

SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

A Monthly Magazine.

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the **Word**, that ye may grow thereby.”—1 PETER ii. 2.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the **Word** with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. **Therefore** many of them believed.”—ACTS xvii. 11, 12.

“The **Word** of the Lord endureth for ever.”—1 PETER i. 25.

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ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

NEXT to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30), perhaps the most important question is, "How may I know I am saved?" The answer is simple, Upon the sure testimony of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, the believer *knows* that he is saved.

Ponder, kind reader, a few of the words of Jesus, and then decide whether a believer may know upon such a testimony that he is saved beyond the shadow of a doubt. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 39, 40.) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no one

is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John x. 27-30.) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John iii. 36.) Not life for a few weeks, or months, or years; not life to be bestowed and taken away, to be gained and lost, but everlasting life; and the believer has it now, and has it for ever. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.)

Do any still ask how they may know that they are saved? I still reply, By believing the sure testimony of God's word. You know you were a condemned and ruined sinner by believing that word; you know Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners by believing that word; and you may know you are saved, if you trust in Jesus, by believing the same word.

Let me ask a few plain questions that may present this important subject in a clearer light to your mind. How do you know that the law of God has pronounced a curse against everyone

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who continues not in the strict performance of all the divine commandments in all their extent, reaching to the secret emotions of the soul? You know it only by believing God's word. How do you know that He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied Himself of His visible glory, and was born of the Virgin Mary, and performed many wonderful miracles, and preached many sublime and sweet truths, and died upon the cross, and rose from the tomb, and ascended up to heaven? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that He is to come again, and will judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"? You know it only by believing His word. How then do you know that—not relying upon yourself, or upon forms and ceremonies, but upon Christ alone—you shall certainly be saved? Obviously in the same way—only by believing His word.

You cannot *feel* that the Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, and that He suffered on Calvary, for this occurred more than eighteen hundred years ago; but you can *know* it upon the unimpeachable testimony of God. And so you are not called to *feel* that you can be saved in order to obtain assurance of salvation, but to

know it upon the sure testimony of God revealed in His word; or, to put it in another shape, you cannot know that you are saved because you feel it, but you will feel it because you know it. If you hear good news, you do not first feel that it is true, and then believe it; but you first believe it, and then feel happy. In like manner, if you would know that you are saved, you must fix your gaze upon Christ, and listen to His precious declarations in the gospel, instead of seeking for comfort amid the darkness and disease that not only belong by nature to the "old man," but will continue to cling to it until it is laid down at the grave, or left behind at the second coming of the Lord.

It is my earnest desire and effort to turn your thoughts entirely away from yourself to the Saviour; for it is the most melancholy business that can engage you, to be probing into your own soul to find some assurance that you are saved. You can never find it there, but only in the Word; and, thank God, having once seen it in the Word, you can see it every day and every hour, simply as you read and believe what Jesus says.

Nor is this assurance the privilege exclusively of a favoured few who have made higher attainments in holiness than the common crowd can ever hope to reach; but it is the privilege of everyone, without exception, who believes the testimony of God's word, addressed alike to all.

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The merchant plunged in the noisy whirl of trade; the mechanic working at his bench; the professional man in the wearisome routine of his daily duties; the wife and mother harassed with the anxieties and cares of her household; the child of affliction bowed under the burden of a well-nigh insupportable sorrow, may all rejoice in this cheering assurance, and *know*, by simply and sincerely believing God, that they are for ever saved. Christ died for one as much as another of His people; and "he that believeth on Him is not condemned" (John iii. 18), no matter what may be his circumstances in life. To believe this is to know that we are saved.

Many regard it as impious presumption when they hear Christians say they *know* they are saved, but they do not regard it as impious presumption to make God a liar, as they do by their doubts and fears; for "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." (1 John v. 10.) They seem to think that it is only a pre-eminently holy walk that can secure assurance of faith, whereas it is only assurance of faith that can secure a pre-eminently holy walk. They seem to think that to obtain this priceless boon they must struggle hard and long, and they refer as an illustration to Jacob wrestling all night with the Lord, whereas a glance at the passage in Genesis would show them that it was

the Lord who wrestled with Jacob, just as He is now wrestling with their ungenerous and unworthy unbelief, seeking to cast it down by the precious word of His grace.

Suppose He should appear at this moment in your presence, and with His own voice promise to give you eternal life before asking you to *do* anything or *feel* anything, would you trust in Him? Would you depend on Him to make good His promise? If you would, remember He speaks to you as truly and directly in His word as He could possibly do were He to reveal Himself bodily, so that your eyes could see Him, and your ears could hear Him. It is the peculiarity of His word that, unlike any other word, it "liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter i. 23); so that it is as fresh and sweet and powerful to-day as if it had just fallen from His lips. But there is this immense advantage in the written word over the spoken—that having once received assurance of salvation in the former, you can always find it there; for "the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter i. 25.)

It is an unspeakable relief to the troubled soul to find that this word which by the gospel is preached unto you does not say, Whosoever believeth and is good; whosoever believeth and feeleth happy; whosoever believeth and prayeth

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well; whosoever believeth and loveth God fervently, but "whosoever believeth on Him;" or, in other words, Whosoever trusteth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Of course, I am far from saying that the sincere believer will not follow holiness, or that he will not be happy, or that he will not hold communion with God, or that he will not love the Saviour and confess Him before men. He may and will do all these, yet not in order to be saved, but because he is saved by believing, simply and only believing, in Jesus. Nor does the Word intimate whether our belief must be strong or weak. It is not, "Whosoever believeth strongly;" but, "Whosoever believeth." It is Jesus Christ who saves us, and not our belief.

The objection, however, may be here raised, that the real point of the difficulty is not yet reached. "It will be admitted," some are ready to reply, "that the true believer may know he is saved; but the question is, How can he know that he is a true believer? Is he not compelled, in the very nature of the case, to look at his own heart and life before he can be assured of his interest in the blood of Christ?" Now, I am bold to say that assurance can never be obtained in this manner; for in proportion as a child of God is conscientious and painstaking in his walk, so is he made aware of the evil of his nature and of his many shortcomings. The holiest saints on earth are in—

variably those who most clearly perceive, and most promptly confess, the vileness of their hearts, and their frequent failures; and they would be the first to confess, that if assurance is derived from anything found in them or done by them, it is a privilege entirely beyond the reach of their experience.

The fact is, assurance does not depend upon our conduct, but our conduct greatly depends upon our assurance. Let no one infer from this that it matters not how a Christian lives; for whatever gives the slightest encouragement to sin, whatever leads any to suppose that the least iniquity in the soul or life is a little thing, is utterly contrary both to the letter and spirit of the gospel. Its solemn language is, "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter i. 15, 16.)

But the calling here does not depend upon the holiness, although the holiness depends upon the calling. The divine order is, first faith and then works; first grace and then government; first privilege and then responsibility; first life and then activity; first salvation and then holiness: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Eph. v. 1); but mark, *as dear children*; and the exhortation is based upon the fact that the believer is a dear child. So you will find

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of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament take it for granted that faith is already exercised; that grace is already received; that privilege is already enjoyed; that relationship with God is already established; that life is already bestowed; that salvation is already secured. They are not asked to pray, and work, and give, and be holy, in order to be saved, but because they are saved; and their salvation is not made to hang upon their discernment of themselves as true believers, but upon their discernment of Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

It is nowhere written in the Bible, Believe that thou art a believer, and thou shalt be saved; but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) It is nowhere said, He that believeth himself to be a believer hath everlasting life; but, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John iii. 36.) Do you ask, then, how you may know that you are a believer? I reply, You cannot know by looking at yourself, but only at the Saviour, who speaks to you in His word. If a friend of undoubted veracity were to tell you something that had occurred within his personal knowledge, you would not think of your own heart and life to find out whether you believed him, but only of his unspotted reputation for truthfulness. If you were dangerously ill,

practice had never been known to deceive a patient, should at length declare that the crisis of the disease had been safely passed, and that you were on the way to recovery, you would not be occupied with thoughts about yourself to learn whether you believed him, but your attention would be instantly turned from self to his skill, his integrity, and his cheering words. You would not think you must first feel glad before you could believe him, but you would first believe him, and then feel glad. You would not say, "Doctor, I wish I could believe you; I am trying to believe you; how can I believe you? how can I know that I believe you?" but immediately upon the announcement of the good news you would believe him, and straightway rejoice.

So was it with those who were saved in the earliest and best days of Christianity. They heard the good news of the love of God, and of the death of Christ for the ungodly, and of His resurrection for the justification of His people, and without any delay they believed, and at once were made happy in the assurance of salvation. Some of them had been idolaters, and adulterers, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners; and yet it could be said of them, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1

deepest degradation to the highest blessedness was brought about by simply believing the testimony of God; and there is not the slightest evidence that they doubted their acceptance, or that they worried themselves in trying to discover whether their faith was of the right kind, and whether it was sufficiently strong, or that they ever asked how they might know that they were true believers, and thus obtain full assurance of faith. On the other hand, there is abundant proof that they were strangers to the fear and uncertainty that make up the gloomy experience of at least nine-tenths of the people of God in modern times. May it be so with each dear reader, that he too may be filled with all joy and peace in believing. (Romans xv. 13.)

“Can it be right for me to go
On in this dark, uncertain way?
Say ‘I believe’ and yet not know
Whether my sins are put away?

“Not know my trespasses forgiven,
Until I meet Him in the air!
Not know that I shall get to heaven
Until I wake and find me there!

“Not know my state till on my brow
Beams the celestial diadem!
Why, surely all the world will know
That I’m a pardoned sinner then.

“Must clouds and darkness veil my brow,
Until I dwell with saints in light?
And must I walk in darkness now,
Because I cannot walk by sight?

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“And shall I just begin to say,
 ‘Father, Thine every word is true,’
 And cast my doubts and fears away
 When all the world will own it too?

“Is this the way to treat the God
 Who bids me love and trust Him now?
 Is this the way to use the Word
 Given to guide me here below?

“How can I forth to sinners go,
 And tell of grace so rich and free,
 If all the while I do not know
 Whether that grace has smiled on me?

“How can it be my joy to dwell
 On the rich power of Jesus’ blood,
 If all the while I cannot tell
 That it has sealed my peace with God?

“How can I be like Christ below,
 How like my Lord in witness shine,
 Unless with conscious joy I know
 His Father and His God as mine?

“Oh, crush this cruel unbelief;
 These needless, shameful doubts remove
 And suffer me no more to grieve
 The God whom I do really love!”

ADAPTED.

 FRAGMENT.

“SPEAK to me now in Scripture language alone,”
 said a dying Christian. “I can trust the words
 of God; but when they are the words of man, it
 costs me an effort to think whether I may trust
 to them.”

“ART THOU IN HEALTH, MY BROTHER?”

A COMMON enough greeting everywhere, and one often answered as carelessly as it is asked. It may be profitable to consider some of the conditions of physical health, and see if they are in any measure similar to the conditions favourable to what we may call spiritual health.

We often find when using a fact in nature to illustrate a spiritual truth that the comparison cannot be carried out to its fullest extent, nor need this surprise us; for though the laws which govern each may be similar, they are not identical.

Before referring particularly to the subject of spiritual health I would remind the reader that there must first be *life* before there can be health; and I would point out the fallacy of trying to produce life by studying to show indications of health. You may electrify a corpse, and it will show one evidence of life—movement; but it will not live in consequence. In like manner by acting on the emotional nature of a man morally dead you may produce in him some symptoms similar to those seen in a “living” one, but he is none the less “dead in trespasses and sins,” and his punctilious attempts to serve God are but “dead works” in His sight.

Taking it for granted then that life exists let

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us now examine some of the conditions and indications of health.

The subject of food first suggests itself for our consideration, it being of such great importance.

When all is going on well we look forward to and enjoy our food, but if the appetite has fallen off we may be sure there is something amiss.

Therefore if we find ourselves losing our relish for the word of God, we had better look for the reason. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," are the words of king David; while Jeremiah testifies, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

The apostle Paul would have his son in the faith, Timothy, "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine;" and Peter exhorted his readers to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby.

Food is an absolute necessity, and, although we may accustom ourselves to live on very little, some food we must have. It is no use pleading that we have a desire to study the Word, but cannot make time. It would not do in natural things, neither will it in spiritual. A real desire for food will not nourish the body; can we expect that it will sustain the soul? If the word of God is habitually neglected disastrous consequences must follow.

“ART THOU IN HEALTH, MY BROTHER?” 15

Many, from various causes, cannot enjoy plain and simple fare, but need many condiments and skilful preparation to give it a relish. This is not a right state of things, though it may not lead to much harm. Some “having itching ears will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts.” (R.V.) The truth, as it is in Jesus, does not need tricks of oratory to made it edifying.

In studying the written Word, it is the “living Word” we must seek for, as He alone can give us satisfaction and strength. He is the hidden manna, and the bread of life. Let us not desire food for speculation, or food for the intellect, but rather a word for the heart—something which will draw us closer to our Lord, because we feel we understand Him better. One feels the importance of coming to the Scripture with a definite sense of need, and a definite expectation that our need will be met. “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”

In natural things we also find that to maintain health we need a certain amount of exercise. Were it not for this the full value of our food would not be received; and more, in extreme cases the continuance of nourishment, if not properly utilised by exercise, would be positively injurious to health.

This being the case, it will scarcely surprise us to find that a similar order of things exists as

16 "ART THOU IN HEALTH, MY BROTHER?"

regards spiritual matters. Collectively, it is according to the effectual *working* in the measure of every part that the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted. (Ephesians iv. 16.) In like manner, individually, it is by making use of what we get from the Word—comforting others by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God—that we may expect to make progress in divine things.

And surely we find other motives for spiritual activity besides our own well-being. Even now there are thousands perishing for lack of the knowledge we value so cheaply. There are souls groping in darkness, to whom we might carry the light of life; there are lives ruined and hearts broken by the power of sin, from which they cannot free themselves; hopeless ones weary of life, yet fearing to die; and for such comfort, peace, and salvation are found in the gospel. But how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

From the subject of exercise we are led to the no less important subject of *rest*. The injurious effects of incessant activity are too well known to need comment. Rest is essential to health, because it is when at rest that the waste of strength and tissue is repaired. It is now that the vital forces, having ceased to contend with distractions without, are at liberty to build up and fortify within.

“ART THOU IN HEALTH, MY BROTHER ?” 17

The important function of recuperation comes into play, and the body is fitted once more for the battle of life.

It is very interesting to notice how the Lord Jesus recognized the necessity for spiritual rest and retirement, even rising up a great while before it was day to obtain it (Mark i. 35), and also departing again into a mountain Himself alone. (John vi. 15.)

With His example, how much more should we, liable as we are to be carried away by the excitement of the moment, so order our affairs that we may have times of quietness and refreshing alone with God. “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isa. xl. 31.)

Again, who has not noticed the close connection between health and happiness? The two go together. Health is a reason for happiness, and happiness is a means of health.

It is well known that the state of the mind influences that of the body. One whose mind is harassed by continued anxiety will never feel in vigorous health, while the reverse is none the less true. As for the Christian, his normal state is one of joy and rejoicing; his every care and anxiety is cast upon Him who is able to bear it. He is satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of

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Perhaps if many dear Christians, who are always bemoaning their shortcomings, would forget themselves and their failings for a while, and "rejoice in Christ Jesus," they would get rid of half their troubles. Every miserable believer is a false witness for Christ, and a hindrance to the spread of the gospel. "Let all that put their trust in Thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them." (Psalm v. 11.)

It is said that in health the internal heat of the body is always the same, no matter what the surroundings are. Any increase is called fever, and is dangerous to health, while a decrease of vital heat is even more so.

Those who have studied the matter could tell us how much the *heart* has to do with distributing the heat of the body, and that where the heart's action is weak the extremities are likely to suffer from cold. And does not the child of God know that the heart is the great heat-centre, and that in the exercise of love the whole spirit is filled with grateful warmth and sympathy? To such a one a place where coldness and formality reign may give a momentary chill; but the warmth within—fed from another source—will soon assert itself, and go forth upwards and outwards in love and service to God and man. It is an old saying, that if zeal without knowledge is at fault, knowledge without zeal is equally such; and yet light without heat is one of the characteristics of the present

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day. “The love of many shall wax cold.” We may well be on our guard lest we share in the prevailing indifference.

And now we have looked together at some of the conditions favourable to spiritual health, it only remains for me to remind the reader, that as the one who enjoys physical health is never much occupied with it, so if our spiritual state is in like good condition we shall not be continually studying and analyzing it, lest we have to learn by sad experience that self-occupation in *any* form is injurious both to our happiness and spiritual welfare.

S. E. McN.

Settled Peace.—“The moment we begin to rest our peace on anything in ourselves we lose it. And this is why so many saints have not *settled* peace. Nothing can be lasting that is not built on God alone. How can you have settled peace? Only by having it in God’s own way. By not resting on anything, even the Spirit’s work, within yourselves, but on what Christ has done *without* you. Then you will know peace—conscious unworthiness, but yet peace. In Christ alone God finds that in which He can rest; and so it is with His saints. The more you see the extent and nature of the evil that is within, as well as that without and around, the more you will find that what Jesus is and did, constitutes the only ground on which you can rest.”

MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE TEACHING.

THE crown of innocence passed from man's brow in the garden of Eden, and he was driven out. (Gen. iii.) Left to himself he soon filled the earth with corruption and violence (Gen. vi. 12, 13), and the flood came. Under the law he was a rebellious transgressor (Ex. xxxii. 7-10); and in the presence of God manifest in flesh in the Person of the Son of God, the deep and awful depravity of his heart declared itself. (John xv. 24, 25.) By-and-by man will even dare to oppose the victorious Son of God, and Son of man, when He comes to take to Himself His great power and reign. (Rev. xix. 19-21.)

But the whole truth is out, God revealed in Christ, and man displaying himself in his dealings with the unresisting Lamb of God. Even among men we acknowledge that to abuse innocence, and insult those who cannot resist, is the height of barbarity, and an expression of extreme wickedness.

It is not that the Lord Jesus was not able to smite His enemies, but He was here to fulfil the Father's will; and it was an expression of His perfection not to smite, when He was able to smite, in order to accomplish the will of God.

MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE TEACHING. 21

"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God: Thy law is within my heart," was what marked the Lord's life here as a Man. He bowed His head to the storm of human hate and rage, and because He resisted not, man could gratify his depraved heart by insulting the holiness, perfection, and grace that shone out in Him.

Think of the perfection of the blessed Lord, beloved reader, when He could stand and allow all the fierce waves of human hatred to roll against Him, and yet go on loving, and serving, and praying for those who hated Him without a cause! It was perfection indeed! And then add to it all the storms of divine wrath against those sins which He took and made His own on the cross. God forsook Him then, and yet such was His absolute perfection that He could justify God in His act of forsaking Him. (Psalm xxii. 1-6.)

A space indeed has to come in between the most devoted of us and Him here. He stands alone in His perfection. The storm of human hatred was met by "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and the judgment and forsaking of God were answered by the most absolute vindication of His ways: "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Psalm xxii. 3.)

In Isaiah liii. we get not only man's depravity shown, but the awful refinement of that depravity, if I may use the expression: "He shall grow up

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before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Before God He grew up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground;" and precious as He was to God, His whole life one sweet savour, beautiful beyond expression to the eye and heart of God, yet to man—poor, depraved man—Israel especially, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Man was totally blind to the varied glories and moral beauties of the Son of God. That which was a delight to God's heart, and an object of wonder to the created intelligences in heaven, passed unnoticed by man, because of his moral incapacity to appreciate what was only good, and which, if noticed, only served to awaken the enmity of his heart, and bring it out into open hostility; as we read, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

Then comes—along with divine teaching in the soul, as to who He is, and for whom and what He suffered—a confession of the refinement of man's wickedness that could attribute the sorrows and sufferings of the Lord Jesus to the hand of God being on Him, because of His own sin. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE TEACHING. 23

yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." The thought of man's heart was, that all this had come upon Him as an expression of God's displeasure against Him; that His ways were displeasing to God, and therefore the hand of God was upon Him. Man is not only blind and hostile, but perverse and wicked. His "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

My reader, God only can furnish the answer. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." (Jer. xvii. 10.)

But divine teaching, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is a precious thing; and the soul that is taught to discover and to say, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," comes to say, in contradiction to the foul insinuation of man's heart, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who

24 MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE TEACHING.

shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken." (Isaiah liii. 5-8.)

God desires "truth in the inward parts." And while His teaching leads the soul into the discovery of its own state, and to abhor oneself and confess one's sin, He also opens up to us His wondrous provision, and enables us, for our eternal good, to apprehend the glory of that work, and to appropriate to ourselves the everlasting benefits that flow from it.

Thus the work is of God. Whether it be the work *for us* on the cross or the work *in us*, revealing our sad condition to us, and enabling us to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," it is all of Himself—of God, who, while He glorifies Himself in it all, accomplishes the purpose of His heart in saving, and having around Himself "an innumerable multitude, which no man can number," of sinners saved by His grace, and redeemed by the precious blood of His Son, who otherwise would have been lost for ever.

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

E. A.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

1 JOHN v. 6, 8.—It is the writer of this epistle who records the fact that out of the pierced side of the crucified Saviour there came out “blood and water” (John xx. 34), and it is to this that reference is made here. The blood speaks of atonement, the water tells of purification, and in these is found the answer to the double question of Job xxv. 4: “How then can man be *justified* with God? or how can he be *clean* that is born of a woman?” The ground of our justification is the *blood*, as stated in Rom. iii. 25, 26, and v. 9; while the instrument of our purification is the *water*, as in John iii. 5; xiii. 10; xv. 3. 1 Peter i. 23.—We need to be justified from our sins, and in virtue of the blood God can justly justify; but more than that is called for. We need to be born again, and this is effected by that which water here signifies; namely, the word of God clothed with the power of His Holy Spirit.

