now. It is “knowing the terror of the Lord” that “we persuade men.” “We *are* made manifest to

God, and I trust also to your consciences.” There was a light which had shined into Paul’s heart, and there was no terror to him.

To a sinner it is an awful thought that all must be opened up before God, but it was not to Paul, because he was made manifest to God. He had been before God—he had been read by Him. And not only this, but there was a something—a certain life of God—which these Corinthians might see whether they did or not. There was not only light in his heart, but there was treasure in an earthen vessel, and Paul showed how God works death in us in order that the life may be free.

This is God’s way with us, but it is not what man likes. If man could have heaven in his own way, he would be ready to go there; but when it comes to the living God having *His* way with us, man’s will broken and death working, it becomes a painful thing. “Though our outward man perish” is the way Paul had to go, and the Corinthians, and we, too, whether sensible of it or no; and it is a very blessed thing when, while conscious of the outer man thus perishing, the child of God can say, “The inward man is renewed day by day.” Life is working on through all the death.

Paul could say it was in the midst of all circumstances. “For which cause we faint not; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” What is the secret from lack of which many finding death working in them have no power to say, “for which cause we faint not”? Why not now as then? It is because we are not realizing that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Do you wonder that if Christ is preparing a place for us there, and sees us meanwhile here carrying about as much of the sand of the desert as we can, that He, by letting death and disappointment roll in on all we seek, should bring home to us the fact that it will not do? There is not one of us really able to say, I see what He is doing, who is not also able to add, I faint not, though all be against me. In contrast to present things, for every touch that death gives you should be able to point to some circumstance in glory that answers to it. God has taken us potsherd of the earth up for His glory, and the great thing for us to do is to sit down and see which way God is going, for we shall find His way is to make all give way before that.

I should be sorry if any one knowing me could not say, Your walk says that you have every-

thing inside Christ and nothing outside. I would look upon my body as an earthen pitcher in which to carry about the dying of Jesus, as it shall carry one day the glory of Christ; and, as to circumstances here, they are smashed.

This is no matter of attainment; it is the simple path of the Christian. If God has, by the hand of His Son, labelled a place for me in the glory, what do I want here? when I get up to where He is I shall see that, though I was a poor broken thing here, “in deaths oft,” yet it was my pathway. And where does that pathway lead up to? To the judgment-seat of Christ. He is only a *Saviour* to some. But He would not apply His work to your soul and leave *Himself* out of the question. The point is how the saved ones should walk. He cares about your walk though you do not gain life by it. I should not like to be one who so little appreciated the love and grace of Christ as to be dragged up there just because He must have me, and it to be manifested there what an unworthy life mine has been!

Do you know what it is to have your motives detected? to have a friend come and say that which makes your heart ready to burst because he has touched the right point—the one you thought concealed? What agony you felt at the first sound of it? What is that to what it will be before that judgment-seat?

But everything is “made manifest” *now*. What is there in me that is not made manifest? All is. You may, like Job, be in the furnace, but God comes in and says: He is a dear child of mine; the dross is purged away, and there remains that which I put in. What would a place on the throne be without the heart being brought into subjection to His present work?

What is all the eternal glory compared to the thought that Christ is the object for which I have to live now? He has made me a vessel to show forth His glory now, and what sort of fruit does He look for from me?

(G. V. W.)

The Samaritans would not receive Him, and He turns aside into another village. Oh what a lesson that is! Because He had “stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” The half-hearted would not receive Him because He was doing the very thing that marked His blessedness. And so it will be with you; if you set your face to go to Jerusalem you will not be received by those who are half-hearted.

(J. N. D.)

“HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST.”

REV. iii. 11.

It is very remarkable that, throughout the history of God's dealings with man, from the very beginning down to the present moment, there has always been a company of people in existence separated from the general mass of what might be called “the profession,” and distinguished by their fidelity to God's truth up to the point it was revealed to them at the particular time they lived. This company of people, though not possessing at any two periods the same measure of truth, has always been marked by the same characteristics; and thus there is an affinity of the closest kind between those who have formed this company from the earliest times down to the days we are in. Let us look at some of these characteristics.

In the first place, it has always been small and insignificant. This is inevitable; for the general tendency with man is to take up with that which is *popular*. Of this we have proofs all around us. The truth of God never has been, and never can be, popular; and, may I say, it was never *meant* to be so. Those, therefore, in

any period, who have kept to it faithfully, have been in a small minority.

Then, again, it has always been disliked and despised, and generally persecuted by those outside it. This, too, is inevitable. The reason is just this, that the truth of God, when held up faithfully, serves as a mirror to discover the defects of those before whom it is presented; and this, of all things, is what the "professing" world likes least. Let it go on its own way, and its own self-constituted leaders will take care that its conscience is not disturbed; but let a few faithful ones hold up the truth of God, which is itself without a speck or a flaw, and all the hollowness, and hypocrisy, and evil is at once shown up in its true colours.

No wonder that the small and insignificant company who presume to do such a thing as that should be disliked and despised. No wonder that every little personal defect, every little failing in their walk, should be picked out and placarded about for the amusement of those who, by being brought face-to-face with the truth of God, have been thus disturbed and exposed. Such is only natural. For instance, those who could not stand the truth of God, as held up by Paul, found no difficulty whatever in publishing the fact that "his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible." So it always is, and always will be.

Then, looking for a moment at the other side of the picture, the faithful few have all along been the medium employed by God for bringing out the truth. This, like what we have been looking at, is also inevitable; for God always acts on this principle: “To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.” He always honours faithfulness where He sees it; and His way of doing so is by communicating fresh light and fresh truth. Of this, endless instances could be given from Scripture and from history. And thus this faithful company that I refer to have always been the depositories and exponents of the truth for the time being. The light communicated to them, of course, ultimately shines out (though robbed of its power) upon the scene around; but whatever truth or light finds its way into the mass of the profession, can always be traced back to the faithful few to whom it was originally communicated. Since the canon of Scripture was closed, the work of the Spirit of God has been simply to unfold what is already written therein, but the same principle applies to this as it does to the times when new truth was given from God to man.

As I said before, the measure of the truth enjoyed by this separate company of faithful ones has not been the same at any two periods. For instance, the measure of truth possessed by

Simeon and Anna, in the days when our Lord first came upon the scene, was very far short indeed of what we have now ; but it is not a question of the *amount* of truth or knowledge, but simply of *faithfulness*. Thus Abraham, though he knew nothing of many of the glorious truths which we are familiar with to-day, was nevertheless called "the friend of God"—a designation which, I am afraid, very few of us, with all our knowledge and intelligence, could lay claim to.

There is one sad aspect of all this which I rather want to bring out. It does not do to overlook it. It is just this, that the testimony has never gone on for any length of time in the same hands. What I mean is, that failure has always come in through the unfaithfulness of those who held the testimony ; and thus God has been obliged, if I may so speak, to pass the truth on to others, who have kept it pure for a time, but have in their turn allowed it to slip through their fingers.

Scripture proofs of this are numerous ; but we may see it strikingly exemplified in the history of Christendom in England during the last few hundred years. When the Church had sunk into the lowest depths of degradation, in what are known as the "dark ages," the Spirit of God raised up men like Wickliffe, Luther, and

others, to whom was unfolded truth which, though revealed in the word, had for long ages been little more than a dead letter. This was the origin of “Protestantism,” so called, represented by Sardis in Rev. iii. the English development of it becoming known as “the church of England.” Bright, indeed, was the light which thus for a time was displayed; and if there had only been faithfulness, further truth would have been unfolded, and the testimony would doubtless have been kept in the hands of those to whom it had been committed. But, alas, corruption began to come in; and the English church particularly, like that from which it had sprung, became a thing of statecraft and priestcraft, and—not to speak irreverently—God was compelled to take away the testimony from it and hand it to others. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of English history, we may see how the truth was gradually passing into other hands, and how steadily the “church of England” persecuted those into whose hands it was falling.

Coming later down, there is no doubt that Wesley and Whitfield, and those connected with them at the latter end of last century, held the testimony for the time being; but how grievously they have failed is apparent to any one who looks at the condition, for many years past, of that which professes to be descended from them.

It was out of the general decay of all that which professed to have the truth that God raised up, about fifty years ago, those whom He led by His Spirit to bring out from the word those grand truths we are familiar with to-day, and it is unmistakable that "Brethren" (so-called) have held the lamp of the truth from that day to this. This is said with all humility; but still it is the truth, and cannot be set aside. It is an exceedingly solemn position to be in, and one which, so far from exalting us, should send us on our knees before God in self-judgment and searching of heart. For surely the continuance of the testimony committed to us depends entirely upon our faithfulness; and hence the solemnity of that warning we have quoted at the head of this paper: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This was said to the Philadelphians. They were distinguished by having kept the word of Christ and not having denied His name, and yet even to them is this warning necessary. The Lord bring it home to each of us!

It is a surpassing blessing to be led amongst those who hold the testimony in their hands for the time being; but, at the same time, the responsibility of such a position can hardly be estimated, even at any period in the history of God's dealings. How much is it enhanced now, in these days, when unbelief and opposition to

the truth are assuming such proportions, and when things are so rapidly moving on to that point when the Lord Himself shall come to wind-up in judgment that which now falsely bears His name! We seem to be hardly aware of the responsibility which hangs upon us. Had we a due sense of it, it would be impossible to go on, as many do, quibbling over details which do not affect the truth of God one single iota. I say it with all gentleness and humility; but one cannot but be amazed by the way in which the grand truth of God for to-day is, to a certain extent, shelved; while matters of a personal character, mere personal opinion, are magnified beyond all bounds. Each reader must, and will, own the truth of this.

In view of all this, will the reader bear with me in pressing once more the importance of that warning we have already looked at? Are we, any of us, letting slip the grand truths we were once distinguished by? The Lord help us to lay hold of them again with redoubled eagerness and devotion, thinking only and entirely of Him who, from the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, says to Philadelphia, “Behold I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown!”

T. W.

SATAN.

GENESIS iii. 1-7.

WE should be impressed, each of us, as far as the Lord enables us, with what we have to guard against; any part of the truth that has been overlooked anywhere. What we require in a measure to be revived, the Lord would supply it to us, if we waited on Him. We ought to come to hear with the expectation that He will set forth to us what we require. And, in saying this, it is not *abstract* things that I mean: we are often too abstract; it is Himself that we want; it is everything that we may know what He is. But we are constantly taken unawares; we are unprepared for the character of the thing that is here, because we are not instructed as to it. "Forewarned is forearmed."*

The subject I wish to bring before you, after this preface, is one on which I am not able to say much, but it is one of great importance. It is Satan—his power, and the different ways in which we suffer from his antagonism.

I feel there is a great, and, I trust, a growing desire, to follow the Lord; but I do not

* This address, and the two following, at Quemerford, May 24th and 25th, 1876.

think there is a sufficient sense of the power of evil, and of the character of that evil. The Lord says: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It was a very momentous thought in His mind. He does not wish us taken *out* of it, but He does wish us to be kept *from* it. I feel that many are not sufficiently acquainted with the character of this evil. I may say, for one, I have not been sufficiently acquainted with his devices.