1 JOHN v. 10.—We take “the witness” here to be that simple, clear, and certain record which assures us that God hath given unto us eternal life in His Son. The believer has this witness in himself, but not independent of the Scriptures; for it is there the witness is found, expressed too in such lucid language as the most unintelligent may understand—“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart,” said one of old. (Jer. xv. 16.) So with the believer now. He receives God’s witness or record; he *eats* it as Jeremiah says. It becomes a part of himself

and thus he knows that he has eternal life ; for not only has he God's witness in the written word, but having mixed that word with faith he has it in himself ; he knows that eternal life is his.

E. J. W.—Rev. xxi. 8. It should not be hard to see who are meant by the “fearful and unbelieving”—the two classes that head the list of those whose end is here solemnly described. The unbelieving are those who have never drunk of the fountain of the water of life, so freely and graciously offered to “him that is athirst” (see verse 8), while “the fearful” are the very opposite of the overcomer mentioned in verse 7. To overcome requires courage, and courage is the fruit of faith ; but “the fearful” conjure up difficulties, and suffer themselves to be frightened from a course that involves confession of Jesus as Lord, and the setting of the face against the whole current of evil. Thus, instead of overcoming, they are overcome, and reap the eternal consequences of their sinful fear. Oh that “the fearful and unbelieving” would give heed to the solemn words of warning which Infinite Love has written in view of the awful end of all who continue in that state !

2 TIMOTHY ii. 13.—This verse should be interpreted with due regard to the argument of which it forms a part. Earlier in the chapter Paul exhorts Timothy to take his share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, even as in chapter i. 8 he had encouraged him not to shrink from partaking in the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. But a path of suffering and reproach for Christ's sake and the gospel's, such as Paul's own path was, and such as he besought Timothy not to shun, should have its answering

recompense hereafter, for we have to do with a God who is immutable, and who ever acts towards all according to the immutability of His own being. (See Romans ii. 7-10.) Are any dead with Christ? They shall live together with Him. Do any suffer? They shall reign together. Do any deny Him? He will deny them; and if any are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself; and with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Be we faithful or unfaithful, God abides the same—ever true to Himself, ever maintaining in unsullied majesty the attributes that make His name glorious from everlasting to everlasting.

HEBREWS ii. 14.—We do not understand this passage to teach that Satan ever had the power to slay whom and when he pleased apart from the will of God. But when sin entered into the world, God suffered to pass into Satan's hand the power of pressing home upon the conscience of men the solemn sentence of death. To Satan's lie man had listened, and therefore death—the fruit of sin—should be the instrument in his hand of filling the hearts of men with fear. Nor were the saints of old altogether exempt from this; for what lay beyond the dark confines of the tomb they knew not, or if known to was but obscurely seen by them. But now by death our Saviour Jesus Christ has annulled his power and brought life and incorruptibility *to light* through the gospel. (2 Timothy i. 10.) Death is now disarmed, no terror has he for the believers in Jesus, the bondage state is over, and it is now clearly seen that death but opens the door into eternal bliss, into the immediate presence of Christ. What a contrast between the state of Old Testament saints and ours, upon whom

EPHESIANS ii. 2.—“The prince of the power of the air.” We take these words as descriptive of Satan and of the seat of his power. It corrects the common but mistaken notion that he is now in the lake of fire. That will be his place, as Rev. xx. 10 clearly states; but at the present moment the seat of Satan’s power is in the heaven’s that surround us, from whence he exercises his baneful influence over the children of disobedience.

1 CORINTHIANS vi. 15.—The entire passage clearly and incontestably proves that it is the present natural bodies of believers that are spoken of as “members of Christ,” and that the body of the individual saint is now “the temple of the Holy Ghost.” There is not the slightest ground for supposing that the passage refers to the glorified state.

ROMANS v. 13.—The word “imputed” in this verse is not the same as in chapter iv. 22, 24. It means the putting of each sin specifically to the account of the doer of it, and this was not the case before the law entered. Of course men were sinners, and as such were subject to the judgment of God; but inasmuch as no law had been given which distinctly forbade the sins, they were not laid as so many separate items to the account of the individual. But when the law entered, the evil deeds became actual transgressions, and as such were laid to account. This was the effect of the law. “The law entered, that the offence might abound.” (v. 20.) Not that *sin* might abound, but “the *offence*,” for a sinful thought, wish, or act became more sinful after its having been forbidden. Thus the law bound sins to the conscience as so many positive transgressions. They were imputed, or laid to account

TRUE BELIEVING ;

OR,

AN ANXIOUS INQUIRY ANSWERED.

“**I** AM over three years sick, and often fear I am not a true believer, and I get so depressed. I truly believe Jesus to be the Son of God, and put my whole trust in Him to save me. *Is not this true believing?*” Thus writes a correspondent unto us.

As far as we know, dear friend, there are not two ways of believing anything. We have heard preachers speak of believing with the head and believing with the heart, and we think we know what they mean when they thus speak. But these distinctions are very perplexing. They cast people in upon themselves, and set them wondering whether theirs is the right sort of faith, as if there were more sorts than one. Now Scripture does speak of a man believing with the heart (Rom. x. 10) ; but then, observe, it is *the man* who believes, and his heart goes with the thing believed, being interested in it, and in his heart he desires that what is believed should be true. Believing with the heart is simply that. To distinguish this from the cold assent of the mind without the heart being in the least affected is easy enough to the simplest soul.

What determines faith to be true or false is not anything in the faith itself. If your faith rests on a true object, it is true faith; if it rests on a delusive object, it is delusive faith; but in either case the faith is the same, the difference lies in its object. One man believes in the stability of a certain bank, and invests his money there; the bank fails, and his money is lost. Another with equal certainty places his elsewhere, and receives it again with interest. The confidence in both instances was identical; but how vastly different the result!

The individual who believes the gospel *believes God*; for the gospel is "the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ." (Rom. i. 1-3.) Now "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers xxiii. 19.) And again, "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) The man therefore who *believes God* may justly have the firmest assurance, seeing that with Him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.

AN ANXIOUS INQUIRY ANSWERED. 31

But it is evident that before a soul can believe the gospel he must know what that gospel is, for "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Many think they know it, but a few moments' conversation with them reveals the appalling fact that they are entirely in the dark as to *the gospel of God*. In the sacred Scriptures this gospel is set forth in words which the Holy Ghost has chosen, and by the mouth of His messengers, be it from the pulpit, the public platform, or the printed page, God proclaims His good news to all. What is it? Listen! "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved*." (Rom. x. 9.) Pause, dear friend, and go over that verse again; read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. What news it contains! What a joyous proclamation! What a blessed report! How suited to your actual need! And this report reaches you sealed with the seal of the true and living God, whose word shall abide, though heaven and earth pass away.

But what is to be believed? This: that God hath raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead. Mark, that God hath done it. Not simply that Christ is risen, but that God hath raised Him from the dead. What a testimony on God's part to the perfection and all-sufficiency of the work of atonement wrought

was there that Jesus was forsaken of God, there God hid His face from Him, and there He was left alone to bear the full weight of divine and holy wrath against sin. And now that solemn work is ended, and in raising up the Lord Jesus from the dead God bears witness that what divine Justice required Justice has received. But what has become of the sins the Saviour bore? They are gone even as a debt is gone when full payment has been made. To believe this, to believe it with the heart, is to be saved.

Faith is the eye of the soul; without it the precious things of God's word cannot be seen in their truth and beauty. But who thinks of his eyes? You may not have thought of yours since you began to read this paper, yet without them all would be dark. Do not then be occupied with your faith, and puzzling your poor, weary brain as to whether you believe aright. After all is said that can be said about it, faith is not your saviour, though no one is saved apart from faith. Christ is your Saviour.

To be always peering into one's own heart to ascertain whether ours is true believing, is like a person constantly examining his eyes before a looking-glass to find out whether his sight is good. Had you the most convincing proof of the soundness of your faith, and rejoiced on that account, your joy would proceed from what you found your faith to be, and not from

AN ANXIOUS INQUIRY ANSWERED.

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what Christ is. Thus self and not Christ would be the spring of it.

Fix your thoughts on an object outside yourself, and forget your faith in thinking of that which the soul should believingly receive and rest upon, even the sure word of the Lord. Think of Him whose love has been shown in the gift of His only-begotten Son (John iii. 16), and who commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. v. 8.) Think of Him who came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them (1 Tim. i. 15), and who once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter iii. 18.) Think of Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. (Rom. iv. 25.) Behold Him now in heaven without our sins. See in the very fact of His being there the great proof which God sets before our eyes that our sins have been put away according to the requirements of the eternal throne. Search into these things, and blessing after blessing shall flow into your soul. Self will be displaced by Christ, and your faith will be forgotten in the joy and peace which you will have in being engaged with the true Object of faith, even God, and the precious revelations of His word concerning Christ and His work.

Finally, dear friend, if you believe Jesus to be the Son of God, and put your whole trust in Him, and in His precious blood. **YOU ARE SAVED.**

The knowledge of a present salvation is a different thing from a hope of being saved one day, however sure that hope may be. That blessed knowledge His word imparts. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." (John vi. 47.) Receive this short and simple verse as spoken for you by the Lord Himself. Rest on it as if some celestial messenger, sent by the loving Saviour, had written it in letters of light across the walls of your room. Believe it because He says it. He that believeth on me *hath*, HATH, HATH everlasting life.

Faith is a very simple thing,
 Though little understood ;
 It frees the soul from death's dread sting
 By *resting* on the blood.

Faith is not what we see or *feel*,
 It is a simple trust
 In what the God of love has said
 Of Jesus as "the Just."

What Jesus is, and that alone,
 Is faith's delightful plea ;
 It never deals with *sinful* self,
 Nor *righteous* self IN ME.

It tells me I am counted "*dead*"
 By God, in His own Word ;
 It tells me I am "born again,"
 In Christ, my RISEN LORD.

If He is free, then I am free
 From all unrighteousness ;
 If He is just, then I am just,

THE LAW : ITS PLACE AND ITS EFFECT.

SOMETIME ago it was my lot to listen to an address on the subject of The Law—the law of God—delivered in the open air to a tolerably large company, by one who is in the position of a minister of the gospel, and a pastor in the Church.

The speaker left us in no doubt as to what he meant by the law, illustrating it by and contrasting it with laws framed and issued by legislative assemblies, national and municipal.

To describe the thoughts, feelings, and experiences awakened in my heart by that address would be a difficult task. The total misapprehension of the nature of the law, the object God had in giving it, and the effect of it in the conscience of the sinner, was painful to a degree. Then the confounding it with the gospel of the grace of God that brings salvation, and thus hindering the proper effect of both in the soul, was terrible.

If I take a gallon of milk and a gallon of vinegar, and mix them together, I destroy or nullify the peculiar properties of both. Just so it is when the law and the gospel are confounded together. The sharp, searching, convicting power of the law

is blunted; whilst the saving, peace-giving character of the gospel is not known.

Knowing the address referred to is but a sample of what is current teaching in Christendom, I have thought that it might be to the glory of God, and the blessing of souls, to call attention to a few passages of Scripture bearing on the subject.

It will help much to a right understanding thereof to see from the word of God the different ways in which He has dealt with man from the beginning.

There was first the trial of *Innocence* in the garden of Eden,—and how soon failure came in there we all know. Driven out from that garden of delights, man, left to his *Conscience*, soon became so bad that “the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. vi. 11), and the deluge came. Then, after the confusion of speech at Babel, and the dispersion of the different branches of Noah’s descendants, all lapsed into idolatry. (Joshua xxiv. 14.) God now called out Abram, and out of his loins raised up a nation, the nation of Israel, with whom He was pleased to identify Himself, and to whom He made Himself known, whilst allowing the rest of the nations to take their own way, though not leaving them without a witness. (Acts xiv. 15–17.) But it was in Israel—that favoured portion of the human family—that the trial of man was carried on. Now, in order that man might have the opportunity of showing

whether he could stand before God in his own righteousness or not, the Law—a perfect rule or standard of conduct towards God and towards his neighbour—was given him.

A farmer, wishing to test a certain kind of seed, does not sow his whole farm with it, but chooses a portion, the very best part; and after having cultivated it, he sows the seed, and waits patiently for the harvest. If in result he finds nothing but weeds, he pronounces the seed worthless. Just so with God. He selected a portion of the human family, and to them He gave the law. It is most important to remember that the law was never given by God to mankind in general. The opening words of the Decalogue itself show that it was not: “I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.” (Ex. xx. 2.) Did He bring the Egyptians out of Egypt, or the Philistines, or the Moabites? Let us bear this in mind.

Now, what was the outcome of man’s being placed under this perfect rule of conduct? No sooner was it given than it was broken. Whilst Moses was on the fiery mount receiving that law which said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” the people on the plain were dancing round the calf which their own hands had made. (Ex. xxxii.) But more, God sent His well-beloved Son into the world, and to that very people to whom the law said, “Love your neighbour as yourself” [Was there ever a neighbour like Jesus?], and what was the

result? They spat in His face and cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him."

Such are the results of the different ways in which God has dealt with man whilst on his probation. Each test only brought out more fully the state of the heart towards God, until it was written, "They have both seen and hated both Me and my Father." (John xv. 24.)

But I desire to turn to the New Testament to learn there the effect of the law in the conscience of the sinner. In Rom. iii. 20 we read, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now here we have two very plain, positive statements, both of which are in direct opposition to much current teaching of the present day. In the first we are told what the law cannot do—it cannot justify. In the second we learn what it does do—it gives the knowledge of sin. Very plain and simple that. So also in chap. vii. 7—"Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." Again we read, in Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, or tutor to Christ." (See new translation.) What is the function of a schoolmaster or tutor? It is to impart knowledge. What then is the knowledge which the law imparts? Is it the knowledge of God and His salvation? Nay, verily; but, on the contrary, it gives the knowledge of sin in the very springs of our moral being, as those two passages in Romans tell us.

But further we read, in 1 Corinthians xv. 56, "And the strength of sin is the law." Now what are we to understand by that? Perhaps an illustration will help. A schoolmaster has broken the lock of his desk, and having occasion to leave the school during school hours, he says to the children, "I am going out for a little while, and none of you must look into my desk." What is the result? No sooner is the prohibition made than the desire to see what that desk contains is awakened in the breast of each child present. Such is poor, fallen human nature. The application of even the holy, just, and good law of God only calls sin into activity. (See Rom. vii. 5, 8, 9.) So in 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9 the law is called "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation." The experiences of a soul learning this experimentally are given us in Romans vii. 7-24, which I would earnestly recommend to the prayerful study of my readers.

Such Scriptures as have already been referred to, show the effect of the law in the conscience; it writes the sentence of death there. But I would also refer to one portion where the law is put in contrast with the gospel.

One has but to turn to the epistle to the Galatians to see how energetically the Holy Spirit, by the apostle, refuses to allow the law to be mixed up with the gospel. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by

the law; ye are fallen from grace." (See v. 1-4.) The two systems — law and grace — are perfectly distinct, and indeed so far opposed to each other that to mingle them is to destroy the distinctive features of each. In chap. iii. 10 we read, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Note, it does not say, "as many as break the law," but, "*as many as are of the works of the law.*" No child of Adam can be on that ground with God without being under the curse.

"But," says the apostle, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." (v. 13.) "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (iv. 4, 5.) Now, if the law was "perfectly suited to meet the need of the sinner," why the necessity that Christ should redeem them that were under it?

But it may be asked, Of what use then was the law? To answer that question one has but to call attention to Gal. iii. 19-26, where the apostle, in the wisdom of God, takes it up and answers it in the most beautiful detail. He then shows that it had its place ere Christ or faith, as a principle of relationship with God, came; but now that Christ is come, we who believe are no longer under law. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace."

(Rom. vi. 14.) We can no more have Christ as our Saviour, and be at the same time under law, than a woman can have two husbands without being an adulteress. Those that were under the law, having believed the gospel, are set free from the law, in order to be to Christ. His death on the cross is the severance of the tie that bound them to the law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (See Rom. vii. 16, and Gal. ii. 19, 20.)

Thus we see that, as a principle of relationship with God, the law is superseded by the gospel. Christ takes the place of Moses. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17.) And instead of the law being the Christian's rule, we read, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.)

G. R.

HIS OWN "WELL DONE."

OH, grieve not o'er the weary way,
 Nor let its roughness make thee stay!
 Press on with still unflinching zeal,
 Thy living Lord with thee doth feel;
 For *Him*, for *Him* the race be run,
 What matters ought but His "Well done"?

"For Him, for Him!" Stay not thy course,
 Though Satan use his subtle force,
 And ever deals the keenest wound
 Through those in closest union bound ;
 'Tis not for man thy race is run,
 Nor can he mar thy Lord's "Well done."

For Christ thy Lord, for His dear name,
 Above man's praise, below man's blame,
 By love unbiassed, hate unswerved,
 Thy heart by His own power so nerved,
 That for His sake—that peerless One—
 Thou'lt all things dare for His "Well done."

Let no man rob thee of thy crown,
 Nor close thy mouth, nor bring thee down,
 Nor chill thy heart with Christ aflame,
 To wait upon his praise or blame ;
 Soon, soon the battle will be won,
 What matters ought but Christ's "Well done"?

Still live for all with faithful love,
 Encourage, warn, instruct, reprove,
 Support the weak and cheer the faint,
 And search with care for evil's taint ;
 'Tis His command—that peerless One—
 Who waits to speak His own "Well done."

Aye, run the race ; the promised crown
 Upon thy head shall yet come down.
 Aye, fight the fight ; it is thy Lord's.
His lips shall speak the rallying words,
His smile proclaim the victory won,
His voice accord His own "Well done."

J. J. J.

REDEMPTION AND SERVICE.

BY the redemption work of our Lord Jesus Christ the believer is set in a totally new place, and is brought into new relationships before God; and neither the true ground of peace, his new standing, nor his new relationships, can possibly be changed.

The true ground of peace cannot change, because it is founded on an eternally efficacious sacrifice, which has been both offered, and accepted of God, and never needs to be repeated. It is made *sure* to the believer on the authority of God's unalterable word.

Our new standing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, in the cloudless favour of God, cannot change, because it is the result of an accomplished redemption, and our having received eternal life in the Son — quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 6, 10.)

Our new *relationship as God's children* cannot change, because we are "born of God." Our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, as "*members of His body*," cannot change, because we are thus united to Him by the gift of the Holy Spirit. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Nor can our relationship to the Holy Ghost who dwells

in us change, because He is "the earnest of our inheritance," and is to abide with us for ever. (Eph. i. 14; John xiv. 16.)

Our *communion* with the Father and with the Son may be interrupted, the Spirit dwelling in us may be grieved or quenched, our *state* of soul may go through many changes; but our new creation standing and relationships remain unaltered; and it is an immense blessing when we clearly apprehend it, and enjoy it, as the teaching of God's Word for our comfort.

Thus the believer is always before God "in Christ Jesus." "If any man be in Christ (there is), a new creation." This is not an improvement of the old Adam nature, but an entirely new life or nature has been imparted to him. A "new creation," then, is not our old man, the old fallen nature, changed or made better (which never can be); but its having been judicially set aside for ever when God "condemned sin in the flesh"—*our* sin in the flesh—in the sacrifice of His own Son, and our having received a new life in Christ, we are created *in Him*. Thus our old Adam standing as "in the flesh" is gone by divine judgment, and we have a new life imparted to us in Christ Jesus, and therefore a new standing. Thus "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;" and all is of God, who has reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ. Everlasting praise and thanksgiving to

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God for such a marvellous manifestation of perfect love and almighty power to us-ward in and through His own Son !

We repeat that *the believer* stands before God "in Christ Jesus." He has no other standing; and this too not merely on the basis of *mercy*, surpassingly great as it is, but in righteousness, on the eternal and unalterable foundation of an accomplished redemption in and through our Lord Jesus Christ—a redemption now known and enjoyed. "In whom we have redemption" (yes, we *have* it) "through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 7.)

In that blessed work God has been glorified even as to our sins, and consequently Christ has been glorified in righteousness, and as Man exalted to the right hand of God, as the only adequate recompense for His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; and as He died for us, God can and does righteously, by Him, justify us from all things, and will have us in glory with Him as the just result of the travail of His soul.

In "the death of the cross" all the attributes of God shine forth. We there see all His ways vindicated, His truth magnified, His infinite purity manifested, His word fulfilled, His inflexible justice displayed. We see, too, God's matchless *grace* to us-ward, for Christ Jesus "was delivered for *our* offences;" and in God's raising

Him up from among the dead, we see *divine power* put forth in righteousness to Him, and “for *our* justification.”

In “the death of the cross” we see perfect obedience, perfect love to the Father and to us, perfect submission to His will, perfect surrender of Himself to God, and perfect trust in God—“*My God*”—even when forsaken and in unutterable agony and sorrow as an offering for sin; and when He had fully glorified God He closed the scene with, “It is finished!” and, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” And now, on the authority of God’s unalterable word, we who have believed through grace know our new place in Him risen, ascended, and glorified; in Him in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”—“complete” (or filled full) “in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power;” and can, while waiting for His coming, look up to where He now is, and with adoring praise say—

“In the glory’s highest height,
See Him, God’s supreme delight.”

Fellowship or communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ flows out of the knowledge of redemption, and is connected with the enjoyment, by the power of the Spirit, of our new standing and relationships; and it results in true service. If we let slip the sense of our relationship to the Father as His children we

REDEMPTION AND SERVICE.

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soon glide into the world, and manifest what is carnal. *Then* the Holy Spirit, instead of strengthening us in fellowship with the Father, has to *reprove* us, till we have judged ourselves. If we walk carelessly the Spirit is grieved, and thereby hindered in His blessed work of communion—"the communion of the Holy Spirit"—and we become weak in service.

The *spring* of true service and devotedness, when the conscience has been purged with the blood of Christ, is divine love—"the love of Christ constraineth us." It touches our hearts, stirs our inmost souls, and calls out the affections of our new nature in grateful response. "We love Him, because He first loved us." Hence the importance of the exhortation, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

The *path* of service is marked out for us in the written word. The perfect *model* set before us for our imitation is Christ—"Leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps." By the word, too, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and true exercise of soul before God, we learn the character and measure of the work He has given us to do; for He "gave to every man His work," and "hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him." Obedience, then, is true service.

The *power* of service is the Holy Spirit. "The flesh profiteth nothing." By the Holy Spirit which

is given unto us the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. He takes of the things of the Father and of the Son, and shows unto us; and He strengthens us with might in the inner man. As to *power*, then, we are cast entirely on the Lord to work in us and by us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The *object* of service should surely be the honour of Christ and the glory of God. If sinners are converted, will they not be giving praise to God and the Lamb throughout eternity? If saints are built up, are they not thus capacitated to bear more fruit for the honour of Christ, and that the Father may be glorified?

The *competency* for all true service is gift and grace from the ascended Christ. All are not evangelists or teachers, but "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The Holy Spirit qualifies for service, even when there is not gift. (See Acts xx. 28.) Eldership is a local *office*; *gift* is for building up *the body*.

May we so abide in communion with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit through the word, and so enjoy the new and eternal life, standing, and relationships into which divine grace and divine power, according to righteousness, have set us, that our service and devotedness may be, both in quality and quantity, according to God's will.

H. H. S.

“THE BEST ANSWER TO INFIDELITY.”

INFIDELITY as a principle cannot be conquered. The infidel may through grace become a true believer; but infidelity, which is merely unbelief in a full stage of development, is ineradicable. Unbelief is a weed that is indigenous to the heart, and is one of the sad fruits of an evil soil—the flesh—that cannot produce anything good.

Infidelity may assume various forms: it may be ignorant and gross, or it may be cultivated and religious, in which form its danger is multiplied tenfold; and to this we are increasingly exposed to-day. An unsanctified heart will find pleasure in employing the vast stores of learning that are within reach nowadays to the destruction of the truth of revelation. The Bible becomes the chief point of attack, and the clever infidel-brain is unwearied in its endeavour to overthrow its authority and to question its truth. Such is the sad, though not surprising, effect of education.

But if infidelity cannot be conquered, it may be and is completely answered. It would be strange if sin of any kind could not be met and silenced.

What is infidelity? It is aberration from the truth, the denial of the truth. It is therefore negative both in origin and end; it starts with negation, and concludes with the same; it ques-

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tions everything, but it supplies nothing ; it takes, if possible, but it does not give ; it dwells amid darkness and doubt, whilst its unhappy admirers feel certain of nothing but their own uncertainty. How could it be otherwise ? Now if infidelity be to err from the truth, it is clear that the truth meets, exposes, and answers all error ; just as disease, being a derangement of bodily soundness, is perfectly answered by a healthy state. Obtain health and disease flies away ; establish the truth and there is no place for error. It is answered.

I was struck lately by the statement of a young man, who, in the course of his daily business, is thrown much into the company of professed infidels. He said that some years ago, whilst a young Christian, he found their questions difficult, and himself laid open to many intellectual perplexities that he could not meet. Just at that time he heard a preacher say that the best answer to infidelity is *uncompromising decision for Christ*. This short but pregnant sentence found a deep place in his soul, and opened out to him a new line of testimony against unbelief. A life of uncompromising decision for the truth he now saw was the one grand and perfect answer to infidelity. It may not conquer the principle, but the patient, faithful Christ-like life that humbly seeks to maintain the truth is evidently of much greater value as a witness than argument, or evidences, or miracles, or any outward signs.

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Argument appeals only to the brain ; signs and wonders speak to the eye ; but in the life of the true Christian—that beautiful life of self-denial, of holiness, of love, of kindness, and of truth—the life of Christ, there is that which speaks to the conscience, and which reaches therefore a far deeper seat of existence than anything else.

“How came you to be converted ?” I once said to a young doctor.

“Just by seeing the lives of So-and-so and So-and-so,” he replied.

Yes, “the *lives*.” Ah ! that is the need of the day ; the deep, crying need of the day. How effectually, alas ! can the infidel point to many a Christian, and say, “*If that is Christianity none of it for me !*” It may be no real excuse for him, yet it is a stumbling-block, and a thousand shames to him who causes offence.

Did the ways of Christ stumble anyone ? Were they crooked or deceitful or worldly or grasping ? Were they not pure and holy and honest and truthful ? Could any point to Him and find out inconsistency ? Never. “I am altogether what I said unto you.” (John viii. 25.) Himself and His ways were the same—absolute harmony ; so that a reviling thief at the point of death, won by the discovery of that harmony, could raise his solitary voice in opposition to the universal roar of condemnation, and declare that “this man hath done nothing amiss.” It was *His life*, His being what

He said, that, speaking after men, converted this poor dying malefactor; and it is Christ reproduced in His people, and seen over again in our ways, the fair fruit of His own grace, *uncompromising decision for Him*, that alone answers infidelity.

Preaching, argumentation, &c. &c., these things may fill their place, but *life*, LIFE, LIFE, the life of Christ seen in us, that only avails.

J. W. S.

"HE KNOWETH."

"He knoweth the way that I take : when He hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold."—JOB xxiii. 10.

THROUGH all sorrows, heart upheavings,
Withering friendships, lonesome grievings,
Still my way "He knoweth."

"Knoweth" still its tortuous turnings,
As through chills or deep heart burnings,
Still it onward goeth.

"Knoweth" how the heart uplifted
For fresh blessings must be sifted
Of the chaff that marreth.

"Knoweth" that the gold is gaining
Where by fiery trial and training
Love with failure warreth.

Strengtheneth still the faith that crieth,
In the might that He supplieth,
While the furnace gloweth,

"I shall yet come forth as golden,
For my Master's service molten,
For my way 'He knoweth.'"

J. J. J.

PEACE.

WE find in John xiv. 27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is the legacy the Lord has left His people in this world while He has gone to the Father.

"Peace I leave with you." This is peace with God, which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. "My peace I give unto you" is the peace He possessed as Man walking down here on earth.

I have seen many who have peace with God, but I have never seen any who had made their peace with God, nor could anyone possibly do so under any circumstances. Nothing but the blood could make peace with God; and we read in Colossians i. 20, Christ has "made peace through the blood of His cross."

It is one thing to have peace made, and another thing to possess it.

Suppose a rebellion broke out in Scotland, and that the rebels, after pillaging and burning, have been defeated by the Queen's troops, and are fleeing for their lives. At this juncture the Prince of Wales goes to the Queen to make peace, but is told that unless a heavy ransom is paid, which will cover all expenses, damage done, &c., he will

property, the Prince can just raise the necessary sum, that he does so, and pays it into the Treasury. Her Majesty then signs a free pardon for every rebel who will lay down his arms and submit himself to her authority. Armed with this pardon (having in fact made peace), the Prince goes to Scotland, and sends out his heralds to tell the glad tidings that he has made peace, and that all who lay down their arms, and take the place of rebels, will be pardoned on the spot. What good news this would be, and how gladly multitudes would avail themselves of the pardon thus freely offered them. Some, however, refuse to submit, and by-and-by are brought to trial, and condemned and executed as rebels. Would you not say, Serve them right—first of all for being rebels, and secondly for refusing to avail themselves of the free pardon offered them?

Again. If you met a man who asked you for money, and who said he was doing his best to collect a hundred pounds to buy a pardon with, what would you do? Would you not tell him that the ransom was already paid, that peace was already made, and that it was the grossest presumption on his part to think his paltry hundred pounds could purchase peace, when the Prince could only procure it for him by selling all that he had? Would you not also tell him that every penny he collected was only one way of insulting the Prince? Of course you would.

So now that Christ has made peace by the

blood of His cross, by selling all that He had (2 Cor. viii. 9), what presumption to talk of making your peace with God; what presumption to think of doing your best; and what folly to still go on in rebellion and sin, refusing to repent, when God's day of grace is fast drawing to a close, and rebel, unrepentant sinners will have to stand before His bar and be judged according to their works.

In Ephesians ii. 17 we read, "He . . . preached peace." That is, the One who made peace preached it (See Acts x. 36, and John xx. 19); and now that He has gone on high, He is sending out His servants to preach peace.

Next, Romans iv. 23 to v. 1 tells how we come to have peace. Have you peace with God? It is easy to tell. Suppose you knew you would have to die in half an hour, would you be ready? Would you be glad to meet God, or would you be afraid to meet Him? If you would be afraid, you have not yet got peace; and you cannot have peace till you believe on "Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Remember I do not say till you believe in *Jesus* (faith in Him gives life. John iii. 16), but till you believe on or know God as the One who has delivered His Son to die for your offences, and raised Him again for your justification. In plain words, this means that God has discharged my debt through the death of His Son, and has justified me by raising Him up from the dead. I receive this by faith, and consequently have peace with God.

How can anyone, indeed, who knows the truth about God, who has acquainted himself with Him (Job xxii. 21), help being at peace with Him?

Lastly, in Ephesians ii. 14, I read, "He is our peace." That is, the risen Man in the glory of God is the proof I shall be in that glory. He is the One to whom my hope clings. No one would be foolish enough to cast his anchor inside the ship, so it is folly to build our hopes of heaven on our feelings or experiences. The anchor is let go outside the ship, and so too the anchor of hope should fix itself to the risen Christ. Remember "He is our peace," *not* our feelings or anything inward at all.

Reader, have you peace with God? M.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

1 TIM. ii. 6.—We assuredly believe that the Lord Jesus gave Himself a ransom for *all*, as is here stated, and that this glorious fact should be proclaimed in its own time world-wide, of which Paul himself was appointed by God to be a herald and an apostle. So 2 Cor. v. 15, to which you refer, tells us "that He died for *all*, that they which live" (here it is evident Paul speaks of believers only) "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." As to Rom. xi. 32, it teaches that *all* are shut up in one common ruin, so that all who are saved owe their salvation to divine mercy. (See Eph. ii. 4.)

SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANITY.

WE would say a little upon the characteristics of Christianity, as unfolded by the Holy Ghost in John's epistle, particularly 1 John ii. 12-28. John brings out the family side of truth—the Father and family; whereas Paul's great theme is, Christ and the Church. Of course the writings of both are equally inspired, but this is what distinguishes the two.

There are five things in this scripture characteristic of Christianity. Let us look at them.

1st (v. 12), The forgiveness of sins.

2nd (v. 13), The knowledge of the Father.

3rd (v. 20), The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

4th (v. 25), The possession of eternal life.

5th (v. 28), The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God tells me (1) that I have the forgiveness of my sins, (2) that He is my Father, (3) that He has given me the Holy Spirit, (4) that eternal life is mine, and (5) that Christ is coming to take me to the Father's house. What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian!

"You do not mean that all this is true of people when they are only just saved? I thought none but advanced Christians could say these things!" exclaims some reader.

Indeed they are true of *every* saved person. If

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a poor, weary one only believed on the Lord Jesus to-day, and received Him as God's gift of life, righteousness, and peace, these five things would be true of him. They are not more true of one who has been saved for fifty years, than of another who has been saved only fifty hours.

The word "little" in verse 12 should be omitted; it ought to be "children," not "little children," because the term signifies the entire family. A parent might enter his house and say, "How are you, dear children?" addressing them all, and afterwards call out special ones to speak to them, because he could not say to the baby what could be said to the grown-up son or daughter, but they are all his dear children. So here in verse 12 it is the whole family, and afterwards they are distinguished as fathers, young men, and babes.

What characterizes the fathers? The knowledge of Christ. What the young men? Overcoming the wicked one. What the little children or babes?* The knowledge of the Father. There is nothing higher than the knowledge of Christ, nothing more elementary than the knowledge of the Father.

Then the apostle goes over it again in verse 14, and repeats what he said at the beginning to the fathers without any addition, because you cannot get beyond the goal, and Christ is the goal.

In the young men there is development; they

* Here the word "little" is right; it is not the same word as in verse 12.

had got on, so he could say more about them. In verse 13 he said only one thing, in verse 14 he names three. "Because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Then he adds, "Love not the world." The snare of the young men was the world; that was their great danger; it always is a danger, and it comes in a thousand insidious forms, and takes hold of our hearts before we know where we are, *if we are not walking with God.*

In verse 15 we are told what composes the world. It is a great system got up by the devil, decorated, illuminated, and made exceedingly attractive, to make people happy in disobedience to God, or away from Him altogether. No wonder God says of such a system, that it "is not of the Father, but of the world."

In verse 18 he returns to the babes. Their danger was occasioned by antichrists. Satan was presenting another object, and getting them to look for the manifestation of antichrist instead of Christ. So it is to-day. Great books and pamphlets are written to prove that antichrist will soon be revealed, and the babes are in danger of being caught in the snare. Antichrist is not our object; Christ, not antichrist, is the One for whom we are to be looking.

Having described a lovely circle, beginning with the whole family in verse 12, and distinguishing the fathers, young men, and babes in verses 13-27, we are led back in verse 28 to the entire family,

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to whom John speaks of the Lord's coming. Believers have no prospect but the glory, no future but the Father's house, no hope but being for ever with the Lord.

Now we will look a little at the five things which, as we have said, characterize Christianity. I ask, "Do you believe you have forgiveness of sins?" for that is the A of the Christian alphabet, the first round of the ladder. In Christendom people constantly say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." I ask you, earnestly and affectionately, "Have *you* the forgiveness of your sins?" "Oh no," you say, "but I hope I shall have it before I die." Dear soul, you put it as the Z, God puts it as the A. Which, think you, is right? "Well," you reply, "how am I to know I have forgiveness, unless I feel it?"

Our answer is this: Here is a letter from your Father in heaven, to tell you that if you are one of His children you have forgiveness of sins; not because you are worthy, not for anything you have done, not for your works' sake, but for His name's sake. (Acts x. 43.)

Perhaps some one says, "What troubles me is not whether my past sins are forgiven, but that I commit sins daily. What am I to do with these?" Believe what God says about them. But we hope you do not take it for granted that you cannot help committing sins. The Lord Jesus said to the woman He forgave, "Go, and sin no more." The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, bids

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them "awake to righteousness, and sin not;" and John says, "My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

"Do not you sin?" ask some. Alas! alas! wretched heart that I have, I am obliged to confess that I do. But what is to be done with these sins? We should not carry them on our conscience all day, and have a general confession at night; but go to our Father at once, and confess them. There is no necessity to sin, and no excuse for one who does; but there is the possibility, and if a believer sin the advocacy of Christ is exercised on his behalf. (*v. 1.*)

Advocacy is founded on propitiation. The propitiatory work of Christ was sufficiently large for the whole world, if there were faith in His blood. On that ground alone God forgives sins.

If you have sinned to-day, are you to ask God to apply the blood of Christ afresh? Nay, for there is no such thing taught in scripture as a second application of the blood. A Jew might teach you a lesson. He chooses his lamb from the flock, kills it, and it is placed on the altar. You ask him, "When you were leading that unblemished lamb to the altar, were your sins being put away?" "No," he replies, "not till its blood was shed could sin be put away." The next day you meet him and he looks very miserable, and on asking the cause you learn that he has sinned again. "Well," you say, "why do you look so wretched? You said the blood put your sins away yesterday,

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go and get that blood applied again.” “No,” he replies, “I must bring another lamb, a fresh one each time I sin. There is no such thing as a second application of the blood of the same victim.” Heb. ix. 25, 26 plainly tells us that Christ was offered *once* to bear the sins of many. If you insist on a second application of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ you practically put Him on a level with the Jewish sacrifices. His blood has done its work once for all.

If, as a child of God, you sin—get in a temper for instance—and thus put yourself out of communion with God, what are you to do? Confess your sins. (1 John i. 9.) You cannot go to God now as a sinning sinner; you went as such once, and found Him loving and gracious, and willing to forgive you your sins for Christ’s sake; but now you go as a sinning saint, and confess your sins as a child to your Father.

It is a far deeper thing to confess than to ask for pardon, and God will have confession. Truth in the inward parts leads to confession, and when “we confess our sins, He is faithful and just”—faithful to Himself, and just to Christ—“to forgive us our sins.” The moment a saint sins, the advocacy of Christ avails for him, and this produces confession. Alas, that we should ever need the advocacy of Christ! But what a mercy that it is there for us when we need it!

Secondly, Do you think God would be content to forgive us, and leave us without an object to

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love, worship, and serve? What is that object? The Father Himself! Think of the magnificence of it! Christ says to you and to me, "*The Father Himself loveth you.*" There is something for your heart to revel in! We are objects of the *Father's* love as children. Babes know the Father, not in a formal way, like some people who say, "Our Father," and it has no meaning to them.

Can you look up to heaven and say, "Christ's Father is my Father"? Christ has revealed the Father (John xx. 17), and He gives us His place before His Father. Do you know you have a Father in heaven?

How do you address God when you pray? "I call Him God Almighty," says some one. But that is not Christianity, you have gone back to the patriarchal days; that was how Abraham knew God. (Genesis xvii.) Another says, "I address Him as Jehovah." Then you have gone back to Judaism; that was His covenant name with Israel. (Exodus vi. 3.) Look at Scripture carefully, and you will see the different revelations of God from the creation to the millennium.

First, *God* in creation when there was no man on the scene.

Secondly, the moment man was brought in, and was responsible, God revealed Himself as *Lord God*. (Gen. ii. 7.)

Thirdly, when God called Abraham out from kith and kin, He revealed Himself to him as *Almighty God*.

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Fourthly, in the book of Exodus we find His covenant name with Israel was *Jehovah*, a title which is beyond any previous revelation.

The next revelation of God was when Christ was here revealing the Father, the most wonderful revelation that ever was or ever will be made.

Lastly, after the second coming of Christ has taken place, and the Church has gone up, Christ will come back with His saints, and reign over the earth, and then God will be known as the *Most High God*, Creator of heaven and earth.

We know Him by the most precious of all these revelations. Do *you* know God as Father? Can you look up and address God as Abba, Father? "Yes," you say, "I can do that." Then you know the Father, and His perfect love casts out fear. There is no fear in love; they are two opposites, and never can assimilate. Where love is, fear is not. How can you know the Father loves you—that the everlasting arms of your Father and God are around you—that He is going to give you a place of everlasting glory in His own presence—how can you know *that* and have fear? Are you burdened with cares? It is because you do not know the Father's heart. It is one thing for my children to know that I am their father, and another for them to be able to say, "My father loves me to such an extent that he will never let me want for a single thing that is needful." Do you know the heart of Him who is your Father? The love

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with which He loves His Son is the love with which He loves you ; so you can sit in His presence and enjoy Christ as the object of the Father's love, and know that you are an object of the same love too. That takes away care out of the heart. He says, "Be careful for nothing." When you came to Him as a poor sinner He met your needs according to the riches of His grace (Eph. i. 7), not according to your need. Now, as children on the road home we have *needs*. How are our needs as saints met ? "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The redemption work of Christ filled heaven with the riches of glory, and out of those riches God meets the needs of saints in this world.

Thirdly, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The apostle is still writing to the babes. (Link v. 20 with v. 27.) They had the Holy Spirit, the One who teaches all things. That does not mean that we do not need teaching through servants of God ; for God has given gifts to the Church, teachers, evangelists, pastors, etc., and they are not to be set aside. It simply means that the babes did not need any one to tell them about the antichrists. They knew the voice of the Good Shepherd, and people who came in the spirit of antichrist were foreign to that voice. The lambs know the Shepherd's voice, and want no other. Do you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit ? Romans v. 5 and

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1 Cor. vi. 19, show we have the Holy Spirit. In the first scripture it is in connection with the love of God; in the second, with the fact that my body belongs to God. When we are tempted to do things for self-gratification, the Holy Spirit in us says, "*Ye are not your own.*"

In Ephesians, chap. i. 13, 14, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the seal of our present blessing in Christ, and the earnest of the glory we are going to have with Christ. In chap. iv. 30, He is One whom we are not to grieve. How could God tell us not to grieve the Holy Spirit if He were not a Person? We do not grieve an influence. The Holy Ghost is sensitive, but if we do grieve Him, He does not take His flight and leave us.

Fourthly, possession of eternal life. (v. 25.) We never read of Old Testament saints having eternal life. Never, from Genesis to Malachi, was one word said as to their possessing eternal life. It is a characteristic of Christianity, and a subject of New Testament revelation only.

Fifth, and lastly, Christ is coming, the Bridegroom is at hand, the Son of God is coming to take all the sons of God to glory. Do you believe it? Are you ready?

"Will not His coming make us ready?" some ask. No; we are ready before He comes. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife *hath made herself ready.*" Are you ready? Do you know what it is to have put off everything

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unsuitable, and put on everything suitable to Christ; so that you are ready and waiting for Him who is coming to take us out of this world of sin and sorrow to the Father's house? "Now," says the apostle, "children [fathers, young men, and babes], "abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." Go on in communion with Him. Oh, beloved, if the Lord were to come just now, are you allowing anything of which you would be ashamed? Is there anything unsuitable personally? Give it up. In your family? Give it up. In your business? Give it up. Is there anything in your church associations unsuitable to the Head of the body? Come out, give it up for *His* sake. Is there not enough love in your heart for Him to give up anything unsuitable to Him—personally, domestically, commercially, or ecclesiastically; anything of which you would be ashamed at His coming? God in mercy prevent us from having the Lord's coming as a mere doctrinal dogma lying dormant in our brains, instead of having it as a real, comforting, blessed, purifying hope in our hearts.

God give us to be walking worthy of these revealed truths of His word.

Do not say, "They are too good for me." They *are* yours; and we are left here till Christ comes, to be living in the enjoyment of them, and for His glory.

H. M. H.

PRAYER.

IT has been often said that "Prayer moves the arm of Him who moves the universe." Prayer is an expression of dependence upon God. A prayerless Christian might be called an independent Christian, and independence of God is synonymous with the slavery of Satan. Thus a prayerless Christian is in a most perilous condition, and is sure to bring dishonour upon God.

The divine path for a child of God is altogether opposed to man's intelligence, and it is only as we are dependent upon God that we can go on in that path. The *world* seeks to ensnare us by its charms and allurements; "the *flesh* lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17); "the *devil*, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter v. 8.) Are we stronger than the world, the flesh, or the devil? Even many Christians seek to draw us aside. Under the plea of liberal-mindedness they strive to widen the narrow path God has set our feet in, so that something of man may be utilised for Christ, and Christianity become more popular and serviceable, *as they think*.