The first class of opposition comes out in what I have read. Whatever God is set upon, that is what Satan is set against. It is an immense thing for us to get hold of this thought. As far as I am able to take you, the subject will be mostly suggestive; but I think the greatest *and the most important teaching in a day like this* is suggestive. If you are true in heart before the Lord, you will work it out. It does not produce the same results, I think, when everything is made as plain as a map to us. It may be very pleasant to be able to say: "I see it as plain as A B C;" but it will not be effective teaching when it is. The Lord spoke to the multitude in parables. If Israel had really cared to understand Him, they never would have been satisfied till they had arrived at understanding His thought. The Lord spoke to them in parables, and the very fact of their being satis-

fied that He should do so, showed that they did not care to know His mind. If a friend of mine speak or write to me in parables, I never rest until I get at his meaning. But the Lord spoke to them in parables, and the multitude were indifferent as to what was meant; and when He was alone with them, He expounded all things to His disciples.

I will touch on two or three places in Scripture where my subject comes out. In the passage I have read, Satan comes in against what God was set upon; he comes in to explain away the word. It is the *word* he assails, not *things*. When you lose the word you have lost your power. So he does not begin so much by pointing out to the woman the advantages to be gained as by assailing the word. Having got the word he attempts to pervert it. It is, "Yea, *hath* God said?" and, "Ye shall not surely die." He does not yet tempt her to eat.

If you study your own history you will see the way you have been ensnared and rescued; and no one is happy who has not got a history — if he do not walk, so to say, *historically* with God — seeing and understanding God's dealings with him. I do not mean by this your keeping a diary, — a diary is a record of your *feelings*; I mean, literally, *history*, that is, the events of your life.

An important thing comes out here which

marks the difference between a work of the flesh and a work of Satan. It is a point of great interest as to the moment when an act of the flesh becomes a work of Satan. A simple act of the flesh—I mean an act of flesh simply—is just doing something that pleases me at the moment; it is simply gratification of the flesh: as we read: “She saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.” But in Satanic action there is always a design—there is an end farther on to be reached. The action of the flesh is momentary; it is the present moment that is before me; I like it at the moment; there is no forecasting—no issue to be reached. But when there is an evil issue to be reached by it, it is Satanic.

How would it come in? “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, *neither give place to the devil.*” When you are in a condition for Satan to help you, he will surely do so. I state the principles in a broad way, and may my doing so give you a deeper sense of what a shelter your heart may find in Christ. If you get the sense of a terrible, never-ceasing foe, on the one hand, it will make you more conscious, on the other, of what it is for you to have the Lord for your shelter as you walk through this evil world.

I just pursue the subject, but not to dwell on every example. I say nothing of Cain, for

instance, but pass on to Noah. Noah does not begin with Satan; he only plants a vineyard; but that is self-gratification. And, let me warn you, the moment you yield to self-gratification you are in danger. It is a thing that suits you, and you are allured by it; green fields, no matter what it is, but the allurements comes first. Woe if you yield to it! This was the character of the first temptation of the Lord. When He was a hungred, Satan presents the temptation to make stones into bread.

If I look at Noah, I see he is set upon the earth on new terms, and the point was whether he would break down in keeping them. His planting a vineyard was simply self-gratification, but in so doing he failed to keep the word. "Hold fast the form [the outline or scope] of sound words." It was the scope of the things that he lost. It is not, as people so often say, whether you "have a text" or not for a certain action. Noah had no text—nothing had been said to him about a vineyard; but, Noah, if you had understood that God had put you upon the earth to rule, you never would have done anything to imperil your calling? He who cannot rule himself cannot rule others. Satan was meanwhile glorying in the fact that what God had set up in man had failed, and he brings in Canaan, who is the emissary of Satan, and Canaan is cursed.

I now pass on to Aaron himself. Aaron wanted to please the people, and, through this desire, led away from God, he is soon betrayed into sin by Satan. It is not that he is a bad person, but, thinking he would meet the condition of the people, he was ready to be the tool of Satan. It is the converse of Job's case. He was a good man, who, afflicted by Satan, will not surrender faith. The calf that Aaron made was the evidence of the Egypt out of which they had come—surrendering the truth of God for idols.

I have passed over Pharaoh, because he was a wicked man. But whilst doing so I just say, that man is an incompetent creature, so that when he gets into a strait, he must have either God or Satan to help him. Pharaoh went to the magicians. Aaron has been prominent for God, but prominence does not save him. Prominence for God here does not save from the activity of Satan. The moment you look out to meet the popular mind, it is man you are trying to meet and not God, and you then readily become the tool of Satan. He supplies a ready invention: he quickly found the gold for Aaron. What a thing is Satan!

You ask, What would be the effect of heeding this counsel? Practically you would have such a sense of what Satan's power is, that you would know that if you are not in Christ nothing can

protect you. Education cannot keep Satan out ; not all the thoughts of man can do it. One of the greatest crimes I ever heard of has lately been carried out by a man of education ; if he had not had intelligence and education, he could not have constructed his infernal machine.

The terrific nature of Satanic power is that it is unceasing in its hostility against that which God is set on. And who, then, escapes his attacks ? Why, those who not are set upon what God is. They escape from suffering ; they escape the pain of his opposition.

I pass by the book of Daniel, in which we find more than one instance of his working, and go on to the Lord's own temptation. Nothing astonishes me like this. See what the malice of Satan is—malice in the very essence of it. Here is the Son of God on the earth, and what would Satan do ? Satan in effect says, I will turn the Son of God aside first for a bit of bread—that is the necessary food for every man. Second, by offering Him the world in a new way. And, third (God forbid that we should ever fall into it !) by seeking to make Himself singular among men by the interposition of God for Him. Thus could Satan seek to upset the very Son of God. Wickedness cannot imagine goodness, any more than a good man can believe in a bad one. Here is God's Son, the Creator, on the earth ; and Satan thinks he will turn Him aside for a bit of bread !

I know how small a way I can take any of you into this, but I have the comfort in my own soul of knowing that the Lord would have you awake up to the gravity of it, and, if you wait upon Him, He will carry you into it far beyond what I can.

We now pass on for a moment to Matt. xvi. where the Lord calls Peter, Satan. He says: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." This is a remarkable thing. Here is he, who has just received the greatest revelation that was possible for a man, coming out with that which is Satanic. The Lord had just before said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And now, when the Lord spoke of His death, not as merely saving, but as that through which man should be judicially set aside, "Peter took him and began to rebuke him." Mark, it is not salvation here. Peter never objected to be saved—no one does; but Peter objected to man being set aside. This shows us what Satan is about. The Lord here brings out what is his great point of attack. It is accompanied with a great revelation; and this person to whom the revelation has been made cannot endure the fact that man is to be set aside—to find his end on the cross. "Be it far from thee,

Lord ; this shall not be unto thee." And the solemn answer is : "Get thee behind me, *Satan*."

I now travel on to see how this is worked out. But I must first take another thought in connection with this principle, so I just state the fact, in passing, that when the Lord was being crucified, Judas was actually carried off by Satan : "Satan entered into him." But Peter is sheltered. The Lord says to him : "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee." Satan gets round him first by great bravery for his Master ; he is carried away by his natural prowess, and cuts off the high priest's servant's ear, and then he will go on to the high priest's house to see the end. It was all quite natural. But just see how he is decoyed on. A friend leads him into the house, and there he warms himself by the fire, for it was cold. Satan never lets you know you are in his toils until he has got you fast, and then he seeks to plunge you into despair. And notice his malice ; not satisfied with having got the multitude and the apostate disciple to work his will against the Lord, he will have one of the nearest and dearest of His disciples. Do you understand at all his malice ? Are you alive to the fact that, if you have not the arms of Christ around you, you are not safe for a moment from the virulence of this untiring foe ?

In Acts I find Ananias and Sapphira the tools of Satan ; he makes them believe that the Holy Ghost is not in the church. He says to them : You may tell the lie, no one will ever find it out ; and you will get an advantage in two ways : you will have the credit of having given all that you possess to the church, and you will also have a good bit of the money for yourselves. The object of Satan here is to disparage and undermine the work of God, and to neutralize His grace. The temptation offered to them was that of eminence in the church of God. That was the bait with which Satan deluded them. It is well, when anything is put before you, to ask yourself the simple question : Is this Christ, or is it a bait ? Christ is the only measure for everything ; can I answer, I have enough in Christ ? This is the practical benefit of being in the presence of Christ ; I can then say, Having Him I can do without anybody ; I am perfectly happy with Christ. Can you do without your family ? Well, I say this, that the sense of the presence of Christ consists in being able to say : "No bread;" nothing but Christ ; nothing for the human side. When I come down to the wilderness I want other things ; why, I want a coat, for instance ; but up there, in His presence, it is ever "No bread." You may be a very sincere man, but I do maintain that you have lost His presence when you take up your cares.

You say, I have to go to Him about my troubles, surely? and of course you have; I do not mean that; but when you are occupied with Christ in His own sphere you need nothing else. As one has said: "A prayer-meeting is in the wilderness; a worship-meeting in the holiest." The moment I am in His own sphere He Himself is the satisfying object of my heart; I do not want anything but Himself—no super-additions. Here on earth I want food and raiment and comforts; I cannot get on without things needful to the body. God knows I want things, and He furnishes them too. But I have the sense in my soul that when I have to do with Christ in His own sphere, though I may drop very soon into the wilderness again, still, as I know Him there, I am in an ecstasy. It is Christ, and not myself, that engrosses me. In "believers' meetings," as they call them, they are looking out for divine grace acting on themselves, instead of enjoying Christ Himself.

I look now for a little at the epistles. What was their failure at Corinth? It was that they would spare *man*. It is not that they would not accept Christ for their *sins*, but they would not accept Christ *crucified* as their pattern here on earth. There are three things important for the soul to see. First, God in the cross of Christ clears me of everything that stood between me and Him. Second, I am united to

Christ in glory ; I am put where he rules, where his sway is owned. Third, I return now to the cross to turn out everything in myself that would hinder the outshining of Christ. You admit that you are clear of your sins ; if you were not you could not be united to Him in glory ; and now you are to resist everything in you that is contrary to Him, that the light may shine out in this vessel that He has redeemed to Himself, and that you may come out here in the strength and grace of Christ. *The man must go.* And this the Corinthians would not have. The consequence was, that Satan got in. I do not comment on it ; but I just point out how that, in the second epistle, they were slow to receive back the offender. They had been unduly lax ; now they are unduly severe. Says the Apostle : “ I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him, lest Satan get an advantage of us.” I mention it to show how he first mars the work of God by introducing terrible laxity among the saints, and then by leading them to go too much the other way.

There is another thing I just turn to in the first epistle of Timothy. In these two epistles to Timothy we get mention of “ the latter times ” and of “ the last days.” We are now in the latter of these two ; and I wish to show you the difference between the Satanic action in the two. It is the same principle here that we have already

noticed. In "the latter times" of the first of Timothy, Satan brings in a system with which we are all acquainted—Romanism—which is an exaction on man; hence, of course, it is not supercession. It is just the difference between exaction and supercession. An exaction on the man admits his existence. Satan substitutes a new kind of godliness for the divine godliness brought before us in the preceding verse, and this consists in exaction on the man. If I say you are not to marry, not to do this and that, I admit that you are alive. Satan will bring in *anything* to make me admit that I am here. Let Ishmael stay in the house; make a servant of him, if you like; but do give him a corner. No, he is to *go out*. So Romanism came in to substitute something for God's supercession of man here, and that substitution is exaction.