Beloved, it is only as we are dependent upon God, learning His will, and abiding therein, that we can glorify Christ in a world which rejected

Him. We are not called to be *earthly* saints, but *heavenly*, even as we are heavenly. (1 Cor. xv. 48.)

So that in this day, when Satan is arraying his deadly forces against the reproduction on earth of a Christ in glory, and even getting Christians unwittingly on his side, we have the more urgent need of private and public prayer. When the professed leaders of Christianity are giving up on every side the truth about the atonement, the divinity of Christ, eternity of punishment, the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and reducing God to the level of man, as in Psalm l. 21—"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" and when their followers applaud and endorse all this, it does indeed behove us to pay attention to prayer, that we may be kept.

Prayer occupies a very large place in the Scriptures. We read, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17); "Continuing instant in prayer." (Rom. xii. 12.) It is only as we, *in prayer* and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. iv. 6, 7.) It is a most marvellous thing that, amid all the violent heavings and surgings of this poor world, whether politically, religiously, socially, or domestically, we can have this wonderful peace "*which passeth all understanding*;"

and this is through *prayer*. We have an exhortation in 1 Tim. ii. 1-4 which, I believe, is largely neglected by God's children. Paul says, "I exhort therefore, that, *first of all*, supplications, *prayers*, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," &c. May we all give more earnest heed to it. Exhortations to prayer might easily be multiplied, but space forbids.

The blessed Lord Jesus Christ, when here on earth, was a perfect example to us. He was the truly dependent One, and we find Him marked by prayer. "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to *pray*: and when the evening was come, He was there alone." (Matt. xiv. 23.) "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and *prayed*." (Luke v. 16.) In John xvii. 9 Jesus says of His disciples: "I *pray* for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me." We have only to read through the gospels to see how often, even all night, our blessed Master prayed.

The life of the apostle Paul, whom the Holy Ghost puts forward as a pattern saint, was a man of prayer. One example out of many may be adduced: "For what thanks can we render again to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; *night and day praying exceedingly* that we might see your face.

and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thess. iii. 9, 10.)

The early Christians, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles, were characterized by prayer. "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they *continued stedfastly* in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in *prayers*." (Acts ii. 41, 42.) Surely the lack of private and public prayer gives the key to all our weakness, both individually and collectively. For proof of this see the principle brought out by Christ in Mark ix. 29: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

In Acts xii. we find that when Peter was cast into prison "*prayer* was made *without ceasing* of the church unto God for him." Then when God answered them, and Rhoda told the praying company that Peter was at the gate, they said to her, "Thou art mad." When she pressed it upon them, they admitted that it might be his angel; and finally, when the gate opened and they saw him, "they were astonished." What a sad tale of unbelief it is when we so little look for an answer to prayer, that we are astonished when it comes, and call it "a remarkable answer."

The Old Testament abounds in allusions to prayer. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I *hear* and cry aloud: and He shall hear my

voice." (Psalm lv. 17.) In conclusion, I would like to give you an example of prayer, found in 1 Kings xviii. 41-46. In the first verse of our chapter we find that God told Elijah that He was going to send rain upon the earth. Many Christians throw their responsibilities and privileges overboard because of God's sovereignty. God in His sovereignty was about to bless Israel, to remove the curse that had for so long dried up her streams, and turned the country "flowing with milk and honey" into an arid wilderness. The prophet might have said, "What need I pray, when God has told me He is going to send the rain?" But not so; he went to Mount Carmel—a place of expectancy—from whence he could scan the whole seaward horizon. Then "he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."

Whilst he looked *up* for the blessing, he sent his servant seven times—perfection of expectancy—to look *out* for the blessing. On returning the seventh time, the servant reported, "Behold, there ariseth a *little* cloud out of the sea like a man's hand." Many might think that was a poor and insignificant answer to prayer, but not so Elijah. He sent a message of urgent haste to Ahab—"Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain *stop* thee not."

Now comes the triumphant answer to the prayer of faith. God's mighty hand is in that *little* cloud. "And it came to pass in the mean-

while, that the heaven was *black* with clouds and wind, and there was a *great rain*."

Would that we were more like Elijah—in the current of God's thoughts, in earnest prayer about what concerns Him and His interests. May this simple little paper, recalling to your memory a few verses of Scripture on this wonderfully important subject of prayer, be blessed in some measure. May we all be stirred up to more private and public prayer, not only about our interests and needs, but also about God's interests and the sinner's needs. There is ample room and urgent necessity for continual earnest prayer to Him that is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think. (Eph. iii. 20.) A. J. P.

"**Day Drill.**—Home is day drill. If you are not up to day drill, how can you expect to go through your evolutions on a field-day? 'Prepare thy work, and make it fit for thyself in *the* field.' There is a tone and a ring about one who has controlled himself at home, which must tell on others when he is abroad. If I have practised restraint when I am free to do as I like, surely I can submit to it with ease and truthfulness when it is required of me. To be always in buckle and armour is very irksome, but the sorest part of the exercise is getting inured to it. When used to accoutrements your trouble is all but over, but it will not do to dispense with them at home, and to have to run for them when you have an enemy at the door. You must be a soldier of the line on the parade ground every morning. Habit is second nature. When you are well up to drill at home, you will be ready for all that is

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

THE history of the children of Israel is one of peculiar interest. Their fathers in a time of famine went into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, little thinking that their children would eventually be reduced to the condition of slaves.

The king of Egypt, one of the most cruel monarchs that ever lived, gave orders that they should be treated with unusual severity. Impossible tasks were set them, and upon failure they were beaten without mercy. But this was not all. Fearing the increase of the Israelites, the king gave orders that every boy that was born should be thrown into the river. Words are altogether inadequate to describe the consternation that must have prevailed as this inhuman edict was carried into effect. But the wild anguish of heart-broken mothers awakened no merciful feeling in the tyrannical monarch, and the suppressed indignation of the men was treated only with contempt. Theirs was indeed a sad case.

But did no friendly eye behold those miserable slaves? Was no heart touched by their sorrows? Yes; their cry, though unheeded by man, reached the ear of God and moved with the deepest

compassion, He came down to deliver them from the mighty hand of the oppressor.

I need not here relate how judgment after judgment was poured upon the land of Egypt, culminating in the death of all the firstborn of the Egyptians, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. Thus God brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

But His kindness toward them did not end here. No, He began to lead them to the land of Canaan, a land which He had chosen for their possession on account of its beauty and remarkable fertility. During the journey He charged Himself with all their necessities. For their hunger He opened the windows of heaven, and rained bread upon them; for their thirst the rock was cleft, and made to pour forth water in abundant supply.

After God had shown such wondrous love, we should naturally expect that the Israelites would be filled with the most lively gratitude, and that any difficulty that might arise in their pathway would be met with perfect equanimity because of having an infinite resource.

But was it so? Alas! no. We read that as the people journeyed from Mount Hor to compass the land of Edom, they became much discouraged because of the way, and spoke against God, and against Moses His servant. Their language showed ingratitude and distrust to no ordinary degree. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt

to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." (Num. xxi. 5.)

This sin of the Israelites brought its due reward. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." They were thus awakened to a sense of the enormity of their sin. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Num. xxi. 7-9.)

Perhaps, reader, thou hast followed this brief narrative of the sorrows of the children of Israel with considerable interest. The cruel treatment they received at the hand of Pharaoh has excited thy pity; and the sorrow their sinful murmurings brought upon them in the desert may have moved thee to tears. But we would pray thee to reserve thy pity for thyself, and thy tears for thy own condition. If thou art a stranger to the grace of God, thou art in a

bondage far worse than that of the Israelites. If the name of Jesus has for thee no charm, a poison is in thy soul more deadly than that of the fiery serpent.

Every unconverted person in the world is a slave of the devil. Ten thousand times better to be in servitude to the King of Egypt than to be the captive of Satan. Pharaoh could but afflict and kill the body, but Satan drags the precious soul into eternal perdition.

The bondage of the children of Israel evoked a cry of anguish that reached up to God. How is it with thee, dear reader? Has thy condition ever caused thee a sigh? Have thy lips uttered a cry of distress? Then be assured that thy cry has reached the ear of God. Yea, it is He that has made thee sensible of thy condition. Dost *thou desire emancipation?* This is a desire which God has implanted in order that He may satisfy it. He would speak peace to thee by this paper.

Now let us see how God can righteously save the sinner. The murmurings of the Israelites had brought its just judgment. Fiery serpents were sent among them, and soon the camp was strewn with the dying and the dead. Doubtless many a heart was filled with dire despair; but suddenly hope was kindled by the announcement that a serpent of brass had been set upon a pole, and that any bitten person who did but look upon the serpent would be made whole. Soon their

hopes were changed to a happy certainty; for it came to pass that, if the serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

That brazen serpent, raised upon a pole, spoke of God's righteous judgment of sin; for it pointed on to the Lord Jesus Christ, who upon the cross has endured the wrath of God due to our sin. Yes, Christ is the Antitype of the brazen serpent. Have you a doubt concerning this? Listen to His own words: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.) As the bitten Israelite had to look to the serpent of brass, so now the sinner desiring salvation has to turn the eye of faith to the once uplifted Son of man.

We wish to call your especial attention to the fact that the serpent was uplifted for all that were bitten. The very ringleaders of the murmuring Israelites were invited to look, and upon doing so found themselves animated with new life and vigour.

This is strictly in keeping with God's present way of grace. Salvation is offered to every creature that is under heaven; for there is no difference, for all have sinned.

Satan is seeking to make men believe that God restricts His salvation to a favoured few. But

Scripture plainly asserts, Christ died for all. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) Yet bear in mind, that those only who believe will derive benefit from that death. The brazen serpent was uplifted for all; but of what avail was it to the bitten Israelite who refused to look?

Observe, too, upon what easy terms health and soundness were obtained! Money was not demanded; prayers were not asked for; they had not even to crawl to the pole upon which the serpent was lifted up. The word was, "Look and live."

And what are the terms upon which a guilty sinner may obtain the pardon of his sins, divine righteousness, and a title to heaven? What price is asked for boons so great? Listen! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk *without money and without price.*" (Isaiah lv. 1.) "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely.*" (Rev. xxii. 17.)

Many persons, who truly desire salvation, think it is useless to look to the Lord Jesus until they have a greater sense of the vileness of their hearts. We would ask such whether they suppose that a bitten Israelite would have refused to look to the serpent of brass, because he did not feel the effects of the bite to the same degree as a neighbour expiring by his side? Would he think it necessary to wait until he had a greater personal experience of the deadliness of the poison? Such a thought would

be the height of absurdity. Nor is it less absurd for a sinner, knowing himself to be on the road to the lake of fire, to stop away from the Saviour until he feels himself more vile. Do you feel your need of a Saviour? Then hesitate no longer.

“All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.”

Are you willing to be saved by Christ? “Whosoever will, *let him* take the water of life freely.”

But we are persuaded that not a few anxious souls are perplexed as to how they are to look to Christ. Well, it is not by the imagination, but by faith. Looking to Christ is simply turning to Him in all your need and wretchedness. Though in heaven, He hears the faintest breathings of the soul that turns to Him.

A reader may say, “How can I be certain that I have a genuine faith in Christ?”

This matter is easily determined. Has your faith led you to turn as a lost sinner to the Lord Jesus for the salvation of your soul? If it has, Scripture asserts this to be an evidence of genuine faith; for it says, “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?” (Rom. x. 14.)

The word of God in its divine simplicity declares, “There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall

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call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved.*" (Rom. x. 12, 13.)

It may be that the language of your heart is this, "I know that I need a Saviour, and I would not be lost for the world ; but I do not wish to be a Christian just now. In a few years I shall be differently situated, and then I will give my attention to these things."

If this be thy thought, dear reader, we would pray thee to seriously think of the risk thou art running. God is offering thee salvation, without money and without price ; yet thou art turning thy back upon Him, and closing thy ears to His voice of mercy. The door of heaven is being held wide open that thou mayest enter, and thou art deliberately wandering in an opposite direction.

What if God should be incensed against thee, and take thee away with His stroke ! How couldst thou endure the horrors of a lost eternity ? Yet, for a few years of pleasure, thou art hazarding thy immortal soul.

"But I intend to be saved," dost thou say ?

So did many thousands that are now shut up in hell. We would earnestly beseech thee to procrastinate no longer ; for "now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation."

To-morrow may be too late. Before to-morrow's sun shall have arisen, the Lord may call away His own, and then thy eternal doom will be a matter of certainty. If the love of God move thee not.

let the thought of hell arouse thee. Thou art called to an instant decision.

To-day thou art invited to a feast of gladness; but if thou refuse, *to-morrow* thou mayest ask in vain for even the crumbs that fall from the table.

To-day God throws open for thee His treasure-house of eternal pleasure; but if this be slighted, *to-morrow* the gates of hell may be opened for thy reception.

To-day mercy speaks in accents of melting tenderness, pleading with thee to be reconciled; *to-morrow* the decree may go forth—"Let him alone."

C. H.

"THE OTHER SIDE."

THERE are two sides to every thing, the difficulty being, not in discovering if there *are* two, but as to which is the *right* side. There are bright sides, dull sides, light sides, dark sides, and many other kinds, the kind often depending on the light in which you look at the thing.

A long time ago I read a fable in a childish little book, which helped me to see one of the brighter sides of *trial*. The story was something like this: A beautiful gold vase had been placed on a shelf in a goldsmith's workshop. It was just fresh from the hands of the engraver, and

very chaste and lovely it looked. In the same room there was a nugget of gold, which was being beaten into shape. It was complaining of all it had borne and still had to go through. "Oh," it said to the vase, "how I wish I were like you! When will these dreadful blows be over?"

"You wish to be like me?" said the vase. "Then hush! for were it not for the fire and the beating, though you would still be gold, there would be no shape, and very little beauty, to be seen in you. The master knows what he is about, and he loves us too much to give us one stroke too little."

"One stroke too little." *There* is the bright side, though we do not, as a rule, think so. We far oftener take comfort in thinking that our Lord and Master loves us too well to give us "one stroke too many." But there is as much comfort to be found in knowing that "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalm cxxxviii. 8; Phil. i. 6), as there is in believing that "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm ciii. 14.) We need to take them both together, and, whatever the trial, to hear Him say, "He doth not afflict willingly" (Lam. iii. 33); and though (like the gold in the fable) we *feel* the fire and the chastening, yet let us rejoice in the knowledge that "nevertheless [in spite of all] *afterward* IT [that very chastening,

which we felt so keenly, produces what was lacking; for it] yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

A. E. E.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

1 PETER iii. 7.—With reference to your question as to whether a Christian wife should pray aloud with her Christian husband; we hardly think this passage furnishes anything conclusive as to it. The point here is, that the walk of husband and wife toward each other should be of that godly, gracious kind that no hindrance should arise to their private waiting upon God together. When conduct the opposite of what is described in verses 1-7 marks either it is a sad hindrance to prayer. As to the question itself, we cannot just now recall any scripture that speaks definitely upon the subject, and we must therefore gather the mind of God thereon from the general teaching of His Word. May we not discern His gracious way with us in leaving it thus, so that no burden might be imposed on the spirit of the weakest, and no bar raised to hinder any?

A. J.—Your communication did not reach us early enough to be answered in our present issue, but we shall hope to reply to it next month.

DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE;

OR,

INDIVIDUAL FAITHFULNESS AND ITS RESULTS.

NEVER were two more sweeping measures passed by any government than those enforced by Darius the Mede, in the days when he had for prime minister Daniel the Jewish captive. The first prohibited, for the space of thirty days, all practice of religion whatsoever. The second not only annulled this, but proclaimed the worship of the true God throughout all the one hundred and twenty provinces of this monarch's mighty dominion. Both were published within the course of a week or so.

But as to these measures, What caused their enactment? What led Darius to preclude every petition saving those addressed direct to himself for that period? Again, Why did he so quickly strike his pen through his newly-framed bill? The cause in each case was Daniel.

Now this man had, like Joseph before him, been raised to great eminence in a land wherein he was a stranger. God raised both for the accomplishment of His purposes and the help of His people.

Daniel was chief president, and placed in authority over all the councillors of Darius. But

this fact made him the victim of jealousy. A Jewish premier was, of course, intolerable to the pride of the Medo-Persian nobles. The result was that they plotted his downfall. But where could they find a fault? His administration was blameless, his life irreproachable. They could only find it in the fact that he did not acknowledge their gods. His religion and theirs differed. Theirs was one of form, and allowed infinite latitude; his was one of conscience, and bound his very being to a principle, the maintenance of which was dearer to him than life. Theirs might be held in abeyance or temporary neglect; his was a matter of as much importance as daily food. Theirs connected them with idols; his sustained him in communion with the living God.

Of all this his artful enemies were fully aware, and hence their clever device.

They succeeded in obtaining from the unsuspecting king a decree which forbade the presentation of any petition to God or man, except the king, for thirty days. To this decree Darius appended his sign-manual. This was his first famous measure. Daniel was hopelessly entangled. Escape, even if desired, was impossible, apart from the betrayal of conscience and of God.

He saw the dilemma. He must either deny God, and thus escape the lions' den, or else continue true to God and lose his life. The happy result—one which brought such a revenue of

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glory to God, and such honour to Daniel—was, that in faith he chose the latter. “Them that honour Me I will honour” was fully proved by this dear faithful man.

Meanwhile he was to make no petition to God for thirty days. Such was the clear command of Darius. Obedience was impossible. He must obey God rather. And so at all risk, without reserve, and most boldly, he prays “as aforetime.” He flings open his window, in order that he may be seen by his enemies, and with his face toward Jerusalem—that earthly centre of divine interest, though now in ruins—he cries to God. Jerusalem was more to him than Babylon, and God more than Darius. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” and a praying Daniel was a victor.

Yet to his foes such conduct must have appeared folly. Think of petitioning an unseen God; think of turning toward Jerusalem whilst so doing—a ruin which bore witness to the wrath of that God on His people; and think of disobeying the king's decree. However, folly or wisdom, they had gained their end, and had entrapped Daniel. They could now prove a charge of disobedience, and claim for him the punishment of the law.

Accordingly we find them at once preferring their charge, and telling the king of “that Daniel,” a Jewish captive, who did not regard the

king nor his decree, but who made thrice daily his petition. How skilfully had they framed their indictment! Here was a man who neither regarded the king nor his decree. Was this a fair presentment of the facts? Further, thrice daily he made his petition. True; but to whom? They did not say. How could they utter the name of the unseen God, in whose awful presence Daniel found his strength and comfort? Yet the indictment was complete, and Daniel's ways had a semblance of disregard for the king. A way of escape was impossible.

And now Darius discovers, when too late, the faultiness of his measure; and in order to deliver his favourite minister he labours till sundown, but in vain. His was the labour of mercy against the iron claims of justice, of love against law. Evidently both could not stand. If he delivered Daniel, he broke the law, and dissolved the bonds of his empire; if, on the other hand, he fulfilled the law, he must shock all his feelings of mercy and compassion. There was no alternative. Hence his long and futile labour. Justice barred benevolence and demanded satisfaction. She refused the smallest violation, and urged by the law of the Medes and Persians, by the very pillars that support the universe, the priority of her cause. And she prevailed. She must prevail.

Oh, that problem to the brain of man so insoluble! How can mercy find scope for acting

without infringing the rules of justice? What infidel can answer such a question? or what system of philosophy explain its riddle? But God has explained the whole in one single sentence—"That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) And the cross of Christ stands before the world as the divine answer; for there justice, finding perfect satisfaction in the death of the Son of God, permits mercy to extend all the riches of her bosom towards the guilty; and thus the two, working hand in hand, carry the blessing in love, and secure it in righteousness, on behalf of all who believe in Jesus.

Oh, grand solution of our problem, to be admired through the eternal day as the triumph, not only of God's grace, but of His wisdom too!

Well, the law of the Mede must have its way, and Daniel suffers its full penalty. He is cast into the den of lions. The law demands no more. The curtain drops, and night falls over the scene. But the king cannot sleep, nor do the sweet strains of music charm him. His soul is troubled on Daniel's account. And so early morning finds him at the mouth of the den crying lamentably to Daniel, whom he calls the servant of the living God, in order to learn whether God were able to deliver him from the lions.

"O king. live for ever." sounded lovably and

joyfully from the lips of the man of God. "My God," said he, using the possessive pronoun by a renewed right and title, "sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths." Yes, God was able to deliver, and had done so.

"Then was the king exceeding glad for him. . . . So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, *because he believed in his God.*" Happy testimony! Daniel honoured God, and God honoured Daniel. No hurt befell his three friends in the burning fiery furnace. They had refused to worship the image. No hurt befell Daniel. He had refused to cease worshipping God. Their conduct was negative; his was positive. They said "no;" he said "yes." Both responded by grace. And faith, like a golden coin, has two sides, the negative that refuses evil, and the positive that chooses good. Thus Moses refused Egypt, and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. It is the nature of faith to cease doing evil and to learn to do well.

"Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the *living God*, and stedfast for ever." This was his second measure. It wiped the first out of existence. It established, so far as a human

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decree could do it, a religion that acknowledged the *living God*, before whom men were to tremble and fear, and it was published in every realm of his wide domain.

Just think, dear reader, that this was the effect of the faith and devotedness of one man. Think of the glory that redounded to God through him. Daniel loved God, loved His interests, loved His people, loved His poor desolate city; and therefore, at all risk, and at all cost, he clung to Him. The ordeal was terrible, but the grace-given victory was glorious! "The God of Daniel" is a title that now shines on the page of inspiration as does that of "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." Happy Daniel! Oh for grace to cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord, and to continue in prayer to God, as our hearts turn in true sympathy to the moral wastes of Zion, and await the coming of the great Deliverer—the Son of the living God.

J. W. S.

FRAGMENT.

"ATTACHING importance to opinions is a great evil. A soul lives upon truth, taught by the Holy Ghost; but this is not *opinion*. I am saved by believing that Jesus died for sin and sinners—that He died for me; but that is not an opinion."

RECONCILIATION.

GOD was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us : we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.)

Man has departed from God and become His enemy. He needs reconciliation. Satan seeks to lead the sinner to believe that God is against him, and that He needs to be propitiated by works of his. Hence the vast amount of religious doings in the flesh. Tens of thousands seek to reconcile God by their fleshly efforts to be good and religious. But the word of God shows clearly that it is man, the sinner, who needs reconciling to God, and not God to the sinner. There is a vast difference between the two.

The full enmity of man against God, in the person of Christ, came out at the cross. Put to the proof in various ways for some four thousand years or so, the cross fully manifested the sinner's condition as an enemy of God. Whilst God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, we find the world at large refused the goodness of God and crucified His Son. And

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whilst the cross of Christ, on the one hand, seals the world's condemnation; on the other, it is the expression of the wondrous love of God to man. It is the basis upon which God in righteousness now sends forth the word of reconciliation. Paul and others declared it in the early days of Christianity; and it is the privilege of God's servants now to announce the same blessed tidings to all, according to the ability given.

Hence God in grace has now taken the attitude of beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him. The apostle, coupling his companions with himself, says, Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, *as though God did beseech by us*: we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Cor. v. 20.) The sinner must be reconciled in the day of His grace, or come before God in judgment in the future in his sins. It will be too late to be reconciled then. "Behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

God having been glorified in the finished work of the cross, He raised His Son from the dead. Grace now reigns, and all who come to Him in self-judgment, by faith in the name of His Son, are justified and reconciled. Our Lord when on earth gave us a striking illustration of the manner of our reconciliation to God in the story of the prodigal son. In this dissatisfied, ungodly worldling Jesus illustrated the moral condition of the publicans and sinners of that day: but it also

sets forth the state of the unconverted world without God at the present time. Reduced to beggary and misery through his own sin, and having failed in his own efforts to remedy his condition, he made up his mind to return to his father and confess his sin. "He arose and came. . . . But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Luke xv. 20.) Lovely picture of the sinner's reconciliation to God! Take your place before Him, dear reader, like the prodigal son, in self-judgment and confession, if you have never done so before, and you will be reconciled in like manner. If you seek to justify yourself, you are like the Pharisees and scribes, who are illustrated in the elder son, and you will be found outside the place of blessing. But if you come to God, like the prodigal arose and came to his father, you will find yourself the object of His love, and His Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. And henceforth "Abba, Father," will be your cry.

Let us dwell a little upon the manner of this reconciliation. Five things may be specially noted. The father saw, compassionated, ran to meet, embraced, and kissed his son. The father saw. "When he was yet a great way off, his father *saw him*." Occupied with his long-lost one, he was on the lookout for his return. His eye lighted on him in the distance. Recognizing the

well-known form, the heart followed the eye, and was filled with compassion towards him. Love immediately sped the feet, and he ran to meet him. And there, just as he was in all his wretchedness, love satisfied itself by folding the lost one in its fond embrace. His eyes saw, his heart compassionated, his feet sped, his arms embraced, and his lips covered him with kisses.

The son confesses his sin, but is interrupted by the father ere he can talk, as he had intended, about being a hired servant. (Luke xv. 18-23.) He was welcomed and treated as a son. Not a word of reproach escaped the lips of his loving parent. His return and his confession were a witness to his repentance, and immediately a heart of love lavishes its all upon the object of its affection. This is the way of love.

Blessed triumph of grace! Lovely picture of the grace of our God! Dear reader, what do you know of all this? Have you judged and confessed the past? Do you know what it is to be reconciled to God, folded in His everlasting arms? Have the kisses of peace and reconciliation been imprinted upon your cheek? "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans iv. 7, 8.) Do you know too the blessedness of being included in that precious verse, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be

saved by His life"? (Romans v. 10.) If so, you can join too with all His own in adding, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." (Romans v. 11.)

And the father, still with his arms around the neck of his long-lost son, says to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry," &c. (Luke xv. 22, 23.) Grace abounds. The best of everything for the reconciled one alone will satisfy a father's heart. It was not a question of his deserts, but a heart of love finding its gratification in the blessing of its object. Wondrous grace! And this is the way of our God, fellow-believer. All that love can devise and grace bestow is lavished upon every sinner who returns to Him. Clad with heaven's best robe; sealed for the day of redemption with the Holy Spirit; fitted to walk before Him, it is now the joy and privilege of every child of God to feast with a loving Father upon the exceeding riches of His grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans v. 20, 21.)

Beloved reader, this is the manner of the sinner's reconciliation to God. Are *you* reconciled?

E. H. C.

MANY HEARTS REVEALED.

READ MATTHEW xxvi. 1-16.

IN this solemn and yet blessed scripture we find the thoughts of many hearts revealed. Many are the characters found in it, and the moral state of each is laid bare in the presence of the Son of God. And this is so everywhere; for the Lord Jesus is the touchstone which tests and reveals the state of every individual, not only of the world without, but also of His professed people within. All find their moral level in His presence, and deception and hypocrisy, as well as half-heartedness, though for awhile hidden, are made manifest and apparent to all.

“The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. iv. 12, 13.)

This scripture is deeply solemn; in it we learn the true nature of the word of God; it is quick and powerful, living and operative. Men do not

like it; it is too personal; it enters with the authority of God, acts upon the conscience, and brings the guilty soul consciously into the presence of Him under whose eye all is made manifest.

An infidel once said to a servant of Christ, as he was quoting portion after portion of the Scriptures to him, "Can you prove to me that that is the word of God?" The man of God replied, "If I ran a sword through your body, would you need any proof of its being a sword?" and went on quoting the Scriptures. Years after the two met again, and he who had been an infidel had to own that the sword had done its work, and that he needed no further proof that it was the word of God.

Surely we can say, Blessed is the man *in whom* the word of God has done its work!

First of all, then, we have in this scripture (Matt. xxvi.) the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." The blessed Saviour here speaks according to His divine knowledge of the counsels of God which He had come to accomplish. He had come to do the will of God, though in the accomplishment of them man, poor man, was permitted to manifest himself fully.

Prophetically He had said, in Psalm xl., "Sacri-

fice and offering thou didst not desire ; mine ears hast thou opened : burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart." This scripture is quoted by the Spirit of God in Heb. x., where it is said, "A body hast thou prepared me," which evidently refers to the incarnation of the Son of God.

He had come to accomplish the counsels of God—"In the volume of the book it is written of Me," being the book of God's counsels ; and with the full knowledge of what it was going to cost Him, He came, became a man, and went on to death, even the death of the cross. As between Himself and God He was about to accomplish a work by which God was to be glorified in a way in which He never had been before, by the question of sin being righteously disposed of, Satan vanquished, and God's counsels fulfilled in the blessing of His people. As to God, His service here was loving obedience ; as to man, it was deep, divine compassion, that nothing could quench or hinder, until all was accomplished. "I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.)

Blessed Lord, how much we owe Thee ! how eternally we are indebted to Thee ! Thou hast surely raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifted up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them

among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. (1 Sam. ii. 8.) Fill our poor hearts, blessed Saviour, with a deeper sense of Thy love, and what that love passed through for us, and give us a greater desire to serve Thee until we see Thy face in glory !

If the Son of God was here to accomplish the counsels of God, man, poor man, the willing slave of Satan, was, in his own sinful deed of crucifying the Lord of glory, unwittingly to become the means of the accomplishment of those counsels. "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

This is most solemn ! An assembly is convened, made up of the leaders of the nation, that which represented the education, culture, refinement, and religion of the people of Israel, and their object was to capture and kill the Son of God. Others later on were added to them, when it became, not the voice of Israel only, but the voice of the world at large (Acts iv. 24-27) ; and thus the cross, in one aspect of it, was the laying bare the heart of man beneath the eye of God. What a display ! What further proof need we of man's, of our, depravity ? Surely none.

Thus we see revealed, side by side in the cross, the deep eternal counsels of God, and the dark, evil plottings of men. The angry passions of man, the storm of human hatred, and the full-blown malice of Satan, were only used of God for the accomplishment of the purposes of His love. The cross is a marvellous display of the wisdom and love of God, and faith discovers in it the imperishable and everlasting foundation of all our blessing.

In the sixth verse we find Jesus at Bethany, that spot which had more than once furnished shelter and refreshment for the outcast Son of man.

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.”

In John xii. we find that this woman was Mary the sister of Martha, who sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His word. The one is the result of the other. She had been at His feet, drunk in His word, and now she, with blessed spiritual intelligence, comes and breaks the alabaster box upon His head, and anoints Him for His burial, “and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” One heart at least, at that solemn moment, when the thoughts of so many hearts were being revealed, was found true and devoted to Him. The words of the blessed Lord, “She hath wrought a good work

upon Me," show us how deeply He appreciated this touching expression of her devotedness, and for her He raises up an everlasting memorial: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Strange, is it not? that that which was spoken of by the Lord as "a good work wrought upon me," should be construed by the *disciples* as "this waste." "When His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." Such is the perverse heart of even the disciples when not in communion with God. Real devotedness of heart to Christ is very little understood. Outward showy acts of service are much more appreciated, because man can figure in them, than real devotedness which flows from living communion with Himself. The one who sat at His feet, and heard His word, was the one who anointed Him for His burial. It is well to notice this.

It is one thing to look upon Christ as a blesser, and quite another to enter into the infinite preciousness of His person, and have our hearts overflowing with a sense of His worthiness. Mary was not thinking of her blessing, but of the Blesser, and of His worthiness: with her it was Christ, and every nook and corner of her heart

was filled with a sense of His preciousness. Will such a one be negligent of the poor? No; far from it; but in spirit be fully with Him who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor. viii. 9); with Him who has said, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." (Psalm. xli. 1.)

It is a fact, however, that people may make much of the poor, they may raise up large institutions for the help of the same, and have very low, yea, often blasphemous, thoughts of God's Christ; but it is impossible to have right thoughts of Him, to be in communion with Him, and neglect the poor. But in every thing the blessed Lord must have the first place. We must always remember this, and beware of man, who would reverse the order, and put the poor first and Christ last. No heart that is true to Christ can *think lightly* or *speak hastily* of the poor. To do so is to reveal a heart that is very far from the heart of the blessed Master. No; the more we are right in our souls about Christ, the more shall we seek to relieve those whom the Lord has left in our midst. "Ye have the poor with you always, *and whensoever ye will* ye can do them good; but Me ye have not always." (Mark xiv. 7.)

Then, again, there may be a great deal of self in the bestowment of our charity. It is quite possible to do it to be seen of men, and from man

to receive approbation ; but to be devoted to Christ, to own His claims, to have the heart riveted to Him in its spiritual affections, to pour upon His head the very precious ointment, to hold Him in the place of abiding pre-eminence, is often enough to call forth the disapprobation, not of the world only, but of the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. “To what purpose is this waste ? For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.”

Mary was not only a receiver, a vessel into which the Lord could pour His grace ; but she was also a bestower, one who could, with beautiful spiritual intelligence, furnish the heart of the blessed Lord with refreshment, at the moment when He was about to be betrayed, denied, rejected, and crucified.

May it be ours to possess the spiritual intelligence, the appreciation of His worthiness, and whole-hearted devotedness, that we see in this dear saint of God.

One more character is seen in this scripture—Judas. “He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.” “What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you ?” The blessed Lord was betrayed and sold into the hands of the religious leaders for thirty pieces of silver. What an estimate to put upon the Lord of life and glory ! Such is man, and such are we. The Son of God must go for the price of a slave.

Judas was a man completely given over to be the tool of Satan. Governed by the love of gain, and having betrayed his Master, he perished by his own hand.

Judas stands not alone. How many in principle are acting as he did? Christ is betrayed, shamelessly dishonoured, and robbed of His divine glory, and regarded as a reformer, perhaps the best man, or something lower. The rationalistic theories of "divines" are elevated to an equality with, and often to a higher position than, the Word of God. All is sold; not indeed for naught. "What will ye give me?" is the question of a heart that knows not Christ; and Satan is soon ready with the answer. Alas for the miserable end of such men, whether they are "divines" or not!

Blessed Lord, keep us true and devoted to Thee, until we see Thy face, and go no more out from Thy presence for ever.

E. A.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"THIS is a testing question for every heart—for every conscience. Religion, ordinances, doctrines, and churches may well be laid aside for a little, in order that the soul may be free to give an answer to the solemn query—*What think ye of Christ?*"

CHRIST AN OBJECT FOR THE HEART.

(A LETTER TO A FRIEND.)

WELL, dear ——, I often think of my visit home, and all that took place. It was very happy to be with them again, and to take up the threads of the old associations after my long absence. Of course, there were some changes to note; but do you know what I remarked more perhaps than anything, and what was very sweet? In my little chats with M——, she was so ready to talk about our Lord Himself. Now perhaps it is because I have so lately wakened up to see for myself what a difference there is between truth, however blessed, and the One who was the truth personified—the difference between the things, glorious things, that have been done for us, and the One who did them. Perhaps it is because it was new to me that I was so pleased to find it with M——. You see, one might be put within four strong walls in the desert, where one would be perfectly safe; but what a difference between the dreary solitude of such a position and the having for one's protection and for company in that same desert One whose love could only be equalled by His power to protect from the dangers about! Observe, I do not go further for myself than to say, that I can see a marvellous difference between

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the two situations. I myself have not got much further than praying that I may know practically the second rather than the first. But, oh, it is sweet to *know* that such too is the desire of Him who has opened one's eyes to see such differences, and that nothing would be more for His glory than that it should come to pass! for then would not one know what it was to be glorying in the Lord alone? (1 Cor. i. 31.)

I have been out . . . and on the way got a thought. I was dwelling upon what I had been writing about, and wondering that I knew so little of the reality of a personal loving Saviour, when a verse came into my mind. It was, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, *that ye may grow THEREBY.*" I do not know how it is with you, but I find that somehow *somebody* puts a wonderful lot of obstacles in the way of my getting a short, quiet time to read my Bible every day; and while I was wondering at my own ignorance of Him, this verse came before me as an answer to my questioning.

Who can doubt as to who suggested it? And if there is no doubt as to this, is there any doubt as to its being the true answer to my question? So, you see, I have not been writing to you to no purpose; through doing so I have got a lift. I had thought of an alarum clock before, but now I shall certainly get one, to wake me at such an hour in the morning as will

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admit of my having the few minutes I want for reading.

I am perfectly clear on this one point, that as long as you keep one object right before the eyes of a man who has his eyes open, he will see that one object, and very little else. Now the one object that is ever before my eyes is myself and my short-comings. I am certain that it is a deep dishonour to the Lord, and that as long as it is the case I am belittling His finished work; for that work has purchased for me the right to *forget* myself, and to rejoice in the fact that I am accepted only in Christ. One of the first principles that govern all things now for the Christian, in these days when "grace reigns through righteousness," is that all things are given to us on the basis of what God is for us, and *not* on the basis of what we are for God. We accept this principle for salvation, or rather we accept it for future happiness, and we do not accept it for happiness here. We go on day by day, looking at ourselves, and in our little petty way condemning ourselves because we are not this and that for God; and I believe the key to the whole secret lies in the fact that we do not see how bad we are. If we did, we should, like the rats, abandon a sinking ship.

It has long puzzled me to understand what comfort there was in that verse in Romans viii: "For what the law could not do, in that it was

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weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh.*" I believe there is an immense truth in it for us, who spend the best part of our time in petty condemnations of ourselves. It means, that what we do day by day by halves, God, in the cross, did by one sweeping blow, *once and for ever.* We know perfectly well that we shall get nothing good out of the flesh; but our snare is, that we daily look at and condemn ourselves in the flesh without knowing it. We have some vague idea that we are not condemning the flesh, but ourselves, who are in Christ. I believe it is the snare of the fowler. I believe that if my eyes were opened to see what Scripture calls "a man in Christ," I should see Christ, and not the man at all. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Ye have put off the old man . . . and have put on the new . . . where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is *all*, and in *all.*" (Col. iii.) This failing "I" then is I in the flesh, that I waste my time in condemning by halves, not seeing that I am occupied with that which God has condemned utterly when Christ was made sin for us on the cross. Judgment is due to it, and judgment *has* fallen. We need not be afraid *to forget ourselves* if we have got so far as to believe that "in me (that is, in my flesh)

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dwellleth no good thing." *Till* we forget ourselves we shall look at ourselves and be miserable ; *when* we forget ourselves, or refuse to look at ourselves, then we shall be light-hearted, rejoicing in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free ; and we shall have unoccupied eyes to see Him whom God says is *all*. There is no getting round that *all*. Then, and not till then, we shall "with open face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord," be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Do you wonder at my filling my whole letter with this one subject ? And do I write as one who knew all about it, and was rejoicing in the reality of it ? It is not so. I have been groping, groping, groping for many a long day ; you were witness to some of my gropings at home a couple of months ago. What I write is, I believe, some fruit of the aimless wandering. It is a subject I am very full of ; for I am convinced that glorying in the Lord is not attainment. It is having one's eyes opened to see that we get, in the finished work of Christ, not only forgiveness of our sins, but deliverance from ourselves. Happiness untold is at the bottom of it, and much fruit for Christ our Lord would be the result of seeing it all *by faith*. And now I must say Good-bye.

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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JOHN xv. 6.—In order to a right understanding of this portion of the Word, it is important to see that the Lord is not explaining how a man is to be saved. To introduce salvation into the passage is to miss its meaning altogether. It is a question of *fruit-bearing*, not of gaining or retaining eternal life. Nor does the parable deal with union with Christ, for union with Him is by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 17), and we are distinctly told that the Holy Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified. (John vii. 39.) There was no *union* with Him while here on earth, for “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” (John xii. 24.) It is often thought that the vine and the branches and the Head and the members set forth identical truths, but it is not so. A branch in the vine may be cast forth, but not a member of the body; for the head cannot say to the feet, “I have no need of you.” (1 Cor. xii. 21.) But this and similar passages you will find explained in a small pamphlet, called “*Fallen from Grace*,” price 2d., published at the office of this magazine, and which may be had through the post.

A. J.—We think you may find an answer to some of your difficulties in the article in our present issue entitled “Christ an Object for the Heart.”

ROMANS viii. 13.—If you will look at the preceding verses of the chapter, you will find “flesh” and

“spirit” in constant contrast. The Christian, according to Romans viii., is one who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is not his walking thus that constitutes him a Christian, but being one he thus walks. He minds too the things of the Spirit. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” But the Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, for the Spirit of God dwells in him. Therefore he is no debtor to the flesh to live after it. Set free from it, in that God has condemned it in the cross of Christ (v. 3), he now yields himself to God. But let him remember that as to his soul’s prosperity much depends on his practical ways. No one can live after the flesh, even as no one can through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, without its being followed by a corresponding result. It is a great abiding principle with God, that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Galatians vi. 7, 8.)

*“Lord! we are Thine: Thy claims we own,
 Ourselves to Thee we’d wholly give:
 Reign Thou within our hearts alone,
 And let us to Thy glory live.
 Here let us each Thy mind display,
 In all Thy gracious image shine,
 And haste that long-expected day,
 When Thou shalt own that we are Thine.”*

PEACE AND POWER.

(*An Answer to A. J.*)

IT is no uncommon thing for the young Christian, when the joy of his conversion has somewhat subsided, to be greatly cast down by the discovery that "*the flesh*" in him has undergone no change. Fully taken up at first with the blessing he had received, he could think of little else; but now he begins to realize the continued presence of his old and evil nature, which, perhaps, he thought would trouble him no more. His former likes and dislikes still remain, and are ever ready to assert themselves, ready to incite to sin, to plead for indulgence, and to conjure up a thousand things wherewith to intimidate the soul, and to hold it back from the full confession of Christ as his Saviour and Lord. It is true the old "I" is hated, for a new "I" is there with holy instincts and an honest desire to yield itself to God, whose claims the inward man now fully recognizes. He feels in his conscience that he ought to live to God, and to love and serve Him with all the strength of body, soul, and mind. Fain would he do this, but "*the flesh*" is too much for him, and how to perform that which is good he finds not. (Rom. vii. 18.) Deep mental anguish

ensues, the conflict waxes fiercer, and blow follows blow, till at length the soul is tempted to surrender, as if the battle were too strong for him to fight, and the race too swift for him to run.

It may be that our words catch the eye of one whose experiences we have in measure described. Turn aside with us, dear friend ; we would have a few moments' talk with you. It is not long since you were converted. The joy of that happy hour lives in your memory still, nor are you likely to forget it to your latest day. How cloudless your sky then ; and as to your heart, it was so full of the love of Christ that you believed yourself able to dare and do anything for His blessed name. You do not think so now. When you had an opportunity to confess Him before others you did not embrace it, though your conscience bade you "play the man;" and when you might have spoken for Him, your tongue was silent and your lips were closed. The evil within has made itself felt, and in spite of earnest resolves, you have broken down at the point where you believed yourself strongest. You have found yourself joining, almost unconsciously, in the giddy laugh, while the old companionships, worldly and frivolous, have had at times their former charm. Oh, how you hate yourself for all this ! And when you think of the broken resolutions that fill so large a place in the history of each succeeding day, you are dejected and miserable, and

inwardly groan, "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.)

Painful as this experience is, we trust it may yet yield you a rich harvest of blessing, inasmuch as it will teach you two great lessons—first, that "*the flesh*" is incurably bad; and, secondly, that you are *without strength*. And each believer must learn them for himself, in the only school where such lessons are taught. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth *no good thing*," is the heartfelt confession of one who has learned the first. You will not fail to observe that Paul does not say *we* know, but *I* know. A thousand individuals may be learning the same lesson at the same time, but no one can learn it for another. The solemn fact that "*the flesh*" is a worthless thing has to be wrought in the individual soul, and when wrought there it ceases to look for good where none dwells. Nor have we strength to deliver ourselves from the state in which we are; for if a man is securely bound hand and foot, and then cast into a deep pit, he may struggle to release himself, and utter many a grievous groan for deliverance; but the more he strives, the more is he conscious of his lack of power to escape the bonds that bind him. He needs another to set him free. So "*sin in the flesh*" is not to be overcome by creature effort; and when we have found out our own weakness, we are on the eve of seeing

how God effects that deliverance for us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

These discoveries of what "*sin in the flesh*" is are to you new and painfully surprising, but to God they are not so. Long, long before He dealt with your soul He knew what you were as a child of fallen Adam, and what you would be. Nothing has come to Him as a surprise, and it was with the full knowledge of all the evil within and how it would manifest itself that He separated you unto Himself by His Spirit, even as a stone is separated in the quarry from the rock of which it once formed a part, and placed you under the shelter of the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is well that you should know and understand the changeless grace of God in which you are set. We are so apt to think the uprising of inward evil changes the countenance of God towards us, and that if we could only suppress it and love and serve Him better He would regard us with greater favour. But it is not so. Not that God is indifferent to evil, or can suffer it in His children; but if we suppose that what we are for God determines what He will be for us, then are we, in the consciousness of our souls, under law, and the Scriptures affirm that we are not under law, but under grace. (Rom. vi. 14.) Weigh this well, and may God give you understanding.