But in the second of Timothy it is not substitution that he brings in, but imitation. Oh, but is not Romanism still going on with its exactions all around us? I have no doubt that it is; but besides Romanism, another phase of evil has now come in: we read of "having a form of godliness, but denying the power," and of those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These "resist the truth," as "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses." It is imitation of the truth, and that not in a person who has never learned it. It is

imitation, combined with sickly sentimentality, which the term "little women" expresses; it does not mean literally women, but the effeminacy of character which goes after this imitation. This is the character of the last days.

All I am saying is conveyed in the first sentence I uttered, namely, that Satan is ever set against that which God is set upon.

If you look at Ephesians, you find that Satan is always opposing the saints who faithfully pursue their heavenly calling. It is when we have on the whole armour of God that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." It is there that the warfare is unceasing. There is something exceedingly fearful in the virulence of it. If you are determined to enjoy your rights to heaven, his opposition to you will be unceasing, and therefore it is compared to wrestling — every sinew is strained to the uttermost to upset the antagonist; and all this because I insist upon my rights. Many a one has proved the severity of the struggle. God will help them; that is enough. But many a one, because he insisted on his rights with not strength enough to maintain him—many a one who has been the brightest, the foremost of all—has been floored by Satan. Their purpose, however, is known to God, and He certainly will

restore them. They were set on going on to glory, but they did not look for the protection offered them by the way—they had not on their armour—and so they were drawn aside. And then it is said of them, “Oh, there are your people who said they were heavenly!” And so they are; they were right in their purpose, but they have failed in carrying it out; and I warn you, if you do seek to maintain your rights, you must be prepared for the most unrelenting opposition—for the most dire virulence of Satan. If you say, God has given me heaven, and I mean to have it, I answer, You must have your armour on then. And that is character; it is not prayer simply. No man can get on against Satan without character; you never can face Satan if you have not character; you may have large conceptions of righteousness, but the question is, Is your own character righteous? With your armor on you are invulnerable. You can say to Satan, You cannot touch me; I am strong in the Lord. I would have you search your ways and everything about you as to this, and then, though Satan may be able to say, I saw you do such and such a thing the other day, you can answer, So I may have, but I am not doing it to-day. I stand by the power of God now, and I am going to resist you.

This is what I call the first class of opposition.

I need not tell you how he opposes in preaching the gospel. I cannot go into the subject, but I may say I do not believe the gospel is ever preached without his seeking to neutralize it. It is well for those who preach to make up their minds to this. It is not only the hardness of man's heart that they have to meet, but the gospel is never preached without Satan being there to pick it up if it be by the wayside.

As to the way in which Satan deals with individuals, Peter says he "goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," and he knows you well. He knows what your peculiar liking is, and finds you in a condition to entertain his suggestions. Judas had the bag before Satan came to him, and he says to him: I know you like money, now I will give you some money if you will do it. To another, who is ambitious, he says, I will give you power.

It has been a great question with philosophers as to the interval of time that elapses between the conception of a bad act and the execution of it. I will tell you; and not by philosophy, but by Scripture. "Satan entered into" Judas. He put it into his head; and if you entertain the thought he puts before you, he will enable you to carry it out. Wherever there is consistency, persistency, in an evil course, there is Satan. Man has no power of himself; so I say, you never see a persistent attempt to a certain

end for evil that it is not Satanic. When people say, That man has a great will, you may be sure he is supported by Satan.

Paul says, "Satan hindered" me. I do not know how it came to be so, but we find that he was going to preach in a certain place, and that he could not go.

How, then, am I to overcome him? *Resist* him. "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith;" and, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The great thing is to stand against him.

There are just one or two more points I should like to touch on. First, the way in which God makes use of Satan. I believe He uses him to correct the saints and to scourge them. In Job's case how terrible for him to know, if he did know it, that he was in the hands of Satan; that it was Satan who had taken away his sheep, his camels, his oxen, and his sons and daughters. And Satan was glad to do it; and he was glad to be the thorn in the flesh to Paul. Just think of it! I believe it would give us far greater sobriety if we thought more of these things, if we saw that we are never safe from the attacks of Satan but in the hands of the Lord.

And, lastly, we have that most solemn word "*Delivered unto Satan*, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

May the Lord keep us close to Himself as our great High Priest by the way! He never suffered

from the attacks of Satan internally, though He did from outside. And, for that very reason, He is able to carry us through all the virulence and malice of that which is outside us. He makes it all to be but the winds blowing on His garden, "that the spices thereof may flow out." As for ourselves, we have no power at all unless we are depending on the Lord Jesus Christ.

(J. B. S.)

The love of Christ was above all the wretchedness of His poor disciples, above all their failure; and thus if it were a right feeling, He could feel *with* them; if it were an infirmity, He could feel *for* them. He can enter into it all in a divine way, and with divine goodness, just because He is above it all. When I am not above a thing it acts upon myself; but when I am, I can think for it all as well as with it. And He says to us, "Love one another as I have loved you." By clinging close to Him we can love in the same kind of way in which He loved, and thus recognize anything good, and of Him, in our brethren, and learn to esteem others better than ourselves.

(J. N. D.)

ON RULE.

HEBREWS xiii. 17.

I FEEL impressed to bring before you, beloved brethren, the subject of rule, in the hope that a few words upon it may enable us to distinguish between clericalism and radicalism.

Clericalism is the assumption of rule in a teacher. The teacher is not necessarily a ruler, though the ruler may be a teacher. Radicalism is that which wants to be independent of all rule. Nothing is more important for us practically at this time than to see that it is more according to the rule than according to the teaching in a place that the progress is.

Rule is not merely government; it is oversight. "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" It is character that is the qualification for rule. I see it in every place that it does not depend upon the gifted person there, but upon the character of the oversight. A teacher *may* be an elder, but it is not of a teacher but of an elder it says, "They watch for your souls." And of such it says, "Obey them that lead you"—the guides, properly speaking. I therefore have read this verse as the best passage I can find to bring the subject before you.

From the beginning I see how necessary it is to be subject to rule. At the very start the breakdown was through disobedience; and the first commandment with promise is in connection with obedience to rule. The wife is to be in subjection to her husband. It is a principle which you find pervading all Scripture, and the contrary principle you find running parallel with it all through also. Cain says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Christianity maintains that you *are* to be your brother's keeper; it is the principle of John xiii.: "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them."

I am called to minister to a person, not as he desires, but to so minister to him that I may remove from him anything that comes in as a hindrance between his soul and Christ. I see something in you, and I take pains to remove it; that is charity. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." I do not act towards you as your inclination dictates; but just as a father might say to one of his children, I do not like that colour that you wear; or, I do not like the way in which you act. It is not that I wish to wound you, but I take such an interest in you that I wish to improve you. True love desires the perfection of its object. Love is not blind; it says: I will take care that

you shall be altogether such as I would have you: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." That is the great principle. Thus in small meetings there is often more real vitality than in large, because there is more oversight.

I am not touching on the place of the pastor. The great principle is that we are *all* to have oversight: "Be the subject one to another." We are all to have godly care over each other, and if this be common to all, how much more those who are older? Of course it would not be right for a young person to go up to an old brother and say, I do not at all approve your ways. "Thou shalt rebuke thy brother" is law. Legality consists in pointing out the fault; rebuke is always legal; washing is with divine power removing the defects that I perceive, else it is only making the blot still greater. If I see a defect in you I am responsible to remove it, though I may not be able to do so. Whether able to remove it or not, if I charge myself with the responsibility of it, I shall not be very ready to gossip about it. If I am responsible for a window being clean, I shall not be in a hurry to point out the spots on it; I shall not want to talk about them to the master and the company. I often say to myself: You are responsible for that defect; do not be in a hurry to talk about it. You may be very quick to see defects, but

your very quickness of perception only saddles you with the greater responsibility. Some are more responsible than others; the greater your age the greater your responsibility, so it is, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Now there is a difference between gifts and office. If I am a bishop in Quemerford I am not a bishop anywhere else. If I am a gift in Quemerford I am a gift everywhere else. Christendom is very anxious to maintain the office, but it overlooks the gift. If I could say of any regiment, All the officers of that regiment are there, I could not say it was demoralized, though the rank and file might be in a very low state. But if the officers are wanting, I admit the regiment *is* demoralised, and I am anxious to get it into order of some kind. There must then be *some* officer, there must be order. There is no such thing as being left by God to do things in the church anyhow at all. I know places where things go on well, and where, as I have said, it does not depend so much on the gift as on the oversight. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," or as it is literally, "*Shepherd* the flock."

There is always a tendency to connect rule with teaching; and that is clericalism. I do not know anything that has caused more confusion than teachers trying to be rulers, gaining

a certain prominence in rule because of their having a gift. Teachers are often young men, and I say to such, you *must* be subject to rule. There are other qualifications for rule besides that of age. I never take the place of rule myself, though certainly I am old enough; still I lend my aid to any ruler in case of difficulty.

There must be divine intelligence in ruling; the work is done by the power of God,—there could be no order otherwise,—but meanwhile there is no assumption of office. I may not be able to appoint the rulers officially, at least I cannot give them their commission. But as it is said, when there is no Lord Chancellor, the great seal is put into commission—what is called a care-meeting; just so we may not have a bishop, but three or four do the work. I am not so particular about who does the work, as that the work is to be *done*.

You cannot *appoint* bishops; for it you were to try to do so in Quemerford, you would find that some of them would be in system, and that therefore you could not get them. “Much food is in the tillage of the poor; but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.”—It is lost because there is not a man who can come in and say, I am the deacon or the bishop of this place; and so the work is left in abeyance, and there is untold lack for want of judgment. People say, “You have no bishops and deacons,” and

I answer, "Well, I cannot say we have them, but anyhow if you come amongst us you will find the work is done." Just as I might say, In this house there is neither governess nor tutor, but there is a maid-servant who has so much grace and power that she keeps the children in order, and the children are so good that they obey her. So do not talk about the lack of officers, but see that the work is done.

Turn for a moment to Acts xx. What do we find here? When the apostle comes to the church at Ephesus, for whom does he send? for the teachers? Not at all! He sends for the elders—the overseers as they are called in verse 28; and he puts them in the place of *watching*. "I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore *watch*."

I now pass on to 1 Timothy. I know what objections are raised as to this epistle; but I am very certain no person can understand the second epistle without understanding the first. We get here the orderly state of the church as it was at the first. Suppose there is a garden all grown over with weeds, and entirely gone to ruin, so that no traces of what it was at one time remain, and I want to put this garden to rights again. I make inquiries as to who saw it in its original

state, for it is the original idea I want to respect. And an old man turns up who says : There was once a walk that went down in this direction. I know so much. Well, immediately I set to work to clear out anyhow that one walk. Thus the first of Timothy gives us the original idea.

Young Christians are full of enthusiasm as to the wonderful truths that God has recovered to us in these last days, but I believe we have no conception as to what the original church was—as to its magnificence on the earth. I am as ready as any one can be to acknowledge with my whole heart before God the marvellousness of the grace that has visited us ; I believe it is the most marvellous thing that the Lord should have taken us up and revealed to us His mind, as He did to His disciples at the beginning, in Luke xxiv. ; but I should like to know what “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” was, and what the gift that was given Timothy “by prophecy.” I may make a sort of guess about these things, but they are beyond me quite. It is not that we are not to be full of thanksgiving for what we have got, but I do say that a great deal of humble waiting on the Lord is needed that He would indeed instruct us as to what is “the house of God”—as to what the church is in His mind ; as it says, “That thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God.” When man looks at it it is the house of

God : when Christ works in it it is the body. A man cannot behave himself in the *body*, but he is called to do so in the house.

The first chapter of Timothy is taken up with doctrine ; it is the essential thing. The second chapter is prayer. Prayer is dependence upon God. The man was to be characterized by prayer, the woman by appearance. That is the difference between the man and the woman. A godly woman, instead of seeking to attract man by dress and appearance, shows by her ways that she has retired from the world, and has taken God for her portion. Man, on the other side, instead of being self-reliant, is dependent on God.

Chapter iii. is rule. Here we get bishops and deacons. We all know this is the letter, but the question is whether we know it as divine. Some have before now been offended with me when they have spoken of beginning a new meeting, if I have asked, "Who is to be the bishop?" If you are going to have the church of God in a place, I say, who is going to have the charge of it? Who is going to rule? Are you sensible of the gravity of what you are doing? People think lightly of it, but it is quite contrary to Scripture to do so ; it is a very serious thing, therefore it is said, "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" I do not

know any one thing people are so slow to take as the responsibility of the church of God. If a man is a bishop Peter says he ought to take the oversight of the flock "*willingly.*" And here it says: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a *good* work." There is no better, no higher. I am not talking of gift now; but he adds, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

It is a solemn question—one in which we all help or hinder. Which are you doing?

And now a word about deacons. It is not as to whether there be a deacon or not; this work also may be put into commission. The assembly provides the means, and there are certain persons who carry out the dispensing of them. A deacon is to be a well-ordered person; if you cannot find one to undertake the work you must get two or three to do it. The fifth chapter takes up the practical action of it in the matter of distribution. As much as possible you ought to be careful in the distribution of money not to put the saints in a position where faith cannot be exercised. Thus no one is to be put on the list until they are too old to work for themselves. I think every one in need ought to be looked after, but no one, except a person in certain circumstances, ought to have, so to say, a stipend. There are certain quali-

fications for such, as we get in verses 9 and 10.

I believe great mischief has been done through ignorance on this point. It is not that you should not help people over a difficulty, but if you make them entirely dependent on you, you hinder their faith in God, and by your very kindness you do them an injury. If a man be in a difficulty, help him over it. In some cases, of course, there must a continuation, and they must be put on the list.

All this is really important, for it is a day when every barrier is broken down, rule is altogether gone, absence of subjection is the rule. The point is not how the oversight comes, but whether the thing itself is really worthy. This is an immense help. As a young man I found that obeying others who, as people say, had no right over me, was exceedingly useful. Often a man thinks if he has a certain gift that he is not under rule. I say, not at all. Your gift does not give you rule over others. On the contrary, part of that very gift consists in the ability given you to press home on others that they are to be subject to those whom God has put over them, and as you do this you will find out the real honour that there is in subjection.

All I say is, I would support rule by prayer, by the word of God, in every way that I could ; but do not mix up the overseer with the gift.

They are not derivative in any way. I believe the church would hold a very different position in the eyes of men if it were known that every person who came in was looked after more than they would be in a nunnery ; that there would be no detail in their private life that would not be a matter of interest to the overseers.

There is an order that runs all through the epistle. In chapter iii. we have what the church should be here,—“The pillar and ground of the truth ;” and in chapter iv. comes in the apostacy, or Romanism, which attempts to set up another order of things by exaction—not supercession, which was the necessary result of “Jesus Christ come in the flesh.” If He have so come, He has of necessity superseded the man that was here ; and so wicked spirits will not acknowledge Him as having so come, because it supersedes everything of Adam.

But Romanism comes in admitting that the man is alive. It is the effort of the enemy to make a man religious without God. Radicalism is the effort to elevate him in his own way, and so it is called *liberality*, and is simply exalting man ; so that “gain is godliness.” They will be rich ; they get a certain power by wealth. The moment a person seeks the elevation of man, he looks for all that will raise him ; and

so wealth comes in. Therefore it says in the midst of such things, "Charge them that are rich in this world."

And this brings in something apart from deacon's work. I do not think a rich man should use deacons. I do not say he is never to put into the box; but this I do say, that when he hands money over to the deacons it becomes the Lord's money, and the responsibility of it is no longer his but theirs. The box is the Lord's money; it is simply the Lord saying to each one, Will you give me anything to-day? You may refuse to do so, and you may have good reasons for refusing; but it is to the Lord you refuse to give. The deacons are responsible to the Lord for the use made of it.

I would also notice that the apostle Paul would not take from the church at Corinth, whilst he would take from an individual Corinthian. I am not sure that the assembly is up to giving in ordinary cases; there is too much partiality in the saints. Stephanas and his companions supplied Paul with what was lacking on the part of the Corinthians; though he would not take from them, he was "glad of their coming." In this way it is the company in which you are least a receiver as a labourer in which you will be the happiest working. You will be all the happier for not being dependent on them; they receive from you, and not you from them.

Meanwhile those that are rich are to "do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on what is really life." Suppose there is a penny. I have no divine title to that penny. But you cannot take it by force; for I say you have no divine title to it either. I, then, have got *possession* of it, though no title to it; and I may do as I will with it. If I lay it out on myself, I have the good of it now, and I thank God for it; if I lay it out on some one else, I will get the good of it by-and-by. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." If I lay it out badly, I have got neither the good of it now nor hereafter; I have not used it as the Lord would have me. I have heard people say in a radical sort of way, when receiving from another, "I do not thank you for this; I thank the Lord and no one else." Well, I say you might as well thank them now, for the day will come when you will have to.

I object to a person having what you call an almoner. All I want to make clear is the difference between the individual and the assembly in the matter of money. I want a gifted individual to be responsible to the *Lord* for his

money. If he likes to put anything into the box with me, all well and good; but when he does so he has handed it over to the responsibility of others. For my part, I think there is nothing more difficult than the use of money for the Lord. It is the gift that people are most anxious to have, and I think it is the most difficult to exercise. I believe immense harm has been done by making pensioners. It is of importance to care for poor saints, and keep them from want, and yet to leave room for faith to act. Never prevent a soul being exercised before God.

We can thus easily understand how it is a grief to those who rule when the saints do not go on well. "They watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief." They will have to give an account to the Lord of the way in which they have acted to souls. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." It is the servant, not the people, who loses his reward. The servants have to give an account of what they have done to the souls.

In conclusion, you ought to be able to say to inquirers, Do you ask for bishops and deacons? the work is *done*. It is not a question of keeping up a position, but of keeping the house in order. And if, as I have said, there is none but

a servant-maid to do it, I say she is anyhow keeping the house clean. It is not a person sitting *ex cathedrâ* that we want; it is a person that will do the work. The moment teachers take upon themselves to act for the assembly it is clericalism. It is not teachers, it is the *assembly*, that must act; it is a deliberative company. Overseers and pastors should visit cases, look after them, and so on, and thus prevent their coming as matters of discipline before the assembly. Only the assembly can deal with them. (J. B. S.)

The way to be preserved from sinning is to be full of Christ. If my heart be full of Christ evil cannot come in. Satan has nothing to do with the new man; therefore if any one keepeth himself, that wicked man toucheth him not.

(J. N. D.)

How far are our hearts prepared to take our place before all the world and say, I belong to Christ alone? Let it be a strong pressure on the conscience that we should not take that name to dishonour it. (J. N. D.)

“GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.”

LUKE ii. 8-20.

It is a solemn fact, beloved friends, that where there is faithfulness to Christ one is obliged to leave things on the earth which He has left, and follow Him up to heaven, where He is gone. The God of glory gave Him out as the One in whom all His counsels lay, and earth having rejected Him, the heavens have received Him back for another and a brighter day.

Every previous thing in the dealings of God with man had pointed to Him for the fulfilment of all promised blessing below, and His leaving this earth made one great vacuum, and worse. It was not that God had not lighted the world up—moreover by the presence of His Son, as “the light of life”—it was that Satan and man’s rebellion had put the light out. The devil may seek to kindle and set up lights of his own, but the eye of faith, that follows God in His ways, from the moment that Adam was put out of the garden, can see Him working to bring in His own eternal glory, by the second Man. If in severity He condemn the original world and bring in a deluge on it, yet, in the midst of that very deluge, we get the ark bear-

ing witness that in judgment He remembers mercy. If His people be in the bondage of Egypt, He brings in deliverance by redemption; He does the best thing He can, but He could not bring out full and eternal redemption until the cross. He separated a people to Himself, brought them through the waters of death on the ground of the shed blood, and destroyed their enemies.

Let me ask what is that burning bush? I do not know what you think of it, but I am sure it was "a great sight," because of the fire and the voice out of the midst. Do you not think Moses was right to turn aside and look at it? What a sight! A bush burning with fire, and not consumed! We get a secret thought of God from the voice. He says: I will never for an instant let go the claims of my holiness nor of my grace. Fire is the only thing that can express it in such a world as this. It lights upon the bush, but the bush is not consumed. "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God;" but the bush, in its opening mystery, brings them together. Was not this the secret of God for that moment? In it God revealed Himself.

And what was the ministry of Moses but unfolding that secret? The fire travels from that bush to the land of Egypt, and it finds there, in the Paschal lamb, the blood, the sacri-

fice; and the people, who are in type the bush, are not consumed, but feed upon the flesh which the fire roasts. It is the people now that are in question, not the bush. And there is the fire of God's holiness; and what has it found? It has found its food, likewise, in that sacrifice. Did the fire consume the people? No more than it consumed the bush. God has found what satisfies His holiness, and He feeds upon it. The blood is sprinkled upon the doorposts, whilst His beloved people feed on the lamb roast that night to be much remembered. And then they not only pass out of Egypt, but they sing the song of deliverance at the Red Sea, saying, “The Lord hath triumphed gloriously.”

We next find Moses going up the mount, and seeing the God of Israel above, with a pavement of sapphire-stone under His feet. God can take him from the bush, and the fire, and the voice, up there, as we read: “Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.” God is making a way for Himself; if He do not, there is no way for us to get to Him. All that He is must be further and fuller declared to Moses for His glory, and shall be found in the sanctuary in relation with His people, as we read: “He reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So

Moses finished the work." What a moment was this! Will God *use* this path through the sanctuary? "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, so that Moses was not able to enter in because of the glory." Everything connected with the mount of God was burning fire, whether in the bush, or in Egypt, or on the top of the mountain. But the burning fire has found out a new way for itself through the tabernacle, and there God has opened a meeting-place for Himself and His people. He says, I will make such a path as shall show out my glory, both in holiness and grace; every step of it shall be to make myself known, and to make them know me. God is forming a way for Himself; and I know Him well enough to know that it is sure to be a path in which others are to follow Him. Yea, the fire, the glory, and the cloud became their travelling companions and guides.

Who gave the directions about this wonderful sanctuary? Go from altar to altar, from one court to another, till you come at last to the sin-offering. Who could make such a path for himself and for God? One Man only upon earth—Jesus—has finished it, and sat down at the right hand in heaven. God gave Moses the patterns of it, of that pathway through the sanctuary. He had begun this intercourse

with God at the bush, by hiding his face, but he came down with it so shining, that at last he had to put a veil over it. Think of what it was: God thus giving out His thoughts, and setting them up in patterns, that we may understand Him. He says: I will have the things constructed, and I will give to Bezaleel and the people the spirit of wisdom, that they may work up this purple, and blue, and scarlet, for I have created them; and I will turn them to my purpose of illustrating the coming Christ; and I will show you their divine use. Only take these things away from the world, and I will use them, for the gold, purple, and fine-twined linen are mine.