Many who abandon this principle of law when first coming to God as sinners get entangled

therein afterwards. But if what I am for God determines what He is and will be to me, what can I hope for? In my conscience I shall know that on that principle God must and ought to be against me, and the more upright I am the more will be my distress. But we are not under law as regards our walk any more than we were for forgiveness at the first. For the doctrine of Romans vii. is, that we have died with Christ out of that state to which law applied, and now in the holy freedom which grace gives from law's condemning power we can bring forth fruit to God.

Learn to distinguish between the old I and the new, between yourself and sin that dwelleth in you. (Rom. vii. 20.) To the latter you have to reckon yourself dead, for you *are* dead to it. Do not say that you are not, for God says you are (Rom. vi. 2), and it is our wisdom to think as God thinks, and to speak as God speaks. And if you say that your daily experience proves that you are far from being "*dead to sin*," that may be so; still you are to reckon to be true of you what God declares is true, and your doing so is the way for it to become a practical power in your soul.

For what is the meaning of those words, "*Dead with Christ*," "*Buried with Him*"? Do they not recall to our mind's eye Christ dead and buried, and furnish our warrant for saying, And we too are dead and buried with Him? Thus is closed for ever our history as men in the flesh and with

it end all our responsibilities as in that state and standing before God. Other responsibilities indeed are ours as those who are alive unto God, and not under law but under grace, not in the flesh but in the Spirit, not in Adam but in Christ. And the power to fulfil these responsibilities is found in this, that a new life is ours in the last Adam, and the Holy Spirit is given to us. But if "*Dead with Christ*" and "*Buried with Him*" is the charter of our liberty, if it be the joyful sound of the jubilee trumpet, proclaiming our freedom from the dominion of sin and the bondage which law genders, to whom shall we now yield ourselves? The joyous answer is this, We yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; we walk in newness of life before Him.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) These words set the believer under a cloudless sky. No condemnation can possibly attach to the risen Christ. He has passed through judgment and death, and is now in the full favour of God, on which not a shadow can ever rest. So with us; for we are *in Him*, and are thus free from condemnation, even as He is free, and stand in the unclouded favour of God, even as Christ does. Thus our sins are gone in the blood of Christ, "sin in the flesh" has been condemned in His death, and in that death our history as of Adam ended. Now "*dead to sin*" and "*dead to the law*" we are

alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. vi. 11.)

And the secret of a holy walk, and of victory over sin, is found in the knowledge of these divine truths, and with it the consciousness of our personal weakness and dependence. For the possession of a new life, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, should not lead us to think that we have no need to look to God continually. But be of good courage, and, counting upon God, go forward. God is for you. Out of weakness you shall be made strong, and in His strength you shall yet overcome. God is your Justifier, God is your hiding-place, God is your shield. Go on, then. Fear not to confess Jesus as your Lord. Boldly take your stand for Christ, and you shall prove as others have before, that "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

"Lead on, Almighty Lord,
Lead on to victory :
Encouraged by Thy blessed word,
With joy we follow Thee.

"We follow Thee, our Guide,
Who didst salvation bring :
We follow Thee, through grace supplied
From heaven's eternal spring :

"Till of the prize possessed,
We hear of war no more ;
And, oh, sweet thought ! for ever rest
On yonder peaceful shore."

BENJAMIN'S BLESSING AND BEHAVIOUR.

“And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him ; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.”

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 12.

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. gives “the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.” As the eye glances down the beautiful chapter, no brighter blessing appears than that which belongs to Benjamin. Let us dwell upon it briefly, and look upon it as indicating the blessedness which now belongs to him that believes on Jesus. Benjamin’s blessing, as that of all Israel, was undoubtedly of an earthly and a temporal character, whereas ours is heavenly and spiritual ; yet the one may be interpreted as giving a simple and beautiful indication of the other.

“THE BELOVED OF THE LORD.” Benjamin was a son of sorrow, and so named “Benoni” by his mother. (See Genesis xxxv. 18.) Yet here he is spoken of as the object of Jehovah’s love. “Man is born to sorrow.” But how precious a thing it is to know that we are the “beloved of God.” (Romans i. 7.) Every blessing we possess springs from this. Man, when awakened to a sense of his need, and desirous of possessing the

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blessing of God, looks to his own heart, hoping there to find love to God which may prove a basis for the blessing he desires. Alas! he is bitterly disappointed. In his misery he cries—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”

The Scripture replies, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” We rejoice as we learn this, and exultingly say, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” Then follows, in its own due order, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” (See 1 John iv. 7–21.) Let us not then seek to build anything upon our love to Him, but delight in this—that we are the objects of His changeless, eternal love. Peter boasted much of the love which he had for his Lord. Doubtless it was sincere; but what bitter experience he had to pass through, that he might learn not to trust to the strength of his own affection! John delighted to speak of himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He who wrote of the full display of God’s love in the only begotten Son of the Father’s bosom did himself recline in the bosom of Jesus. In all our sorrows therefore, in the sense of our own weakness, and when assailed with thoughts of our own utter unworthiness, let this be the comfort and joy of our souls—we are “beloved of God.”

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"SHALL DWELL IN SAFETY." The mention of safety brings to mind the thought of danger; and we ask, To what danger were we exposed? As sinners, we stood exposed to the judgment of God. Every sin merited eternal perdition; and to the lake of fire we must have gone, had not God's love provided a dwelling-place of perfect safety. Such a shelter we were unable to provide for ourselves. All our works, all our endeavours, could not ward off the stroke of justice. What could? Let us go back in the history of Benjamin and Israel for a reply.

Exodus xii. is well known as the chapter which records God's last and sorest plague upon Egypt. It tells of that solemn night when throughout all the land there was not one house where death entered not. God dealt in judgment, maintaining His own character. In the houses of all the Egyptians the firstborn died. For the houses of Israel the lamb was slain. Death fell upon the unblemished, sacrificial victim, instead of the firstborn. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled at the door, and thus those who would otherwise have fallen beneath Jehovah's stroke had a dwelling-place of safety, even in the midst of His judgments. "When I see *the blood*," Jehovah said. He spoke not of their good works, or religion, or aught beside, but *the blood*. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Surely none can fail to see in that blood a prefiguring of

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the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God." (1 Peter i. 19-21.) It is that blood which alone can screen from God's judgment. Happy is he who is sheltered by it!

Then are there not foes which trouble and menace? Yes; both evil spirits and wicked men. But *God is for us*. (Romans viii. 31-39.) The blood which screens us from judgment forms a righteous ground upon which God can manifest Himself as on our part. His love could not triumph at *the expense* of His righteousness. He could not pass by our sins; but He gave His own Son to bear the judgment due to them, and thus declared Himself against our sins, but *for* us. Who then can be against us? Benjamin, as the other tribes, was sheltered on the night of the Passover, following which God brought him forth from slavery, delivered him from all the harassing foes of the wilderness; and now, as he is about to enter the land, He speaks of a dwelling-place of safety. Happy Benjamin! And happy, thrice happy, is he who, through the value of Jesus' blood, has God as his Justifier and Protector until all danger be past, and he is landed in that bright abode of peace!

"BY HIM." The last words were incomplete in

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beauty; here is their completeness. It is not only a dwelling-place of safety which He provides, but it is *by Him*, at His side. Love must have all distance removed. See how the Father *ran* to meet the wicked son, nor slackened His pace until the weary head of the wanderer was pillowed upon His bosom. Then would He assign to him some place in His house where he might be free from danger? Nay, not so. If the Father acts, He must do so according to the dictates of His own love. What place must he have? A place near his Father. "Let us eat, and be merry." Oh, blessed picture! What says the sinner? "Oh, if I could but creep in behind heaven's door!" There is no such place. Either, as sinners, we are assigned to the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; or, as redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are brought perfectly nigh to God. This is the doctrine of the Scriptures, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were *far off* are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ." (Ephes. ii. 13.) There is the contrast—"far off," "*nigh*." How near? Just so near as the one blessed word "*nigh*" can express. It is unqualified nearness.

"AND THE LORD SHALL COVER HIM." In the land of promise Benjamin occupied a small tract of country close beside Jerusalem, and thus they might be covered, as it were, by the shadow of Jehovah's earthly dwelling-place. The Lord Him-

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self gave a beautiful figure of the truth which the words express when, bemoaning Jerusalem, He described the blessing they refused. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" They desired not His presence or blessing, and He solemnly declared that the house, under the shadow of which Benjamin had dwelt, should be desolate. But how beautiful the figure, and how precious its application to those who submit to be gathered by Him! Enemies may surround, but none can touch the brood without first attacking the parent bird. Oh, believer, why dost thou tremble when assailed by foes and temptations? He who lives for thee must first be assailed and overcome before thou canst be overthrown. Nor is protection the only idea in the figure. If we are beneath the shadow of His wing, we are where we are kept conscious of the warmth of His heart. Oh, it is a blessed thing that our Lord so knows how to turn everything to account that He makes the very dark times of tribulation and persecution the occasion for more fully manifesting His love! Surely in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us.

"ALL THE DAY LONG." Yes, throughout the weary day of our sorrow here upon earth. The day has many moments, and each moment may bring its changes and fresh sorrows, but throughout its length He covers us. A young Christian

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woman, who had been lying in bed for many years, was cheered through months of weariness by the literal rendering of Matthew xxviii. 20, which was given to her by a visitor: "Lo, I am with you *all the days*." Whether the bright sunlight gleams upon all things, and makes them seem lovely, or whether the sky be overcast, and storms rage, He is with us all the days.

"AND HE SHALL DWELL BETWEEN HIS SHOULDERS." According to God's ordinance, the high priest, robed in his garments of glory and beauty, bore upon his breast and upon his shoulders the names of the tribes of Israel. There Benjamin shone, as the rest, a precious stone in the light of the sanctuary, held in pure gold. The priesthood failed in man's hand, but it is all fulfilled in Him who is the great Priest over God's house. He bears His people upon His breast, and upon His shoulders. That is to say, all His love is engaged for us, and all His divine power is administered in our behalf to bring us through this weary world. Some may say, "It is indeed precious to think of being sheltered in perfect safety, and kept in the assurance of His love; but, oh, we are *so feeble*!" But it does not require much strength *to be carried*. We asked an aged woman, of over eighty years, How far did the Shepherd carry the sheep when He had found it? She thought for a moment, and then the smile kindled in her face, as she joyously answered in

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that sweet monosyllable—"HOME!" It is His divine power which sustains us in each step we take, and what we need is unfeigned dependence upon Him, and unwavering reliance upon His strength. In His bosom, and on His shoulder, are the two places where He speaks of carrying His own; the one expressive of His realized love, the other of His unfailing strength. (Isaiah xl. 11; Luke xv. 5.)

"The Shepherd's bosom bears each lamb
O'er rock, and waste, and wild;
The object of that love I am,
And carried like a child."

* * * *

Judges xix.—xxi. We turn with sorrow from Benjamin's blessing to dwell for a moment upon his behaviour. How sad a contrast there is between them! the former so bright, the latter so dark! Israel, so wondrously blessed of God, turned away from Him, and the book of Judges is the history of their decline. But whose sin is it that fills up the measure of the wretchedness and folly described in this book? It is Benjamin's. A sin is perpetrated which is too shocking to transfer to human pages. He who alone may draw back the veil, and show the horrid corruption of man's heart, has faithfully depicted this scene for our learning. Benjamin is shown to be in a moral state corresponding with that of the wicked city of Sodom which God overthrew in judgment.

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Man's tendency is always to decline. "History repeats itself," because man's heart is always the same. The decline of Benjamin and of Israel has been sadly reproduced in the history of the professing Church upon earth. When we consider the Church as a heavenly thing, and dwell upon its blessing as planned in the mind of God, our souls are swallowed up in admiration; it is wondrous, surpassing every thought. But when we turn to its history, as a professing thing here upon earth, our hearts grow sad, and our faces are ashamed. The epistle to the Ephesians shows the blessing with which God has blessed us, and exhorts to suitable conduct. The second epistle to Timothy predicts the solemn state, in the last days, of those who have a form of godliness, but deny its power. Let anyone compare the description of the latter with that of the godless heathen in Romans i., and the similarity will be found striking and appalling.

And this tendency to decline is found in ourselves personally. As in Nature there is what is termed a law of gravitation—that is, as a principle, everything of weight falls to the earth—so it is also in spiritual things; our danger is always that of dropping down. Have we not already experienced it in our Christian course? And have we not often sorrowfully felt what a difference there is between the way in which God has blessed us, and the way in which we have behaved? Every

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one must confess that we are brightly blessed, but, alas! how often badly behaved.

We would not depress the feeblest believer, nor occupy one soul with failure. There would be neither peace nor power in so doing. Yet we remind our readers of these things, and sound a warning note, that we may see to ourselves.

But what is the power for behaviour such as our God will approve? It lies not in self-occupation, nor in occupation with things around, whether of fancied brightness or of confessed failure. It lies in the enjoyment of that blessing which our God in rich grace has bestowed upon us. If we are conscious that we are the objects of His love; if we dwell at His side in perfect safety; if we are covered by the shadow of His wing, delighting to dwell in that hiding-place of His love; if we abide in the place of His strength as dependent ones; will not all our conduct bear the marks of this? Assuredly it will. Let us pray, then, that our God may so lead our hearts into the full enjoyment of that bright blessing bestowed upon us, that suitable behaviour may be produced in us, to His own eternal praise.

J. R.

Knowledge of Christ.—"Give every kind of knowledge its due attention and respect. But what science is to be compared to the knowledge of Christ? Had a traveller lost his way in some desert, where he had wandered till he was fainting with hunger and thirst, for what would he first ask? for music, for paintings? No, he would ask for bread, for water! Anything else offered him would be a mockery of his misery."

JESUS SEEKING AND SAVING.

GOD has now been fully revealed. The Son has been sent into the world, and He has declared the Father. His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him. In the death of the cross He manifested divine love. Thus God has been made known. He has spoken to us in the person of the Son. His unutterable love and joy in saving sinners through the death and blood-shedding of His own Son has been clearly unfolded. It is made known by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, Who, when received, fills us "with joy and peace in believing."

Those who think of God only by what they see in creation, and in His providential ways toward His creatures, do not know Him as He has been manifested in flesh, and is now made known by the gospel. Hence they have no intercourse with Him as a Saviour-God, no intimacy with Christ as having redeemed them, but are spoken of in Scripture as "without God," "without Christ," and "having no hope." This is the threefold condition of an unsaved soul. How appalling! But it is what Scripture says, and what the Spirit of God brings home to the conscience; for He is the Spirit of truth, and cannot teach anything con-

trary to the truth. Well it is for those who are so bowed down by God's verdict as to *take their true place before Him* as having "sinned," being "under sin," and "guilty," that their confession to Him is, "I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight."

There is now then no excuse, for "God has been manifested in flesh." He has come nigh to us when we were yet sinners, and told out what was in God's heart *toward us*—that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved *us*, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.) Thus Jesus made known to us divine love. In the glory of His person, and in the perfection of His words and ways, Jesus manifested God.

Personally, and in His moral glory, He was "the image of the invisible God;" so that when Spirit-taught souls contemplated Him, and beheld His glory, they knew nothing comparable to Him, hence they could only say, "We beheld His glory, *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, full of grace and truth." This is what He was and is, and none else can be—"the only begotten of the Father." In the Son—Heir of all things, Upholder of all things, by whom also God made the worlds, in due time found here in fashion as a Man, the effulgence of divine glory and the expression of His substance—God hath spoken,

even by Him who did by Himself purge our sins. What a glorious manifestation of God the Son was! Truly His name is Emmanuel, God with us, the virgin's Child, the Son of God, and soon to be manifested again, but then in His own glory, and the glory of the Father, and the glory of the holy angels. When we think of Him, how can we fail to worship and give thanks!

The words of Jesus were all divinely perfect. We are told that "He whom God hath sent speaketh the *words of God*;" so that His sayings, and the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, were of God. In a life of perfect dependence and faith, He did not speak of (or from) Himself; but as the elect Servant and obedient Son, He could truly say, "The Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." "The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." (John iii. 34; xiv. 10, 24; xii. 49.) The words of Jesus, therefore, were not only divinely true, but divinely given, and faith receives them as such. So truly was He one with the Father, that they were His own words; and for our comfort and assurance He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Well might the inspired Psalmist exclaim, "For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven;" and an inspired apostle say, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

What a solid resting-place for our souls is the unalterable and everlasting word of God!

The ways of Jesus also perfectly manifested God. From the manger to the cross He did the will of God, and glorified Him that sent Him. Perfect Man surely, in every word and act; in every thought and desire well-pleasing to God. He obeyed and honoured Him in this evil world so fully, that He never had to recall a word, or to retrace a step. He was always “a *sweet savour*” to God. So completely did He express the Father, so exactly did He set Him forth in all His ways, that He could say to Philip, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” and “the Father that dwelleth in Me, *He doeth the works.*” Faith knows this, and it is known only to faith; therefore He adds, “*Believe Me* that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” To *know* Him then is to know the Father, and the one who saw Him saw the Father, and to hate Him was to hate the Father also. “He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. . . . Now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.” (John xiv. 7–11; xv. 23, 24.)

God then was truly manifested in every step of the pathway of the Son of God on earth; and once and again the heaven opened over Him, and the voice from the excellent glory was, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” (or, in whom I have found My delight). But never

more was God manifested in flesh than in "the death of the cross." Though man then reached the climax of iniquity, so that by wicked hands Jesus was crucified and slain, yet was He there "delivered for *our* offences." There God delivered Him up for us all. There He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. There the good Shepherd willingly and lovingly laid down His life for the sheep. There the Son gave Himself for us in perfect obedience to the Father's will. He said, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me. . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." And yet this perfect Sufferer, when nailed to the cross, and forsaken of God because His soul was made an offering for sin, not only cried out, in bitterest agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but, in the perfection of faith, as the Sin-bearer, could take all from God, and add, "But *Thou* art holy," and, "*Thou* hast brought Me into the dust of death."

Yes, the love of God was there manifested. His holiness, His truth, His hatred of sin, and His grace to sinners, then fully came out, so that propitiation for our sins might be made, and life eternal be ours through Christ. Happy those who can add, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love." (1 John iii. 16; iv. 9, 10, 16.)

When we think of the glory of the Son of God, how marvellous to find Him in this sin-stricken world in fashion as a man! How blessed also to see Him associating with men, eating with publicans and sinners! But oh! the love of His heart, that could willingly suffer the unutterable sorrow, pain, and forsaking of the death of the cross to glorify God and to save us. All this too according to the will of Him that sent Him. Well may we say—

“Love that transcends our highest powers
Demands our soul, our life, our all.”

Among other “words of God” which Jesus spake are these, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke xix. 10.) This men could not understand. Even the religious people of that day charged Him, saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” (Luke xv. 2.) But this only served to tell out more fully the riches of divine grace, and the delight He had in saving a lost sinner.

He spake a parable to them. It consisted of three parts. His own love in seeking and saving a lost one; the diligent service of the saints in sweeping the house under the bright shining of the Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to seek and find the lost; and the Father’s joy in finding and receiving the returning one which was lost. The joy there is in heaven over one lost sinner

who takes his place before God as guilty, undone, in self-judgment and self-condemnation, according to God, is blessedly brought out. (Luke xv. 7, 10.)

What a precious moment it is to the heart of the Lord Jesus when He finds a lost one at His feet to be saved! The sinner and the Saviour are here face to face. The Saviour had been seeking lost ones; He had been calling by His gospel, and now in felt helplessness, in guilt, in the consciousness of being lost, the sinner looks into the Saviour's face, and knows Him as the Son of God, whose loving heart seeks and finds the lost. What joy to the Saviour's heart! He has sought, and has found, and now He embraces, receives, keeps him, and will never give him up again. The sinner is safe for ever. The lost one is found. The helpless one is taken possession of by the great Shepherd of the sheep, to the delight of His own heart; for "when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders, *rejoicing*." But this is not all. He keeps the lost one every step of the journey, till "He cometh home." The Shepherd holds the sheep fast. He does not put it down for a moment. However much the poor ignorant sheep might struggle and desire to be on his own responsibility, yet the Saviour keeps him every moment till "He cometh home." Blessed be His name, His love is perfect! His salvation is complete! "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." and He says

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 14-17.) Even if His loved ones sin, He is our Advocate with the Father.

Thus the Lord Jesus keeps us who have through grace believed on Him. He gives us now the salvation of our souls, and will keep us for the glory. He said, None shall pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no one can pluck them out of My Father's hand. (John x. 28, 29.) Not only is the "inheritance," which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for us, but we are also "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." That is, that heavenly glory, as Christ's joint-heirs, is "reserved in heaven" for us, and God keeps us by His power, through faith, for it. And observe, it is not only that we are kept by divine power, as Scripture says "preserved in Christ Jesus," but it is "through faith;" that is, by divine grace, He supplies us with faith day by day, so that we may be ever looking off unto Jesus, to be constantly assured that He is keeping us, and will keep us, until we are revealed in glory with Him. What a Saviour! How great a salvation! What joy, and liberty, and earnestness of soul it gives us, when thus abiding in His love, His faithfulness, and the abundance of His grace. He has not only atoned for all our sins, but has also considered

our need for every step of the way; and so fully provided for every contingency, that we may, while looking off unto Him, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and have a divinely-given assurance that He will preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

"Yes, I was lost and vile indeed !
To sin a willing prey ;
Till God in mercy interposed,
And turned my night to day.