Look on, from the day when the tabernacle was raised, to the day when that Christ it pointed to said, “I have finished the work.” Then it was that Christ took it all out of pattern, and God rent the veil from the top to the bottom. Why? It was God making a way for Himself to come out in blessing, and for His people to enter into the Holiest as worshippers.

Here, in the passage we have read, we get the darling, the delight of the Father’s bosom. When He left the Father, and came out from above to be born into this world, how the glory found its home with Him in Bethlehem. And when they laid Him in the grave, who was it stood by the sepulchre on the morning of the

third day? It was the glory of the Father that waited there. "Raised from the dead by the glory of the Father."

When the Lord was born into this earth,—given out from the heavens, what were the three things spoken of in connection with Him? They were *glory, peace, and good-will*. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." But if I ask any one as to their establishment in this world—if I say, Where can I see the glory of God? I go to the cross, and there I see Christ killed—cast out. I go to look for peace; where is it? I stand at the cross, and see peace trodden down by His betrayers and murderers. Where is good-will? Man has rejected it. "Glory to God:" they have refused it. "Peace on earth:" they have shed His blood. "Good-will toward men:" they will not have *this* Man, but Barabbas.

Now that Christ is crowned and seated on high, man has taken away the glory which belongs to Christ, and attached it to himself. When I see public proclamations as to new glories, new titles, connected with earthly majesty, I say, What does it mean in the face of the rejected Majesty above? As I look at "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men," written over the Royal Exchange, what a thought one gets of how

Satan has not only refused rightful glories to Him, but has attached them to the powers and courts and marts of the world. The devil is at work as to the counterfeit glory, peace, and good pleasure, in a thousand ways; but meanwhile God is never taking off His hand for a moment, but will end by making it all good to the Son of His love, and for the blessing of mankind.

Not only have glory, peace, and good-will been refused, but they are *gone*—necessarily gone with the One by whom they came in, but who has been rejected. The only way in which God can connect us with them now is by uniting us to Christ where He is in heaven, as the second Man, and Head of the new creation. It is by the testimony of preaching the gospel this is made known to the inhabitants of the earth, and offered them.

I read from Luke ix., where we get a glimpse of the future millennial glory: “As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” He was accredited by God, and received honour and majesty. “And they saw his glory.” What a relief to turn from shadows and find all made true in Christ. We have had Moses and the patterns on Mount Horeb, which lead us on to two other mountains—to the Mount of Transfiguration and to the fire and sacrifice

of Mount Calvary. Not only do they see His glory on the former, but there is a voice from the excellent glory: "This is my beloved Son." Here is the good pleasure, the good-will of God, not merely at His birth, but at His transfiguration, where He has reached the highest point that man could reach upon earth—the only proper answer of the power of God to the righteousness that conducted Him there. Here He is not alone; He not only has witnesses from above, but, in His love, He seeks to associate "His own" with Him. But the higher He took them the more incompetent they showed themselves, for they fell asleep. The *nature* would not do. It was not wickedness; it was actual weakness, which broke down under the sense of "how good it was" *to be there*.

Why did He not go higher? Did you ever ask yourself why? Why did He not go up into the excellent glory? He had a title to; there was no place too high for Him. It was that He would have had to go back alone; and would He go back to heaven alone, as He had come out? Not He! What a moment of silence occurs between the heavens and the earth. Who shall break it? Moses had gone to sleep at the Mount Pisgah in the wilderness. The God who there hid him brought him to light again on the Mount of Transfiguration; as in the Song of Solomon, "I skip from moun-

tain to mountain.” We find on this last not only Moses, but Elias, the two witnesses, of all God could do with man by the law, and the one who vindicated the righteousness of God against the idolatry of Baal; and, besides these, the One who said, “I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought.” Testimony of all kinds, by Moses, Elias, and the Messiah, has utterly failed; and where are we to turn? What has God yet in reserve, which in its infinitude stretches beyond Mounts Horeb and Tabor?

The Mount of Transfiguration revealed a gap and a want which Mount Calvary could alone supply. The two men in glory spoke to Him of what? “Of his *decease* which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Will He come down and open a way through the sanctuary and His *decease* into the kingdom for a redeemed people?

Beloved friends, when we hear of earthly glory, of the turmoils of government, of dignity and royalty here, we gladly turn away from it all and say, We know the Son of man who went up into that mountain to fold up His glory and lay it by, that He might come down and do a work on Mount Calvary, by His sacrifice and death, in order to disclose, by His resurrection, a higher glory, the highest that God has, and which He has reserved for Christ and the church.

And now where do I look when I seek for "glory to God in the highest?" We connect it with Christ at the right hand of God. If we look for peace, it is there we go for it; and good pleasure too. Henceforth all must come down from God out of heaven, for Christ is there. Every thought of God, every revelation of God, every thought of government is there, as the new centre and beginning. If *He* have changed His place, everything else must change its place too, and we go away with Him, and after Him.

But as for peace on earth, I read in chapter xii: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three." How will you account for such a contradiction as this? How can you put the angels' song and this together? You never can harmonize them. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." You cannot put the Mount of Transfiguration and this together. The secret alone lies in His own change of position, and comes out in association with Christ. We come down from the mount and the kingdom and reign of the Son of man, that we may be identified with Him in His rejection.

What place has the rejection of Christ in your heart? It must have a charm to every loyal

breast, for what is it to be with Christ *anywhere*? Take the consequences of loyalty to Christ, and they will put you in the very place of division at home and elsewhere which we have in Luke xii.

Do any in disappointment and surprise say with the Emmaus disciples, What, will you not take the government? Will you not carry us into the millennial glory of that kingdom? No; I fold it all up, that I may first accomplish redemption by my cross. I am bringing in a greater glory, and to do it I must change mountains. Moses had it in his eye when he received the patterns of the sanctuary, but Christ accomplishes it. I want to press it on you how near we are to its fulfilment and manifestation in glory. It is a wonderful thing to see God putting His thoughts ages ago into shapes and forms, by colours and metals, so that we can understand Him and the Son of His love. It is one thing to see Him do that, but it is quite another to wait upon Christ, and see Him take everything out of type and put it into reality by His own death and resurrection, as witnessed by the Spirit to us. What! will He take the tabernacle out of type? Yes, and become also “the minister of the sanctuary, which the Lord pitched.”

There is another passage in Luke I refer to as to peace: chapter xix. 38. Here we find “peace

in *heaven*, and glory in the highest." You get the transfer. It is not only the Mount of Transfiguration, but everything is transferred to heaven because Christ has changed His place, and we with Him. A Christian must go to heaven in order to become one *now*.

And lastly, at the end of Luke, after Christ has done His sacrificial work on Mount Calvary, and been taken out of the grave by the glory of the Father, what is the effect of that wonderful work? The very first word from that risen Lord is *peace*. "Peace be unto you." He has put all right with God, and set us in the Father's love. If we look on to the epistles it is, "Grace, mercy, and *peace*, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied to you." Christ wrought this, and it is God who, from heaven, gives it us forth as our present portion, till the day comes when He will as surely take the church up as He took up Christ, according to His purpose in grace, before the world began.

Christ came down into this scene and accomplished all that was given Him to do, not only in His death, but in His life. In the opening days of His youth, in the ripening years of His manhood, what was it God looked down upon? A righteousness exhibited which never man had, and that marked the life that was laid down for us. How God loved to open the heavens and say, "This is my beloved Son!" It is not only

salvation I am speaking of; it is glory, and peace, and good pleasure; channels opened out between God and men that were never opened before. The Christ who was shining on that mount, brighter than the sun, when the voice from the excellent glory claimed Him as “my beloved Son,” has quitted it for the darkness of Calvary, to bear the wrath of God. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” On each mountain there was a voice, but oh, how different! Oh, the grace that led Him there, a substitute for us! It was by His sufferings and death He overcame the liar and murderer, and by His ascension put us into the same relationship with God as Himself. Not only this, but when the glory of God was secured He went to the Mount of Olives, where He was received up to the right hand of God, and had all things put under His feet. Was that for *Himself*? No, but for the *church*—the Bride—as sharer in all His own delights. And now, in the mean while, is it on earth peace? No, but in *heaven*. It is peace with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as its new source to us. Nothing can come from heaven but grace, mercy, and peace. We see Jesus lift up His hands in priestly grace to bless His people, and as He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up to heaven. And where did *they* go? They went into the temple, “praising and bless-

ing God." *God was found out* on the other side of resurrection in Christ, and that is a wonderful thing. As risen from the dead, He goes up to God as the great High Priest, with our names upon His breast. We have found God out, not as the avenger of our sins, but as known in His beloved Son, so that this gospel may well close with the disciples praising and blessing God. It has brought us to *God*.

And if persecution arise against this testimony of our Lord, and from man being made nothing of, and not merely man, but the world too, what is it to us, who know that man and the world have emptied themselves of the choicest treasure God had to give? What does He give to comfort our hearts through it all? What but the glory of that second Man who is coming to take us out of it all, and in "the little while" His own sympathy and succour. May the light of that glory put out every other that this world can bring before us, so that we may shine as lights in it, holding forth the word of life. The world tries to pick up things to satisfy itself down here, but we are travelling along a path that is bright with the glories of Christ, and which satisfies God. We say good-bye to the earth as it now is, except as coming back to bring out others to the possession and enjoyment of what we have reached in Christ. That path has led Him to glory, and it leads us into present

peace and God's good pleasure in Christ as we tread it, till the day when He shall come to take us to Himself, to be like Him, and to see Him *as He is*. May the Holy Ghost so bring us into the power of God's thoughts about us, that we may be more like Christ down here, by living more with Him up there.

(J. E. B.)

A young Christian—a “babe”—rejoices in himself, has a blessed comfort in himself; the “fathers” more simply in Christ. They have got to know him; they have a personal, matured acquaintance with Him; they rejoice in intimacy with Him. The young rejoice in the first blush of feeling, good and true, and what God has given; but, in the pull going through the world, we find there is nothing positively to rejoice in but Christ. The whole thing consists in having such nearness to Christ that, when the evil springs up, the power of Satan present has to do with Him who has “destroyed him that had the power of death”—with Him whose “holy arm hath gotten him the victory.” As He says: “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Having gone Himself into a place where evil cannot reach, we have got Him there, the immovable source of blessing, and we rejoice in Him there.

(J. N. D.)

THE TWO SOLITUDES.*

JOHN viii., ix.

It is of great moment in a day like this for us to have our eyes open to what is coming on the earth, if not already come. Man is now seeking to adorn himself with what is of Christ, and the issue will be a terrible one. We find the unfolding of the mind of God as to the church on earth in His judgment of her state in Laodicea. We see Peter in Matt. xvi. receive the greatest possible light for the time, and at the same moment refuse the cross—not to *save* man, but to *end* him : full of light one moment ; Satan at the next—the most awful combination. And in the same way we see Ephesus with the candlestick in one chapter, and Laodicea spued out of Christ's mouth in the next. What degradation ! What can be equal to such a fact ? Why did He not spue it out when it was Thyatira ? Because Thyatira had not light ; and it is when the church has light, and does not live Christ, that she becomes an object of the utmost contempt to the Lord.

It is difficult to tell how evil is communicated

* This address, and the three following, at St. Leonards, June 29, 1876.

from one to another, whether in physical or spiritual things. The most learned of men cannot tell you how a pestilence is carried; and just so when there is a Satanic virus abroad, we cannot tell how it is communicated. But the word of God tells us how we may find the antidote for it. In Timothy we find two things given us as a safeguard by God. First, "my doctrine:" "Thou hast fully known my doctrine." And, second, "Thou hast known the holy scriptures." Christendom has certainly overlooked *one* of these; it has separated them from each other. The better part of Christendom insists upon the Scriptures as a great thing, but they have sacrificed "my doctrine." I earnestly commend this latter to you, which is now part of the Scriptures.

To present my thought more easily to the comprehension of all, I turn to John's gospel, because he always prepares the saint with moral power for Paul's teachings. In that way he is a wonderful one to assist us to understand Paul. You never find a man who has fairly got hold of Paul's doctrine that he has not also got hold of John's. Paul puts John's truth in the reverse order. For instance, Paul will speak of "the God and Father," while John gives us "Father and God." John's point is to set forth the Son of God on earth; Paul's to unite us to Christ in heaven.

Three things mark a person who has really learned Christ. Let me state them. The first is *preservation*—not simply from evil, but from all molestation. Second, *separation*. Third, *service*. Necessarily service must come in last. Preservation I get in John x.; sanctification or separation in chapter xvii.

In chapter ix., where we get the story of the blind man, we find him at the end alone with the Lord, who says to him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

Now I do not wish to grieve a single soul, but I must state this positive truth, that you do not understand preservation or separation if you have not been first in this place of *solitude* with the Lord. Solitude is where there is "*no man*."

There are two great solitudes for the soul. The first of these you find in chapter viii., the second in chapter ix. "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst:" this, I say is the first solitude, and into it every believer must enter. One is here condemned in the presence of the Lord—repudiated by oneself. The two chapters are properly one subject,

light, but light with a double action. In the first I find out what I am myself in the presence of the light; in the second I become the possessor of the light. Chapter viii. closes with His saying, "Verily, verily, if any man keep my sayings, he shall never see death;" while chapter ix. opens with a man getting light. The One sent of God into this world comes so close to us that a man believing on Him as the One, gets light from Him.

In the first of these solitudes you take sides against yourself; no man stands for you, and you cannot stand for yourself. As the thief said, "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our sins." And who do you find in that solitude? The Lord Jesus Christ. This is an intolerable wickedness, say they of the woman; let us stone her. But being left alone, she finds herself in that solitude in the presence of the Lord and His word: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

But now comes out another thing, and one that is a source of intense agony to the poor heart, and that is, that you cannot find any among the best of men who comprehends or supports the work of Christ; all oppose it when it is insisted on.

Every good class of humanity is searched in vain. I look round, and I find no response nor

aid. The neighbours, the Pharisees, the Jews, the parents, all see that he has got something, but they will not accept the fact that it is entirely of Christ. What is the terrible thing that is abroad on the earth? I am shocked as I see it, but what is the fact? It is that God is acknowledged, but Christ is refused—Christ who has come to establish God in power and grace in this scene; all the power of man is used to refuse the man of God a *locus standi*. You are forced to the conclusion that the same religious men who would not tolerate a wicked woman will not tolerate Christ. So man's religion lies somewhere between these two points. They cannot tolerate immorality, and they cannot tolerate what is divine.

All classes are brought to bear upon him, first the neighbours, then the Pharisees, who, I believe, were the most religious people of the day; I do not look at them, as is the general way, as being hypocrites; and after these the Jews and his parents. The point in this chapter is, that all society does not supply one in it who will acknowledge in this work or understand it. It is not like Pharaoh wanting his dream explained; the effort is to deny its source; it is the authorship of it that is in question, and it is not understood. The end of it all is, that the man himself is cast out from among them all, and finds himself in a solitude.

Look at the solitude in which he is. It is not that of the wicked sinner, saying, I deserve to be cast out; I deserve to be in this solitude, where I cannot say a word for myself. But here is one with a new light that none can understand, who, on that very account, is cast out by all; and this is an *inconceivable* solitude. If you have never travelled into it you have never yet understood preservation or sanctification. I press it, for I believe multitudes have taken the place of preservation and sanctification who have never been in this place of solitude. Poets tell us of what it is to be where there is not a living soul to be seen; and I say it is a wonderful place for the soul when it finds itself in a place deserted by all—left by the best of men—because it has got what none can understand.

And this is where I learn Paul's "doctrine." He saw "the light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," and fell to the earth before the glory of that presence in which he found himself alone, and from that day forth he was to be "a minister and a witness of the things that he had seen." He always had to get up to that point, no matter where he started from; he brings *everything* up to it. If I had time I could show you how, whether it be Romans, Corinthians, Galatians—every one of the epistles—he must work them all up to this

point. That was his "doctrine." And it is in this solitude that I reach it, when I am outside everything that is of man.

I daresay there are many here who have felt what a terrible thing it is to be alone, deserted, without a creature near, and yet not to have got Christ. I believe many a soul has not peace just because, whilst deserted of man in our own judgment, it has never got into the presence of Christ. All the arguments in the world will not help such a soul ; arguments will only cast you out ; what you need is Himself.

Let me here say one little word of criticism which every careful reader knows. "Cast out," in chapter ix. 34, and "put forth" in chapter x. 4, are the same word in the original. There is a saying in law which perhaps may explain this : He who does a thing by another does it by himself. If one person does anything instead of another it is reckoned to be the same as if that person himself had done it. So here. The Lord had given to the man this light, and it was on account of the light that he was cast out, so that it really was the Lord who had put him out.

The Lord says to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he said, I believe, Lord. And he worshipped him. Can you not conceive the rapture of his soul then?—just as Paul, when he says, "To God I am beside

myself." What would make a man a fool among men is the experience of the one who has got into this solitude.

And the character of this solitude must be kept up, though I am now set amongst men. Hence my new condition is, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish;" and my preservation is, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Here we get this wonderful action on the part of the Father, just as a father would put his child's hand into its mother's, as more likely to care for it in details. It is *preservation*. And this preservation can only be understood by one who has been in this great solitude, who understands what a child of light is.

Man has been found incompetent. A new order of things has been introduced, and the great point to insist upon is that the old is all outside.

I will give you an example of it from Isaiah xl., which may make things plainer. Here we get preservation, but it is consequent on the prophet having learned the two great deliverances that God had effected for him : one, deliverance from his enemies, ch. xxxvii.; the other, that "*all flesh is grass.*" Will you accept the fact that all flesh is grass? Will you take the consequences

of that? and will you take Christ in glory instead of it? You are an educated man when you can take hold of the glory, and then fall back on the fact that all flesh is grass.

What a place we occupy! And one which is really of no use to us if the heart does not take possession of it, even though it be the true ground. I fear a number of saints attempt or assume to be on that ground, who are not there at all in power, and many a one who has come on to it has afterwards to go through the second solitude, just because he has known nothing of it before. Every one must pass through this great moral earthquake, but out of it they come back to live out here the truth they have learned for the first time. Too many souls are satisfied with having learned the first solitude, and so have never got into the second. A dog that is chained does not know that he is if he has never tried to get away. Just so is it with multitudes of souls. They have never pursued, and so they do not know what it is to attain. I do not believe there is a month or a day, that, if you go on, there is not something for you to surrender. There are shafts forming and weapons ready to strike you on every side. The fact is, you are not energetic enough to reach the prize, and that is the reason you are not casting every weight aside. People think at first they can get on very well with different things, but

when they get into the heat of the action they find there is one thing after another that is in their way, and that must be given up.

I do not wish to pain any one, but I want souls to see that they do not know nearly so much as they think, because, though they may have intelligence as to truth, they have not got that truth in practical power; they have not got divine energy to carry it out in their lives. I cannot conceive anything more blessed than to be really in His hand—to really know what this preservation is. Once we know it we cannot possibly give it up for a fold. A fold is for a religious man. His hand is for the child of light, to whom the fold would be of no use.

I pass on now to the seventeenth chapter. Here the Lord says: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." There are two processes of sanctification: one moral, the other positional. The knowledge of the Father is the first. If I am assaulted I do not call for a policeman, because I have the Father to care for me; that is moral separation. We are left here to be for Christ, and being thus left I am to be *separate*; separate, because I belong to the generation of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Sanctify them through thy truth." I am separated from everything here; I do not look for anything here to be altered for me; I do not look to be made an object of consideration; I do

not seek manifestations of divine favour on earth as a proof of the Father's love. See the Lord; He came to the fig-tree when He was hungry, and found no fruit on it; do you think He would have felt any more assured of His Father's love, if He had found fruit? If He do not show care for me down here, it is that He is doing some better thing for me. If a servant is left at any time apparently neglected, it is for some special blessing.

Then He says: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The One who has met me in this inconceivable solitude, that One has gone Himself to heaven. He says: I have left this scene; and I am constrained to leave it too. I have got the Father, and I am not looking round to see what the world can do for me. I think a saint is not really happy who cannot say: If all the kings of the earth were to offer to do something for me, they can do nothing. I have got a Father above who can give me anything and everything; and I am more afraid of getting a little too much of the world than of getting too little. What a blissful possession—what a store the heart gets from Christ, as it goes travelling through this scene! We have got in the present such a wonderful enjoyment of Christ, that we are not a bit regretting that we have left the world behind us.

(J. B. S.)

“DELIVERED UNTO DEATH.”

GENESIS xxxii. 24-31 ; 2 CORINTHIANS xii. 7-10.

I HAVE read these two passages in continuation of what our brother has brought before us.

There appear to me to be in the history of Jacob remarkable instances of the two distinct times that the blessed God consciously conducts a soul into the solitude of His presence. The first is in the twenty-eighth chapter, when, as a poor wanderer from his father's house, without so much as anything in his possession, he gets the greatest communications from God ; indeed, the only communications that God made to him are in this chapter. God draws near to him. It struck me this morning what a remarkable illustration chapter twenty-eight is of the first solitude of which we have been hearing ; whilst in chapter thirty-two he is in the second solitude—the one of which so few know anything. In the last the blessed God comes to make good in him what He had communicated to him in the first.

There is surely not one but must feel that there is in us all too much a cultivation of that principle which thwarts the dearest purpose of God. And, what is more grievous still, when

God comes in to help us, we resist Him just as Jacob did. It is a wonderful thing that He *does* come in to help us. I believe that is the meaning of the apostle's words: “We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” In this outward way He gives us help. If there be in any of our hearts ever so little desire—if it be but *genuine* desire—which has been begotten in us by Himself, He says, I will help you to carry that out. It is a wonderful thing that we can say, Now God is helping me to carry out what I know to be His mind. If you can get that into your thoughts as to things around you—your circumstances—if you can look past them and get the sense of this in your heart: God is helping me practically to get rid of all the things in me that hinder the bringing out the life of Jesus in me, would it not make much that now seems difficult far plainer to you? As has been just said, we *have* the communications, but how far have they gone down deep into our souls?

Well, it is a blessed thing to know that God has His eye on us for this. There is a moment when God comes near to the soul. It was night; and Jacob had arranged everything for the morrow with all the skill and ingenuity that characterized him. It was the terrible efficiency of stratagem and plan of which he was the

master that characterized Peniel on Jacob's part. God allows him to run to the farthest extreme of what he could do in that way; and then what was most solemn, One whom, with all his planning, he had never reckoned on—One who, so to speak, was out of his thoughts—met him and wrestled with him. As has been often said, this One was the blessed God drawing near to him in his solitude and loneliness, there to bring to an end that principle in him which was hindering the blessing of His servant.