"Now I can call the Saviour mine,
Though all unworthy still ;
I'm sheltered by His precious blood,
Beyond the reach of ill."

H. H. S.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EARNEST INQUIRER.—In reference to your inquiry as to *eternal life* it is important to see that Scripture presents it in different ways, and the force and meaning of the term in each instance should be sought from the connection in which it stands. Thus in the only two passages in the Old Testament in which it is spoken of it evidently describes a future state of blessing on the earth under the gracious rule of Christ. Those passages are Psalm cxxxiii. 3 ; Daniel xii. 2. In the New Testament it finds, as we know, frequent

mention; for *life* and incorruptibility have been brought to light through the gospel. Certain passages speak of it as that which is received at the end of the journey, the blessed consummation of a life of holiness here; others in contrast to the vain and transitory things of Time; while in numerous places it is set forth as the present possession of the believer on the Son of God. As examples of the first we may cite Romans ii. 7, vi. 22; Jude 21; of the second, 1 Timothy vi. 12, 19; and of the third, John iii. 36, v. 24, vi. 47; 1 John v. 11-13.

We fully believe that the saints of Old Testament times, from Adam downwards, were born again. The denial of it would be the denial of the total ruin of man by the fall; and if ruined, we must own that he needs to be born anew, or else affirm that man, in his corrupt nature, could stand before God. This we know could never be. Nor do we doubt that the life they received was eternal *as to its duration*, as also pure and holy in its nature, and in the power of this they were called to walk with God according to the revelation He might be pleased to give of Himself from time to time, while each fresh and fuller revelation gave its corresponding feature to the life they had as born of Him. But eternal life in the New Testament usage of the term we hardly think they had; for is not that connected with the knowledge of *the Father and the Son*? (See John xvii. 3.) And such a revelation of God the Old Testament saints knew nothing of. The life in which we live as believers on the Son of God differs in many of its features from theirs, even as the life of a servant differs from that of a

child. In this human comparison (the poverty of which we fully own) there is identical physical life in the servant and the child; but the life they live is not the same, in that one lives as a servant with thoughts, feelings, and affections answering to that state, while the other lives as a child in the family. If, then, it be true that eternal life, as generally dealt with in the New Testament, is bound up with the manifestation of *the Son*, who is "that Eternal Life," and with the knowledge of *the Father*, it is clear the saints of old lived not in that life though born of God. We need not add a word to guard you against confounding this with that state of eternal blessedness which the Old Testament saints surely know now, and shall know more fully by and bye (Heb. xi. 40), or with eternal existence shared by all alike, whether saved or not.

It is our earnest hope that what we have written may help to clear your thoughts as to this important subject. Though discussing it in the fear of God, and with unfeigned subjection to the teaching of His Word and Spirit, we have need of patience one with another. Some of us are dull scholars, and advance so slowly in divine things. Our brethren must be patient with us. Much misunderstanding arises often enough through our not taking pains to ascertain what another means; for it is so easy for two individuals to use the same words without meaning the same thing. May the Lord grant us meekness of spirit and readiness of heart to be taught of Him.

“NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SINS.”

HEBREWS x. 1-22.

WHAT can be the meaning of those five words found at the close of Hebrews x. 2, “No more conscience of sins”? It is said that the worshipper *once* purged should have this; but what can it mean? Were you asked, reader, to explain those words, what explanation would you give? Certainly they cannot mean that the worshipper should have no more consciousness of sin; for the most unworldly and devoted of God’s saints will tell you that he is ever conscious of sin dwelling in him. Nor can it be that he is to have no more consciousness of having sinned; for throughout a glorious eternity the redeemed of the Lord will remember that. The songs of redemption which shall be ceaselessly sung in heaven and on earth, will be “unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our *sins* in His own blood.” What, then, we again ask, can be meant by the worshippers once purged having “*no more conscience of sins*”?

When the sinner is first awakened to a sense of his true state before God, he is very far indeed from having “no more conscience of sins.” On

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the contrary, his conscience is troubled on account of his sins, and he justly dreads the consequences of them. David had a troubled conscience when he cried out in his distress, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." (Psalm li. 1.) Isaiah had a troubled conscience when he exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah vi. 5.) Peter had a troubled conscience when he fell at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke v. 8.) And the jailor at Philippi had a troubled conscience when he anxiously asked, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30.) And so has it ever been with those in whom God has wrought in saving power. You, dear reader, if you have peace with God, know something of this; for as surely as cause precedes effect, so does a troubled conscience precede the knowledge of "*no more conscience of sins.*"

The individual who has "no more conscience of sins" is one whose conscience has been set at rest in the presence of God as to every possible question of sin and guilt. To have the least doubt about it is to betray a conscience not completely purged. Were there to be set before you

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now a faithful record of all the sins of every kind that could be laid to your charge to the very end of your earthly life, could you say, “Those sins trouble me no more. I mourn that I should have been guilty of them; but I know the blood of Christ, shed for many for the remission of sins, has so satisfied the claims of God in respect of them, that they lie no more on my conscience than the many debts of a man lie on his conscience when he knows they have been paid to the last farthing”? This is to have “*no more conscience of sins.*”

Under the law this could never be. The sacrifices repeatedly offered brought the sins of the people continually to remembrance, and each succeeding sacrifice was a witness to the inefficacy of the previous one. Had it been otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered? Therefore in verse 11 the priest of old is represented as *standing* and offering often the same sacrifices which could never take away sins; whereas in verse 12 the Lord Jesus is spoken of as having offered *one* sacrifice for sins, and then for ever *sitting down* at the right hand of God. What contrasts are here! The standing priest and the seated Saviour, the oft-repeated sacrifices and the one offering; the former declared powerless to take away sins, the latter perfecting *for ever* them that are sanctified. Blessed be God, the one offering entitles the believer to a purged conscience, and possess-

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ing which he knows what it is to have "*no more conscience of sins.*"

And to the efficacy of the Saviour's one offering the Holy Ghost bears witness. (*vv.* 15–17.) But what is this WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST, and in what shape does it come? Is it an inward feeling that our sins are gone? A comfortable persuasion of the mind that comes we hardly know how? Far from that. This witness of the Holy Ghost is not within—it is outside of us; it is something on which our eyes can rest; something which changes not; so that to understand this witness of the Holy Ghost we are constrained to withdraw our thoughts from ourselves. For the witness of the Holy Ghost takes not the form of feelings, experiences, and secret emotions of the soul; but it is found in letters of the alphabet, in syllables, and words placed in divine order. But that we linger not further let us say that the witness of the Holy Ghost is this, that God hath said, "THEIR SINS AND INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE." (*v.* 17.) In those nine words you have the witness of the Holy Ghost. It is a spoken witness; it is a written witness; even as anyone would witness to facts within his knowledge, either by word of mouth, or through the medium of pen, ink, and paper.

Hence it is evident the Holy Ghost witnesses no less to one believer than to another. To every believer alike He bears this witness; and all who

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seek the witness of the Spirit may find it where the wisdom of God has placed it—not within the changing heart of man, but inscribed on the pages of that living book we call the Bible. There it shines in its undying lustre—“*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*”

Let those words “NO MORE” be well observed; for do they not imply that our sins and iniquities have been remembered? Into what depths of despair would the opposite conclusion plunge us! Yes, our sins have been remembered, every one of them, little and great; remembered in that hour when God laid them all upon Jesus, and when the stripes due to them were borne by Him. The cross of Calvary, the infinite sufferings of the Holy Victim who died there, proclaim aloud the solemn fact that they have been remembered; and now the Holy Ghost witnesseth to us that they shall be remembered *no more*, for

“Payment God will not twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.”

But who receives the witness of the Holy Ghost? Who has courage to stand forth and say, “I for one accept the witness of God’s Spirit, and know that my sins will be remembered no more”? Presumptuous in the extreme many will style you if you thus speak. Let such judge whether it be more presumptuous to receive the witness of the Holy Ghost than to refuse it. Let

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such say which of these two acts—the reception or the refusal—savour most of making God a liar.

Connected with the witness of the Holy Ghost is the "FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH," of which we read in verse 22. What numbers of God's people are strangers to full assurance! Were proofs of this required, they would be found in the doubts and fears that cloud the lives of multitudes. Do you think that God would have our days darkened with the gloomy shadow of uncertainty? It cannot be. The full assurance of faith dispels all clouds, and roots up those doubts and fears which grow apace in the rank soil of unbelief. But mark, it is the full assurance of *faith*, not of *feeling*, that is here spoken of. Did any *feel* fully assured they were saved, it would be but the full assurance of feeling; and everybody knows how changeable our feelings are, and not to be relied on for a single day. Full assurance of faith is something vastly different; it is the assurance that faith gives. Abraham had full assurance when he believed God concerning the birth of Isaac, but it was the full assurance of *faith*. (Genesis xv. 4–6; Romans iv. 16–25.) The nobleman of Capernaum had full assurance when he believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him concerning his dying child, but it was the full assurance of *faith*. (John iv. 50.) Paul had full assurance when he believed God, that not one on

board that doomed ship on the raging Mediterranean sea should perish, but it was the full assurance of *faith*. (Acts xxvii. 21-25.) And every believer in Jesus has full assurance when he believes God, that his sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more, but it is the full assurance of *faith*. Do any ask, What is faith? It is, dear reader, your believing what God says. If you rest on His word, your thus resting is faith, and full assurance is the sure result. Suppose an angel from heaven were now to appear before you, bearing a letter in his hand from God Himself, which he bade you read. That letter is addressed to you. You read it with eager eyes, and find that it has been written to assure you that your sins and iniquities should be remembered by Him no more. Would you not thank God for such a message? And in your heart you would believe it and rejoice. That is faith. Such a letter in truth you have—not brought, it is true, by an angel's hand, but by the Holy Ghost. If you believe the message which it brings, you will know your sins are to be remembered no more, not because you feel it, but because the Holy Spirit witnesseth to you this great fact. Full assurance will be yours—the full assurance of *faith*. You will have "no more conscience of sins," knowing the blood of Christ has put them for ever away. That this may be the portion of each reader is our earnest prayer.

WORK FOR THE LORD.

A VERY necessary protest has been raised against excessive activity in Christian work, because there are many whom an energy which is not of the Spirit would incline to run unsent.

A word of warning against the opposite extreme is often needed, and I am convinced never more so than at the present time. In too many cases a purely contemplative Christianity has been carried to extremes, resulting in dwarfed energies and spiritual uselessness.

Do we half realize the awful future which awaits the majority of those around us? Do we ever think that some of our acquaintances, with whom we smilingly exchange the civilities of society, will ere long awake in HELL? that many we daily meet in business, will shortly find their portion in the lake of fire? I ask, Do we realize this? And do these thoughts, added to an intense desire for their salvation, nerve us to brave their vulgar ridicule, or polite contempt, and speak with affectionate importunity of the ark of safety in the Christ of God?

Oh, brethren, let us be up and doing! This is no time for idleness. The time is short; eternity with silent tread draws daily nearer; the harvest

is almost past, the summer is almost ended, and many, many souls are still unsaved.

Let us take heed how we hinder others more earnest than ourselves. They are enthusiastic perhaps; they may be precipitate at times; but they are filled with a burning love for souls. All hail to such men! May their zeal increase yet more. May their dauntless energy be divinely blest. They will grow cooler, say some. Doubtless, should they leave their first love; but who dare quench the flame that God Himself has kindled?

Would that our prayers for the gospel, both public and private, were energized by this consuming zeal. They might be less finished, they would be less studied, but they would ring with no uncertain sound, and would tell to a listening God that we *really cared for souls*. ANON.

“HE who works in the field of the world,
Must work with a faith sublime;
For the seed he sows must lie in the earth,
And wait for God’s good time.

“But nevertheless the harvest is sure,
Though the sower the sheaves may not see;
For never a word was spoken for Him,
But will ring through eternity.”

THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE.

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.”—ROMANS viii. 29.

IS this Thy purpose, blessed God, we should be like Thy Son?

Conformed to that blessed One, who all Thy will hath done?
How vast and great Thy counsels are, Thy purposes of grace,
That we should in His likeness shine, and see Him face to face!

How great the riches of Thy grace! we owe it all to Thee,
For Thou in Christ hast chosen us Thy children now to be;
Not only holy in Thy sight, but blameless there in love,
Enjoying Abba's favour now in cloudless peace above.

Redeemed by His most precious blood, we are to Thee
brought near,

As holy priests, O God, to raise for Thy delighted ear
Our ceaseless sacrifice of praise as of Thy Christ we sing,
Our baskets filled with firstfruits, *which of Thine own we bring.*

For Thou hast filled us first, O God, from out Thy boundless
store;

The heights and depths and lengths and breadths we never
can explore.

Unfolded all that mystery of rich unfailing grace,
According to Thy purposes which in Thy Son we trace.

Made known to us Thy wondrous power which raised Him
from the dead,

And placed Him far above all heavens the Church's living
Head.

That power which also wrought in us, and now is working
still,

To form and fashion all Thy saints *according to Thy will.*

So that Thy rich exceeding grace in ages yet to come
Shall in its fulness be displayed that Christ and we are *one*;
When in that selfsame glory seen, each blood-bought saint
shall be

Conformed to His image then, made suitable to Thee.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

THERE is nothing that I would have you to be more sure of than this, that "God hears and answers prayer." There never was, and never will be, a believing prayer left unanswered. Meditate on this, and you will say, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." (Psalm cxvi. 1.)

First, God often gives the very thing His children ask at the very time they ask it. You remember Hannah. (1 Samuel i. 10.) She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. "Give unto Thine handmaid a man child." This was her request. And so she went in peace, and the God of Israel heard and granted her her petition that she had asked of Him; and she called the child's name Samuel; that is, "Asked of God." Oh that you could write the same name upon all your gifts! you would have far more joy in them, and far larger blessings along with them. You remember David (Psalm cxxxviii.): "In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." You remember Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21): "O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again, and he revived."

You remember Daniel (ix. 20, 21): "Whiles I was speaking, and praying yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." Expect answers while you are speaking, like Daniel, in prayer. Sometimes the vapours that ascend in the morning come down in copious showers in the evening. So may it be with your prayers, beloved child of God. Take up the words of David (Psalm v. 3): "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." You remember Peter. (Acts xii.) He was cast into prison, "but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." And, behold, the same night the answer surprised them at the door. Oh, what surprises of goodness and grace God has in store for us if only we pray without ceasing!

Second, God often delays the answer to prayer for wise reasons. The case of the Syrophenician woman will occur to you all. (Matt. xv. 21-28.) How anxiously she cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David!" But Jesus answered her not a word. He had no blessing for her as the Son of David; but, as Lord of all, He could give her a crumb which, as a dog, she could receive; and it was not a small answer she got from Him: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

You remember that, in the parable of the importunate widow, it is said, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke xviii. 1-8.) This shows how you, who are God's children, should pray. You should cry day and night unto God. This shows how God hears every one of your cries, in the busy hour of the daytime, and in the lonely watches of the night. He treasures them up from day to day. Soon the full answer will come down: "He will answer speedily."

Do not be discouraged, dearly beloved, because God bears long with you, because He does not seem to answer your prayers. Your prayers are not lost. When the merchant sends his ships to distant shores, he does not expect them to come back richly laden in a single day; he has long patience. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Perhaps your prayers will come back, like the ships of the merchant, all the more heavily laden with blessings because of the delay.

Third, God often answers prayer by terrible things. So David says, in Psalm lxxv., "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." And all of you who are God's children have found it true. Some of you have experienced what John Newton

did when he wrote that hymn, "I asked the Lord that I might grow." You prayed with all your heart, "Lord, increase my faith." Your faith is increased by your prayer being answered by terrible things. Some of us prayed for a praying spirit. God has laid affliction upon us. Waves and billows go over us. We cry out of the depths. Being afflicted, we pray. He has granted our hearts' desire; our prayer is answered by terrible things.

Fourth, God sometimes answers prayer by giving something better than we ask. So the Lord Jesus dealt with His beloved Paul. (2 Cor. xii. 7-9.) Ah! this is something better than he asked, and better than he thought. Surely God is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians iii. 20.) Dear praying believers, be of good cheer. God will either give you what you ask, or something far better. Perhaps He may glorify Himself by us in another way than we thought. The Lord make you a praying people.—*Adapted.*

"Always Rejoicing."—"Why should we, believers, go to heaven weeping, as if we were likely to fall down through the earth for sorrow? None have right to joy but we; joy is sown for us, and an ill summer or harvest will not spoil the crop."

EARLY DEVOTEDNESS.

IN reading the account of the “singular vow” (Lev. xxvii.) it is worthy of notice that estimation is made according to age. Thus, in the case of a child being devoted to the Lord, from one month to five years of age, the value was set at five shekels of silver for a male; at twenty shekels from five to twenty; at fifty shekels from twenty to sixty; and then down to fifteen from sixty upwards. The highest estimation is placed on that period of life—twenty to sixty—when the faculties and energies are most fully in play. But this is striking, that a higher value is placed on the years between five and twenty than on those between sixty and upwards. A man who begins to devote himself to the Lord at sixty years of age is only worth fifteen shekels, whilst a youth under twenty is reckoned at five shekels more. This is significant. The earlier the better.

I have been struck of late by the thought that those whom God has deigned to use specially to instruct the church have been led to surrender themselves to the Lord when young. Saving grace may reach the soul at any period, and then surrender to the claims of Christ follow; but, as a rule, the best servants of Christ have been early converted, and early led to yield their hearts and lives to Him. The result is that such have been more signally owned in the help of His

people, and the unfolding of His word. And there is a moral ground for this. If a man live the best of his days in the gratification of his own pleasures, and set the will of God practically aside, must he not suffer the consequences in time, even though pardoned and brought to God? Grace may work wonders, and lead an old man thus converted to accomplish great things—doubtless; yet when, through the same grace, the young heart is won for Christ, and has thereby escaped the dulling, deadening effects of sin, it is certainly more easily trained and taught, and is therefore enabled to form a more correct judgment of truth, of things that differ, of those shades of meaning that call for a spiritual mind and a clear, undimmed eye.

Thus Saul was a “young man” when he was converted, and Timothy was a “youth;” and so in the history of the church it will be found that the prominent teachers and distinguished leaders have been early found of the Lord. True it is that more than mere youth is needed. Our passage speaks of *devotedness*. But a young heart devoted to Christ, and seeking to sustain that devotedness, is the heart that is used of Him.

This may well encourage the young. Sin is a dread master. Christ is worthy of our all. He died for us; He seeks our trust, our confidence, our love. He says, “Who will go for us?” He could send an angel. He would rather have you, dear young reader.

J. W. S.

THE SECOND MAN.

IN Colossians i. 16–18 the apostle presents the Person of the Son to the hearts and consciences of the saints in two aspects—as the Creator and Sustainer of all things; and as the Head of the body, the Church, the beginning of the new creation of God.

In the Old Testament we have the revelation from God, that in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth; and in the New Testament, where we have the full revelation also of the three Persons of the Godhead, we are taught that God created the worlds by *His Son*. (John i. 3; Heb. i. 2, &c.) Man, the last of His creatures formed on the earth, was placed at the head of the terrestrial creation. But, through his disobedience to God in Eden, all went to ruin under his hand. Tried in various ways during four thousand years, the awful condition of the human race finally expressed itself in the cross of Christ. Man crucified Him, filled his cup of iniquity to the brim, and brought himself under the sure judgment of God. His moral history, in a sense, ended at the cross. He had been fully tried, proved utterly worthless, incorrigibly wicked, and justly deserving eternal judgment.

Thus the introduction of Christ into the scene fully manifested man's condition, and his utter incapacity to rule for God. And the failure of the first man served as a platform to bring out the purpose and intention of God to fulfil all His plans in the hand of the Second. Rejected for the moment, and hidden in heaven, God will introduce His Son a second time in power. "All things were created by Him, and *for Him*." (Col. i. 16.) In the future God will make everything good in His hand, when every created intelligence *in heaven and in earth* will be subject to the Man whom God delighteth to honour.

But there is more than this. In verse 18 we read, "And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." This wonderful verse brings before us further glories of Christ, into which He has entered, as Man raised up from among the dead. Refused on earth, but now glorified on high, God has given Him a new position altogether, as "Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning," &c. The apostle presses this truth upon the consciences of the saints at Colosse, because they were in danger of not holding the Head. In Ephesians he states the wonderful fact, according to the counsels of God, that Christ is Head over all things *to* the Church, which is His body. But here, on account of the danger to

which the saints were exposed, he uses different language, pressing upon them the fact that Christ is the Head *of* the body, the Church. And hence the folly and sin of worshipping angels, who, great as they may be, are only creatures. Christ is *all*, and *in all*.

Christ then is the Head of the body, the Church, as the glorified Man at God's right hand. The Church, or assembly of God, is composed of sinners saved by grace. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, they are thereby united to Christ in glory, and to one another. This is the "great mystery" (Eph. v. 32), hidden in God during the past ages, and now revealed; set forth more particularly in the epistle to the Ephesians. But here in Colossians this mystery is also further treated of as manifested to His saints, to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles (Col. i. 27); that is to say, Christ in us, the hope of glory. Dear reader, what do you know of this precious truth?

All the children of God, having the Holy Ghost, possess the spiritual capacity to enter into these things; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God. (1 Cor. ii. 10.) It is the privilege of the babes and young men in the knowledge of Christ, as well as the fathers, to search into them. Paul passed through the deepest exercises of soul, and intense physical sufferings,

in order that the saints might arrive at the full knowledge of this glorious truth, knowing that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found therein. (Col. ii. 1-3.) Search then the Scriptures which treat of this wonderful secret. God will lead you on, and your soul will be deeply blessed and enriched; and the effect of these eternal realities will be to separate you morally more and more from the world and all its vanities.

And following the presentation of Christ in Colossians i. 18 as "Head of the body, the Church," we read, "Who is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (or, the first place). Christ raised up is *the beginning*. The history of the race of the first man was judicially ended at the cross. All was sin, ruin, and death. There was (and is) absolutely nothing in the natural man for God. Man was (and is) past all improvement *for Him*. You may patch him up for the world. The moral restraints of education, Christian teaching, and philanthropic efforts, may make something of him down here, as a better citizen of earth. But if it is a question of God and heaven, and that is the all-important one, there is nothing but sin, which He hates.