Now let each of us look at our own history, and see where the deficiency lies. It is our *state*—our *condition* individually—we have to look at, because it is our condition individually which makes up our corporate condition. Here, then, the blessed God, the only One who could take interest in and care for such an one as Jacob, draws near that He may wither up in His poor servant all that was hindering His own purpose respecting him. What sight more interesting than this? “There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” It was not Jacob wrestling, but God wrestling with Jacob, and at the same time, with the most exceeding tenderness, sustaining him while He withers up what opposed Him. The proof that this wrestling was effective in accomplishing its object; the proof that Jacob's soul bowed to the sense that the One who touched the hollow of

his thigh was his Friend; the proof that Jacob's heart entered into the consciousness that the One who was crippling him was the only One who could bless him, is shown out in this, that he would not let him go. What a sight! this broken man clinging to the One who was withering everything up in him—when the trial was at its height still clinging to Him as the only One who could help him.

If in trial I get my mind filled with the instrument that God is using to thus wither me, I lose the sense, not only of the One who is doing it, but also of the thing that He is doing, and the knowledge that He is really my Friend, because He is putting down the thing in me that hindered, and bringing me into blessing according to His own heart. But at the same time that there is this severity on the principle that opposes, there is tenderness unspeakable in the way that He sustains. The Lord give our hearts—for I doubt not there are many here to-day whom He is dealing with in this way, we being all more or less Jacobs—the Lord, I say, give our hearts the sense of this, for it would be a wonderful encouragement to us. He helps us; but when He comes in to help, He must reduce to the silence of death the thing that lifts up itself against him.

He can do it in many ways; He can do it by those connected with us; He can do it by sorrow;

He can do it by bereavement; He can do it by sickness; but He *will* do it. And in this second solitude Jacob is blessed as the Israel of God—as a crippled man. It is the hollow of his thigh that is touched, and that shrinks. Oh, the hollow of that thigh! It is the energy of the man, it is the strength of the man that hinders; and when that is gone, He gives Him the blessing as the Israel of God.

And is not what follows an interesting thing? He adds, “Thou hast power with God and with men.” You can have no power—divine power—but as you get it from God; natural power—what is the good of that? It is a feeble, worthless thing. But you have no divine power with man unless you have power with God. And this is just the point with us. Look at the difficulties that trouble us on every hand. Why cannot we meet them? It is because we have no power with God. And how do I get power with God? It is when I am a poor crippled thing lying at His feet. When I am there He can bless me, and not leave upon me even so much as the very name by which I was known as skilled in the energy of the man.

Another very interesting point we may notice. When the sun rises Jacob still halts upon his thigh; that is, when the night is past, when the darkness is over, when the wrestling is ended. It is most important. He not only halted whilst

the wrestling was going on, but when all was over, and the day was at its height, Jacob was conscious that he was a crippled man.

This halting of his is the only instance of his faith that is spoken of in Hebrews. The feebleness of the man it is that is recorded. "He worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff." I know that Jacob passed through further exercises after this, to which Hebrews alludes; yet this was the beginning of all that which eventually reduced him to the state of a cripple before God. He had to cling to God. It is wonderful to see such a man thus clinging to, thus detained by the One who overcame him. A worshipper is one who is outside everything of himself, and who is engrossed by the One who has cleared the scene to fill it Himself.

I do not refer to Corinthians in the way of connection, but rather in the way of contrast. Another thing that has been spoken of we find here. God not only comes in to help us to reduce to the silence of death that in us which hinders His working after His own heart, *but He keeps it up*. And this is the difficulty to many of us. I confess honestly that it is not long since I saw it myself; and that is the reason why I speak of it, hoping that it may help others. People say, I understand God coming in, reducing me to nothing, crippling me; but I do not understand His keeping me on this con-

dition. Now Paul is an instance to us of God's thus dealing with us. God dealt with Jacob so that He might lead him, poor planner that he was, into the blessing of His own heart for him. But with Paul the thorn was sent to keep up dependence, and bring out the power of Christ. Every saint, of course, is “a man in Christ;” but every man in Christ is not caught up into the third heaven. It is *that* man who gets the thorn; and he gets it to be a help from God—practically to keep the flesh in death.

It is not merely that God comes in to reduce to the silence of death that active thing in me that hinders His working, but He lets the storm continue to keep up dependence on Himself in my heart. Paul wanted to have it taken away. He besought the Lord Jesus thrice to remove it, but the Lord answered him, Do you wish me to place you in circumstances where you will not need me? I will place you where I myself will keep you. Paul says, *I accept it*; “*most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” That is not, I am resigned, but, I am *satisfied*.

It is wonderful thus to see how God not only takes away the hindrance, but keeps up dependence, and how our weakness is the very sphere in which He is able to work. “When I am weak, then I am strong.” I do not know how to speak of it. It is the most wonderful thing you can

conceive, the power of that Christ coming down and tabernacling in a poor feeble thing that has been crippled by the hand of God. Death has been brought in in all its efficacy, and now the power of Christ comes down and tabernacles in me. And I accept it. It is not that I say there is no need for the storm, for the difficulty. No, I accept the difficulty, I accept the thorn, because it gives Him an opportunity to come down and show out His strength in my weakness.

Alas, the generality of us are like Jacob. There is the cultivation of that which hinders ; and can you wonder, if you cultivate and keep up and minister to the thing that is in you, that it produces and brings forth the fruit that it does ?

And it is no use letting things go, saying nothing about it. If you do not disallow it, you minister to it. He superseded it 1800 years ago. My old man was put out of God's sight in the cross of Christ, and God must subject to death practically in me that which He has judicially got rid of before Himself. He says, I must keep the storm up in order that what is in you may be kept down for my glory and your blessing. We think naturally that everything is against us, but He for us ; *God is for us.*

The Lord give us distinctly to see it, for His name's sake. Amen. (W. T. T.)

LAMPS TRIMMED.

LUKE xii.

THE whole body is to be "full of light." It is not, as we were saying this morning, that the *solitude* is the point, and the Lord Himself the *light* of that solitude; but it is in the light that there is fellowship. You cannot get a better illustration of fellowship than lighted lamps give us; all of them give light in the room, but none can say what light comes from this one or from that one. We have fellowship in the light, and nowhere else. People have a very mongrel kind of idea as to what fellowship is. You must be in the level morally in which another is, if you are to have fellowship with him. His disciples never had fellowship with Christ until He rose from the dead. Some continually confound sympathy with fellowship. When Jesus walked beside Mary to the grave there was sympathy, but there was no fellowship. Sympathy is a most wonderful thing; it is said you can take an illness from sympathy. Thus in His sympathy the Lord not only saw what we went through here, but He made Himself acquainted with the very nature of the suffering.

In Luke xi. the Lord inculcates that the body was to be light—the *body* was the thing. He, being rejected, now required that the bodies of His people should be lights—not full of light like a tumbler is full of water, but lights themselves; not light inside, but light outside like a glow-worm. A certain Pharisee then invites Him to dine with him, as much as to say, That is exactly what we hold. But Jesus then, in chapter xii., shows what light *is*, and that the Pharisees are wrong inside, and therefore cannot be right outside. He is speaking to Jews, and He shows them what are the marks of those who are really waiting for their Lord.

But I must first call your attention to the fact that the church soon lost its place of light-bearer, because it soon lost Christ Himself as the object of the heart. It is impossible to have Christ for an object, and man not be set aside. It is not simply that a person is converted, as it is said, but as I am looking out for Him, the absent sun, I am deriving light from Him. The effect on the blind man on getting the light, was that he was not perfectly at rest till he got to Christ; and, as he imbibes Him, he becomes a light himself to others. You must keep up with Him as your object. If the earth come between the sun and the moon, there is no light from the moon.

In the early church, through the work of the enemy, Christ was lost as an object. In Rev. ii. we read: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil." It was all right on the negative side of things, whilst all the while they were failing in the point that a very great penalty was attached to; there was a great deal of outward activity against evil, but it was not the activity of affection; they had lost their first love, and therefore lost their first works; the slumbering and sleeping had set in; they were closing the back door, but they had left the front open to the enemy. While commended for much that was right, they were forfeiting the great post—their candlestick. It is a sad thing for us to own, but the greatest fallings away in the church have been through those who have held the highest truth. The higher the truth you hold, the greater the heretic you can become.

Now let us see how recovery comes in. It is an immense comfort that we never can go so low that revival is impossible. "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses."

In Matt. xxiv. we read of the evil servant saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming." One often hears the *people* blamed for saying this, but it is not the people, it is the *servant*; and

he may not have preached it either. If you have a worldly thought in your heart, it is sure to leaven you somehow.

Following this we get the parable of the ten virgins. Now what was the condition they were meant to be in? They were to have their bodies full of light—not merely their *minds*. There is a great deal in bodily appearance, as it is said: “He setteth himself in a way that is not good.” “He abhorreth not evil.” The outside manner reveals the inner. Christian women’s influence is from their manners and dress. You talk, some say, too much of dress; too much is made of appearance. All I say is, your whole appearance ought to indicate that you seek to have your body the living expression of Christ on earth.

It is important the place the body has in Scripture. The body is that which is under the judgment of God; and the body is the great medium of activity. But what we find in this chapter in Matthew, is that they were all slumbering and sleeping. It was not that they had not light in their *souls*, but their *bodies* were not active. It is said of a saint when he is dead that he is asleep. They were then no better than dead as far as appearances went; there was no divine activity. I believe the saints would be far happier if they were more active; I do not mean active in *work*, but ruled

in *body* for Christ. You see some saints who never mope, and I will tell you why; it is because they are active. Inactive people have no sense of life themselves, neither do they give others the sense of it.

Now when the Lord comes to arouse the saints it is with a cry. He reckons on their affections. Though not active—not in vigour of life, He reckons on their affections, and says: “Behold, the Bridegroom!” The word “cometh” is an interpolation. The thought before the mind is, There He is! The way He revives Israel is by judgment; the way He revives the church is through the affections. He says, I know there is love for me *there*; I will appeal to it.

What was the effect of this? “All those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.”

I call your attention to this trimming of the lamps. I hear some singing about the coming of the Lord, and all the while they go on without changing one single thing in themselves or their associations, expecting the Lord to set all to rights when He comes. But I beg to state that when the Lord appears He will call the saints to account for the state in which He finds them, though, true enough, whatever *that* state may be, He will at the rapture cut every string that binds them to earth and take them away to Himself. It is not at His coming *for* them,

but at His coming *with* them, that it says "He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father."

I think we are in danger of becoming very loose about this. Some are continually saying that there is nothing they like more than to hear and think of the coming of the Lord, and at the same time they are mixed up with all sorts of things He would not like. Think of a gardener who was expecting his master home after a long absence; he would put out all his best flowers for him. Is this what we are doing? Are we thinking of what the Lord has now in this world? He has nothing but the bodies of His saints and their houses through them. Do you walk about this world and think it a light thing that the Lord has *nothing* here? He has not asked for it yet; the day is coming when He will. And what has He now? why, He says, the bodies of the saints are mine. It is the body He chastens, as in Cor. xi. I do not find myself in authority on earth anywhere outside my house and His house. And, therefore, I say our houses ought to be millennial; I do not say our *gardens*, mind! But, as I own the millennial Lord, I say I must have millennial order in the household. The Lord says, I will come and dwell in your house until you come and dwell in mine. It is the kingdom. There are only two places in which God owns

me in this world ; one is in my own house, and the other is in His. In these two righteousness reigns.

But upon this cry there is an action : they go forth to meet Him.

In Luke xii., which I now return to, there are three marks of the person who thus goes forth—of the one who is really looking and waiting for the coming of the Lord. The Lord expects the saint not to give up the thought of His return. Where there is affection the thought of the return of an absent one is as natural to us as it is to look for the return of the sun after the night.

But while saying this, I will add that I do not press the Lord to return. As I look around I cannot but see that things are not in a fit state for Him ; and, though I do not expect *things* to get better, I do expect the *saints* to. I cannot press Him to come whilst I see everything so unfit for Him—so unprepared for Him. I do say that if every one thought this was his last day he would work as he has never done before. I am sure Elijah never did such a day's work as he did that last day. I think the Lord will have a Bethany on earth when He comes, as He had when He went. Are we preparing for Him ? The apostles all speak of His coming, but each in quite a different way to the others. John takes the bride's side of it ; Paul takes

the Lord's ; Peter the flock's ; and James takes the sufferer's side. And you must put all these together as you wait for Him.

The first great mark of waiting for the Lord is that you are "not afraid of them that kill the body." This is beautiful. The moment I come to fear God I find I fear not man, for He cares for me. Stephen is a very good example of this. He says : I have not any fear at all. Fear of the holiness of God's throne ? no ; I am at home there. Afraid of man's rage ? no ; I am superior to the whole of it. They batter me ; those whom you would least expect to ; but I am not afraid of them that kill the body. Stephen is the practical expression of a person able to stand out against man. And he does not talk of the way in which the Lord sustains him in the trial ; he never speaks of himself at all ; he thinks of others—kneels down and prays for them. He is a body full of light.

And what grows out of all this is confession ? "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." We all know how imperfectly we confess ; we all know how a stranger hinders us. But I do say this, as it may help some, that you never can tell another—you never can tell an audience in preaching—the wonders of God's love, if you have not first confessed them to Himself. Would there not be a great differ-

ence between the account of a man who told you the story of the battle of Waterloo, having himself been present at it, and that of one who only knew it from hearsay? You would find out at once that the former had been there because he would describe it from the spot on which he himself had stood. You always colour a thing from the place in which you are yourself, and so everything depends on your apprehension of where Christ is. If you see Christ coming out from under the judgment of God, *that* is what you have got. If you see Him rising and gone up to heaven at God's right hand, *that* is what you have got. What you *see* is what you *possess*. Never waver from that truth.

Is confession what characterizes us? If I have been saying it to the Lord in private I can now go out and say to all the world that He is everything to me; I must say it to them, if only to gratify my heart; nothing else would satisfy it; I must let men know that there is One I delight to honour. Love likes to make much of its object at its own loss. Mary brought her alabaster box of ointment—that which would have signalized her as if she were a person of importance, and breaks it on His head. He does not command it from me, but my love gives it.

But this confession must go on; it must be *continuous*. As a merchant would say, you must

extend your business if you wish to preserve it ; so the Christian is ever called to greater suffering, greater responsibility. It is not that he can retire ; no, it is more and more work until He comes. The soul is never right unless it longs to go to Him. Individually I long to go to Him ; collectively we long for Him to come. It is one of the saddest things, I know, that some should have contented themselves with making one great break at first at their conversion, and then from that time out never another single confession.

The second mark is that I have no care : "Take no thought for your life." There is no fear without, no care within. Having no fear leaves your *body* free ; having no care leaves your *mind* unfettered ; this is the great point in having no care. "Seek ye the kingdom ;" that is my occupation in a world that has refused Him altogether. I see no place for me at all except in my own house ; I have even qualifications for care of the church as I rule my own house ; it is the only place in which I can uphold the kingdom of God.

As to toil, there is no harm in toil ; indeed it is very wholesome : "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." But the thing is to go on with toil without care. The raven is the most hard working bird ; it goes away in the morning and is out all day toiling ; but it comes back to its roost at night, and sleeps

without a care till the morning. If saints had not cares it would be wonderful the peace in which they would go on. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings : his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." I believe that is the finest thing the heart can have. I have got One who loves me ten thousand times better than I love myself, and I am in His sphere ; I belong to His house, and He cares for me. Some one said, "I never speak to the Father about my circumstances, because He knows them very well." I do not know anything in this world more trying to the patience of God than that His children should be dissatisfied with His arrangements. If a soul is complaining, I say, You have not tasted the Father's love. We all know what it is to be tried, afflicted, bereaved ; and what cheers us up through it all is the love of the Father. I walk about with the comfort continually in my heart that I am the Father's favourite child. Am I anything particular ? No. But I walk about knowing His special care over me in a way that I know it for no other person, and I can allow my soul to rest in no other place. Knowing this love, I am not surprised by any bereavement, any loss ; I am going through the world in company with One who says to me, I am teaching you the love that My Father had for Me—the love that always looked down upon Me with perfect satisfaction ; that is the love I am showing you in a sad and sorrowful world.

Nothing harrows me more than to see people who have known the Lord long without any resources in God. You may say you are thankful they have got so far as to know Him at all, and so am I; but I say *they* have not got a Person, and so *Christ* has not got a person; and, therefore, nothing is being got out of them. I am glad when I hear any one say they are dull, for it shows they have, at least, been bright once; but there are some people who do not know what dulness is, because they have never been bright.

I generally find that people who are "living by faith," as it is called, are anxious people, because they are always thinking of the power that will meet the demand. It is not of the least use forecasting things; nothing ever happens as you think it will, and if the whole world were to be submerged I have got Christ, so I need have no care. The great thing is to keep the mind free for God, therefore manual labour is not so hindering as mental.

There is one mark more of those who are waiting, and that is they have their treasure in heaven. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." This is addressed to the Jew; I do not think it could be said to the Gentile, for it would admit that he has something to sell. But has not the

Gentile property? Yes, but he has no divine title to it.

The Lord grant that each one of us may have in our hearts such a sense of His coming that we may never let the thought of His return out of our minds; and that meanwhile we may set ourselves to trim our lamps in the blessed assurance that it is to greet His own eye, and thus may all be fit to meet Him when He comes.

(J. B. S.)

This is not the place for rest, but for watchfulness—watchfulness over our every thought. But what is heaven? It is where I can let my heart flow out. That is an immense comfort! But *here* I must have my loins girded—my heart and every affection kept in order by the Word of God.

(J. N. D.)

Whenever grace gets into the heart I justify God; my hearts says, That is right. The world sets up to judge God, because it is far from Him; but, if I am near Him, I must justify Him even though He condemn me. It is easy to judge God at a distance from Him; it will be a different story in the last day! When the word of God reaches the heart it proves itself. I do not need to judge it, it judges me.

(J. N. D.)

“MY EARNEST EXPECTATION.”

PHILIPPIANS i. 20-25; iii. 17-21.

MAY I say just one word about this question of the body, in reference to the place that it was intended of God to fill, as the vessel for the display of Christ's power, at this present moment?

I would inquire, How far are we intelligently with God in the actings of His grace through our bodies now, and the place that they will have in the day when we shall have nothing to say to them, but they will be changed and made like unto His glorious body? He will show us in that day how He can change and fashion them; but in this day I think we do not give sufficient weight to the fact that it is in our body God intends that Christ should now be magnified. We constantly are prone to think that it is only in our minds, our souls, our affections, or what does not show outside, that Christ's power is to be seen; but that is not at all what we have here.

There is only one other place in the New Testament, as far as I know, where the word here used occurs, and that is in Rom. viii. 19. “Earnest expectation.” It means, literally, that the thing longed for keeps up expecta-

tion until the time is exhausted. The thought is, that but one distinct thing is before the soul, and after that I eagerly stretch out my neck. And what is that? That Christ—all that He is—excellency, fulness, blessedness—should come out in my body: not that it should come out in my spirit, but that this body, and all that relates to it, and in connection with it, and every circumstance and scene that it belongs to, should be the platform on which Christ should be expressed, in life or death. As has been said, Stephen was the expression of the one, and Paul of the other, because Paul lived on here in this world after he had seen that blessed One in the glory; and everything here was distanced by that sight.

The body is that in which all the malignity of Satan has been displayed; it bears the marks of it. Where does all the sickness and weariness around us come from? It came in consequence of sin, and it is expressed in the body. In Mark v. the Lord meets a man possessed of the devil: all the malignity of Satan was expressed in his condition; but he is made an instance of the delivering power of Christ, and his body becomes the vessel for its display; wonderful Deliverer! The result, then, of this deliverance on him was, that the One who had cleared everything out of the way now filled the whole scene with Himself, and therefore the effect on the

man was that he wanted to be with Him. This desire is the simplest and first principle in a soul that has found distinct deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be with the One to whom I owe everything. The apostle says, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.” There was not a single thing now detaining him here. There is no doubt that he was once detained. Jerusalem detained him at one time, but it was not so now. If even the interests of Christ, and the things of Christ, come in to take the place that Christ Himself should have in the heart, we are not clear to go to Him. I believe many a saint is detained here by the things of Christ, rather than attracted to Himself.

I do not think the coming of the Lord tests us half as much as this: Am I ready to go to Him now at this moment? Of course it is a blessed hope, the looking forward to our being all called up together; but it is an immensely testing thing whether or not I am able to say, There is not a single thing that keeps me back here; I do desire to depart and be with Christ. We are really only qualified to stay when we are ready to depart. Then Christ is before me, and I am *possessed* by Christ.

It is a wonderful thought that just as that man had been possessed by Satan—the scene of his mischief and confusion being his poor body—so now he was possessed by Christ. All that

Christ is comes out in my body, whether I live or die. There was the intelligent communion of the man's heart in it. I see he is a man who has got intelligence with the mind and thought of God in that which was once the vessel in which Satan displayed his malignity and dislike to Christ.

Ought not I to be exercised as to what my body is witnessing to? I do not think the saints are exercised enough as to this. Just as an illustration, before I pass on, I would mention what might be seen—a poor, weak, feeble creature, tossing to and fro on a bed of pain; and such an one saying, “What use am I? a trial to myself, a tax to others, no good to any body.” Why, that poor sufferer, with a body full of pain, with everything that would go to make them just the contrary of this by nature, may, by the power of Christ, be so in communion with Him, that their body, instead of being full of murmurings and discontent, is filled with joy and peace, controlled by His presence, and satisfied with Himself. And as you look you do not say, What a wonderful creature is there; but, What a Christ is that which can be shown out in such a poor, weak house of clay as this is.

Every break in the vessel only brings out in it the more the preciousness of the treasure that is inside; every crack and chink only lets it shine out the more brightly. Paul was not

expecting to see the sun go down in ease and retirement; he was looking out for martyrdom.

The Lord give us to see the place that our bodies have. As I have said, it is not our hearts, or minds, or feelings, that are in question; it is the earthly tabernacle, or tent, this *body* in which He is to be magnified.

And now one word on the third chapter. It is a wonderful thing, and a most sanctifying thing, too, the thought that God has got, in His own presence in glory, the pattern of what He is going to have all His people like. God is working with us morally in different ways, that no one but Christ should be seen in us even now. It is Christ that is filling His eyes and affections always. There is a ~~day~~ coming when He will take ~~these very bodies~~—which have been the witnesses of Him in their humiliation in this scene of the terrible hatred of Satan against Christ, and the witnesses, too, of the ruin of the first man—He will take them and transform them into the likeness of His own. Not only will He do that by-and-by, but meanwhile He would like to have you and me intelligently entering into His thought about it—our necks eagerly stretched out after one object—that we might be magnifying Him. (W. T. T.)