Christ risen is a new beginning altogether. He is presented here as the beginning, the first-born from among the dead. He is "the begin-

ning of the creation of God." (Rev. iii. 14.) This is His glorious position; established eternally as the risen Man. God has begun a new creation, of which Christ is Head and Chief, the firstborn from among the dead ones. All who are in Him are a new creation: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) Christians are *created* anew in Christ unto good works; *created* in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. ii. 10, iv. 24.) Satan has never planted his foot, and never can, upon the virgin soil of the new creation of God. He did his utmost at the cross, and man helped him as his willing instrument, to destroy the sent One of God. But the superior power came in, the mighty power of God. The resurrection is an open triumph. Satan has never, so to speak, crossed the empty grave of the risen Christ.

Reader, are you a believer in Christ—a Christian? Then are you in Christ, risen, *a new creation in Him*, the other side of death, judgment, hell, and all Satan's power! But the flesh is still in you, and if allowed for a moment, Satan can cause you sorrow, and, if you do not judge yourself, drag you into the mire of sin. But "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him," &c. (Col. ii. 6, 7); and Satan will be utterly powerless against you.

If you are not in Christ, you still form part of

the world which lieth in the wicked one ; you are still identified with the race of the first man, where all is wreck and ruin, and under the judgment of God. But His eye is on the second Man, the last Adam, Christ risen, the beginning ; and He sees all believers in Him. Glorious position ! Blessed privilege ! And all the fruit of His perfect grace.

And God has given Christ this new position as Man, firstborn from among the dead, that "*in all things He might have the pre-eminence*" (or, the first place). He is worthy ! And this being so, what utter folly to return to the adoration of angels, &c., the reasonings and speculations of the human brain, the shadows of a bygone age, or anything of man beneath the sun ! "*Christ is all, and in all.*" (Col. iii. 11.) Having Him, we have all things ; and to allow anything to come in between us and Him, is to dishonour Him, and to put ourselves at a distance. May God in His grace give to each believer who reads these lines to be occupied with Him alone, and the things where He sitteth at God's right hand, as identified with Him who is the triumphant Saviour over all the power of the enemy, *the beginning of the creation of God.*

E. H. C.

"Think not much of a storm upon the ship that Christ saileth in ; no one shall fall overboard ; but the crazed ship and sea-sick passengers shall come safe to land."

THE WILDERNESS : ITS CHARACTER, NECESSITY, AND OBJECT.

TO prevent disappointment it is important to know where the believer is actually brought by redemption. We take for granted, reader, that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have been redeemed by His precious blood. We trust you know and enjoy the blessed truth that you have been not only sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, but that you have crossed the Red Sea, and have seen the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. That is the same as saying you have, by the death of Christ, not only been delivered from the judgment of God (which fell on Him), but have also the conscious intelligence that the whole power of evil has been annulled therein.

If looked at morally, according to the value of the work done, the death and work of Jesus brings us to God ; but, as a matter of fact, where does it bring us *practically* ? Into the wilderness. The wilderness forms no part of the counsels of God, but it forms an important item in His ways, and must be traversed by every pilgrim Zionward.

What, then, is the character of this place in which so much of the believer's time is spent ?

It is described as a "vast, howling wilderness," "great and terrible," "where no water is;" nothing but the sun above and the sand below. But more than this; it is full of difficulties and dangers—"fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought." In the presence of such a picture we may well exclaim—

"Saviour, through the desert lead us,
Without Thee we cannot go."

Is this your experience of the wilderness, my friend? or do you know so little about it that you are ready to ask with some, "What is this wilderness about which we hear so much at times?" Egypt is used in Scripture as a figure of this world; the wilderness also means the world. But how can two places so opposed in character represent the one thing? Simply enough. Egypt represents the world to a natural, that is, an ordinary, unconverted man. The wilderness is what that same world becomes to one who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The natural man lives not only in, but of the world. In it he has the source of everything that can be called "life" practically, both in the way of sustainment and enjoyment. One thing, however, he has *not*, and that is true refreshment. "There is no rain in Egypt." But when once we have been taken out of this state of nature, through the reception of divine life and deliverance from our sins by the death of Christ, the very things that we

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formerly enjoyed and lived in become to us now only snares and hindrances. A child of God is not merely a person who will go to heaven when he dies—he belongs to heaven now, has a heavenly life, a heavenly object, a heavenly hope; his sustainment is also heavenly, and the character of his *ways* should correspond with all this blessedness which he has in Christ.

But you may say, If our God has loved us so much as not to spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us, why does He either bring us or allow us to come into these difficulties? To this Scripture supplies a definite answer. In many parts of the New Testament we are assured that the only pathway into the kingdom of God is through “much tribulation.” (Compare Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 12, &c.) The Apostle Paul tells us that we (or at any rate the apostles) are “appointed” to it (1 Thess. iii. 3); Peter tells us we are “called” to it (1 Peter ii. 20, 21); and the Lord Himself says we “shall have” it. (John xvi. 33.) But we learn also from the Apostle Peter that there is a good reason for this, that, in short, it is *necessary* (1 Peter i.); not to find out whether or not we have faith, but to bring into real and blessed exercise the faith which we have. And as it was with Israel of old, so is it with us now; there is an *object* as well as a necessity in passing through the trials and difficulties of the wilderness. The eighth chapter of Deuteronomy

says : “ The Lord thy God led thee . . . in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.” Was this all? Oh, no! it also adds, “ *to do thee good* at thy latter end.” (Deut. viii. 16.) The object, then, of all the trouble and difficulty is for *blessing*. But in order that this may be truly enjoyed, it is absolutely necessary that what is in our hearts should be practically brought to light, to make room, as it were, for the divine blessing. Now the sifting and testing, though necessary, is far from pleasant, and many a young believer is puzzled to understand it. To such I would say, “ Keep yourselves in the *love* of God, and you will be better able to understand His ways.” Remember, God does not alter His ways to suit us; we must conform to them. His government is inflexible, but His *grace* is abundant. The great thing is, to start your wilderness journey—that is, your practical Christian life on earth—with simple (and therefore strong) faith in Christ and the perfect work He has accomplished on your behalf, by which not only your sins are gone for ever from the sight and memory of God (Rom. iv. 8; Heb. x. 17), but your *place* also is changed before Him. Formerly you belonged to Adam, and therefore death and judgment were your portion; now you belong to Christ, and have His place as man in the presence of God. Perfect and blessed transfer! And if this is the beginning, what

shall the end be? Being with Him for ever in the Father's house. In the meantime much *experience* has to be gone through, but nothing that happens here can destroy or disturb God's purpose or our relationship with Him in Christ.

The wilderness detects the professor who is not genuine, and he is "overthrown;" but it only serves, by its very difficulties, to develop the life and faith of every genuine child of God.

B. W. K.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. T. A.—Music and fine singing in our day are likely to become a great snare, against which he who would walk with God should be on his guard. We are no admirers of slovenly singing, nor do we regard it as evidence of high spirituality for hymns to be sung so slowly that few can join in them without being utterly exhausted; at the same time, we believe the singing of a poor old saint, whose voice has no melody at all, but whose heart is right with God, is infinitely more acceptable in His sight than the singing of the ungodly, even if it be altogether perfect. Much of the music and singing which forms so large a part of what is called the public worship of God suggests the question, For whom is this "worship" intended? and whose ear is sought to be pleased? Alas! there can be but one answer. As to Christian parents permitting their children to learn music, each must judge for himself in such a matter. It is a question of conscience, and to his own Master he stands or falls. But we are persuaded great and godly care

should be taken, lest a thing lawful in itself should beguile our sons and daughters into dangerous paths, and create a craving for that which the world only can supply.

F. C.—We believe Christian baptism should be “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”—the full and complete revelation of God. In the Acts baptism, in certain instances, is said to have been to the name of the Lord Jesus. Why this difference, if it be one, we cannot tell, unless it be that in this early moment the Holy Ghost was bearing special witness to the fact that the crucified One, known on earth as *Jesus*, had been made both *Lord* and Christ. But we confess to our not having sufficient light upon the point to warrant our speaking with any degree of confidence.

M. H. M.—We never feel free ourselves to press the question of “total abstinence” on any. No one doubts that indulgence in strong drink is in itself a great sin, and productive of untold misery; but the gospel, not teetotalism, is the sovereign remedy. We believe the gospel is as mighty a weapon as ever, and what it did in apostolic days it can, with God’s blessing, do now. When Paul preached the gospel of God at Corinth many flagrant sinners were converted, and drunkards among them, but we have no reason to suppose they became teetotalers first. (1 Cor. vi. 9–11.) While you are seeking to make a man a “total abstainer,” his soul might be required of him; and what regrets would then be yours, that you had not used the precious moments to speak to him of Christ and His great salvation, and to warn him to flee from the wrath to come!

FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION.

PSALM xxxii. ; ROMANS iv. 4-8.

WE would say a few words about two blessed truths—forgiveness and justification. Both are in this psalm. The soul is not only forgiven, but justified, and that is much more than forgiveness; nor does it even stop with being justified, it goes on to find God its hiding-place, and the psalm concludes with an exhortation to “be glad *in the Lord*.” Well indeed may the soul that has passed through the experience of this psalm be glad in the Lord.

Let us begin with the first two verses. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” These two *blesseds* are within the reach of everyone. We may contrast them with two other “blesseds” found also in the book of Psalms. The first psalm opens with the words, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.”

Now no one could lay claim to that blessedness

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save the Lord Jesus Himself. You may observe that there is not only the abstaining from evil, but a positive walk with God—his delight is in the law of the Lord, etc. One sees at a glance that only One could claim that—the blessed Lord alone.

The other “blessed” is in Psalm cxix. 1, 2. “Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.” This is equally beyond us, and there never was a man who could claim it; but the blessedness of Psalm xxxii. we may all claim. I believe David knew something of it after Nathan went to him from God, and he was led to confess his sin. In Psalm li. you will find the exercises of heart he went through; and in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the second book of Samuel you may see the awful sin of which he had been guilty, and how right and needful it was that he should go through such exercises. Here, in Psalm xxxii., he speaks of the blessedness he had when he learned that his sin had been put away—“the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” But no one gets blessing without judging his ways before God, only let us not suppose, as some do, that our repentance moves God’s heart towards us. Oh no, the opposite is the case; it is “the goodness of God” that leads us to repentance. Surely it was not because we repented that God gave His

Son to die for us! No, His love was the motive.
(1 John iv. 9, 10.)

Look now at the third and fourth verses of our psalm. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." These verses express the exercises of many a soul, and the secret of all their misery is that, while feeling they are sinners before God, they will not confess it to Him. They keep silence about their sins, though they are not silent about their good deeds; and there is no chance of blessing as long as the soul keeps silence before God about its sins. Now, have you any sins covered up—sins known only to yourself, and hidden away out of sight—sins that you do not even like to think about? Well, if so, you cannot know forgiveness. Perhaps you say, "But how can I know that? I am sinning every day." Did you ever read that verse in Proverbs xxviii. 13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"? The third and fourth verses then of our Psalm describe the soul's misery while it keeps silence, and the fifth verse shows how the blessing comes. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my

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sin." Now, observe that verse well, "I acknowledged . . . and Thou forgavest." Here you see that repentance and acknowledgment go together, and what a result follows! Look with me at Psalm li., and see David's confession. He had not a good word to say of himself; all was bad, and everything was out. And when anyone is really honest with God he has no excuse to make; he is ready to take sides with God against himself. "Mine iniquity have I not hid," he says. "I am all wrong, and away from God." And then what follows? Why the experience of this fifth verse—"I acknowledged . . . Thou forgavest." It is only when a soul has gone through this that he knows the blessedness of Psalm xxxii.

But between these must come in the knowledge of how God can thus forgive sins, and Isaiah liii. supplies it. The chapter is prophetic of course, but it also furnishes a beautiful account of God's ways in grace, not alone with the Jewish nation, but with any poor sinner that comes to Christ. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"—such words tell what the Jews thought of Him; they only esteemed Him as smitten of God, and under His displeasure, and did not know that they had gone astray, and needed Christ as a Substitute before God; but can you understand it, and say, *I have gone astray, I have turned to my own way?* If you can, then you may add, "But all my iniquities

were laid on Christ. He suffered what I deserved to suffer, and there is no punishment left for me."

Now many know forgiveness who are not clear as to justification; and hence their difficulty is, What about the future? Those who thus speak know but little of the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Probably among our readers are two classes of persons. There are those who are unsaved, poor, miserable sinners, going on to meet God in judgment; and others who are saved, and have their sins forgiven. The latter are not miserable sinners, for God calls them saints. Still it is true, as 1 Timothy i. 15 puts it, that the child of God says, "Christ Jesus came . . . to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" but then he is a *saved sinner*, not a poor, *miserable, lost* sinner. Perhaps you say, "Well, but if they sin, what then? Surely they are miserable sinners." Not at all; if they have done wrong, and have got a bad conscience, they are miserable saints. The unsaved sinner will have to meet God about his sins at the great white throne. It will be a bad look out for any if God enters into judgment with them. There was only one Man that ever could enter into judgment with God about sin and come out of it—the Lord Jesus Christ; and the great difference between the saved sinner and the saint is, that one has to meet God, and

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the other has met God already about his sins. Do you ask, Where? At the cross. And now God has become his justifier; for He has raised out of the grave the One who was his Substitute, and put Him in heaven, and not only is He his Justifier, but his Father, and he can never come into judgment again.

A magistrate does not have his child brought before him on the bench, and sent to prison; he chastises him at home when he deserves it. You and I were once on our way to meet God on the bench, so to speak; but Christ has met Him there for us at the cross. How many sins had we committed then? Why none; they were all future, and they were all *atoned* for there, and now we are taken into the family as sons; and if I do sin, I have no longer to do with God as a Judge, but as a Father He will deal with me, an erring child, till the sin is confessed. He is never going to impute sin to me again; I am justified.

I know of nothing like this to lead to holiness of walk—to know that God will not impute sin. But suppose I sin, and any thing comes between me and the Father, when is the right time to get forgiven? Must I wait till the next time I am praying, or assembled to worship with His people? Not so; do not let the time go by without getting alone with the Father and confessing. We read in 1 John, that we have an Advocate with the Father, and that blessed Advocate

occupies Himself with us when we fail, applying His word to our consciences, until we confess our sin, and then we are forgiven and restored to communion.

Turn to Numbers, and you will see the difference between God not imputing sin to His people, and His noticing everything about them. (Chapter xxiii.) Balak, the king of Moab, had sent for Balaam to curse the Israelites, and God had met him and turned his curse into a blessing; but, (verse 15) Balaam went away to seek other help than God's, for the verse should not have the words "the Lord" at all. If you notice, they are not in the text, but in italics; so it really is, "And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt-offering, while I meet yonder." He did not say what or whom he was going to meet; but it was idle for him to try and do anything against God's people; for he himself was obliged to acknowledge that he could not. In verse 20 he says, "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; *and I cannot reverse it.* He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. . . . Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel."

That is the way God speaks for His people when Satan comes forward against them. He had brought them out of Egypt under the shelter of the blood of the passover, and now He was

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their Justifier. Satan sees, and we see, how wrong they often are; but God says, "I see no sin in them." He would not let Satan accuse them; and yet, in Deut. ix. 24, we find Moses telling them, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." There Moses is speaking to them like a father to his children, and that is very different from God speaking to Satan about us.

We can look back and see all our crooked ways, so often needing the Father's forgiveness; and how often He has had to chastise us just because we are His children!

Suppose a man says to one who is unsaved, "My transgressions are, forgiven, and my sins covered." The unsaved man will probably say, "Oh, I wish I were you! you can live as you like now." But will this be the language of the new-born soul? Does he desire to go to the theatre, and the public-house, etc.? All these are but the suggestions of Satan, and must be met as such. "For this shall everyone that is godly *pray* unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." (v. 6.) The knowledge of God puts a man on his knees.

And what are the floods of great waters? Death. But the believer looks at them and says, "They will not come nigh to me." He knows what it is to be associated with One who

has gone through them. "Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." (*v.* 7.) Then God, in infinite grace, answers, in verse 8: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Do not imagine that people are left to find their own way, or to live as they like. No, God will not allow them to do so; and if they will persist in doing their own will, many a good whipping they will get. It is a terrible thing when God's people have to be guided by bit and bridle, and most blessed to be guided by His eye; but I must be near Him and looking at Him for this.

The last verse gives us heaven begun on earth. "Be glad in the Lord," &c. But we cannot taste this without going through the previous exercises of the psalm.

M.

GRACE.

GRACE is that attribute of God in which He acts from Himself towards sinners to bring them into possession of the privileges which it confers; to lead the reconciled heart into the enjoyment of what He is in His own being—God is love.

The gospel is the message sent from Him to man beseeching him to be reconciled to God. He

who believes the message is taken into favour in the "Beloved" according to the riches of His grace. (Eph. i.) Christ and His finished work alone become the foundation and measure of acceptance with God. Thus grace excludes works as the ground of the sinner's acceptance, or it would cease to be what it is, *i.e.* unmerited favour. Grace brings salvation. (Titus ii.) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii.) And boasting is excluded, because if a man's works are good for nothing before God, and he can only be saved on the principle of faith in Christ Jesus, which Romans iii. teaches, it is clear he has nothing to boast about.

When grace is thus received, the Holy Ghost dwells in us (John xiv. 17; 1 Cor. vi. 19); power is given over sin, and good works are produced; for He occupies the heart with Christ in glory, makes His people one with Himself now, in one body (Eph. i. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xii. 13), and transforms us into His image. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 5.)

Grace will help us all along the road; keep us safely to the journey's end; and bring us into glory above with Christ for ever, to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

A.

SCHOOL DAYS.

NOW is the Christian's schooltime. *Hereafter* his eternal holiday in the Father's house.

We are left here, surrounded by temptations and hostile influences, in order that we may learn about God and man in a way we could not learn in heaven. Never there shall we know the Lord's sympathy with suffering, His priestly ministry, His being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, nor shall we know Him there as our refuge and strength, our help in trouble. Not there will He be "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isaiah xxxii. 2.) To know Him thus we must be living in this busy, everyday world.

Obedience is the first lesson to be learnt by every son born into the family of God. Willing, loving obedience. It cannot be evaded or ignored—it is not what is called an "optional subject," for it is a foundation principle of God's government, and is of the greatest importance. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.)

Again, we are learning dependence and faith ; a simple trust in God. He would have us leave with Him *all* our cares, nor will He ever say our

little troubles are beneath His notice, or our great ones beyond His everlasting strength. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee : because he trusteth in Thee." (Isa. xxvi. 3.)

"Oh, to trust Him then more fully !
 Just to simply move
 In the conscious calm enjoyment
 Of the Father's love ;
 Knowing that life's chequered pathway
 Leadeth to His rest ;
 Satisfied the way He taketh
 Must be always best."

Often, like children, we feel sure we know our lessons, and not until put to the test do we discover how far short we come, and so it is the *trial* of our faith that is so precious to the Lord. The testing shows what it is worth.

It is only since we began our new life in the school of God we have learnt the true value of earthly things. What we once prided ourselves on, and would not give up for the world, we are learning to count but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Hitherto the interests of time absorbed all our thoughts. They seemed so important and so engrossing, yet we learn little by little to "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." Then too the reproach of Christ, which once we feared, we now by grace "esteem greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

What we value is our treasure, and that treasure is in heaven. What wonder then that oftentimes our hearts are drawn away to that radiant place, and our thoughts occupied with all that divine love has prepared for us in the Father's house!

Now, brought into His marvellous light, we see things at their proper value, because the light makes manifest what they are worth; and it does not surprise us to find much that is "highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke xvi. 15.)

We meet many people in our daily life with whom we never get beneath the surface. The ordinary civilities of society are all that pass between us. We feel at times that we should like to speak to them about the unseen things which interest us so nearly, yet we do not know how to reach them; for to the sorrowing, the anxious, and the careless we must speak in a way that will reach the heart before we can hope to do them any good. "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." (1 Cor. xiv. 9.)

The question we have now to consider is, How may we learn these lessons? I answer, We learn as children do, by imitation. The Son of God became Son of man that He might leave us "an example that ye should follow His steps." Even the Christian must have an ideal, and, lest

we should fix our thoughts on a less worthy object, the Father has given us His beloved Son as a divine example of one whose life was pleasing to God in every detail.

If we look for obedience, we shall find it in Him. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; He was obedient even unto death. Or faith, He, the just One, lived by faith; even His enemies testified that He trusted in God. (Matt. xxvii. 43.)

Then, again, He did not value things as men do. "All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," were not worth the price Satan asked; but to obtain the pearl of great price He sold all that He had. He left heaven's glories that He might share and sympathise with the sorrows of earth; therefore *He* could say, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." (Isaiah l. 4.) All men wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, for "never man spake like this man."

When we look at children's copy-books, we usually notice the writing gets less and less like the copy the further we look down the page. Everyone knows the reason. The writer has been copying his own work, instead of looking at the pattern. This we need to guard against. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass

the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii.) It is a well-known fact, that we become like those with whom we are much in company. May we, like Enoch, walk with God, so that our earthly career may bear the marks of our heavenly intercourse !

We now come to other considerations which materially influence our school life. We are not the only scholars in this world. All round us men are seeking for knowledge—for truth. But there are important differences between our companions and ourselves. They are members of another family, with different prospects and different hopes. They are "children of darkness," but we "children of light." They do not admit this, however, but laugh at our pretensions, and deny our heavenly origin ; and, should one of our number meet them in the busy throng, they little reckon nor care to know that *royalty* has passed that way.

Then, again, they do not acknowledge the same Teacher as we do ; they resist the Holy Ghost, and stifle the conviction "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" which He urges upon them. Thus, disbelieving that He alone is able to guide into all truth, they are still endeavouring, aided by the light of science and the speculations of their predecessors, to arrive at some satisfactory decision as to whence they came and whither they are

going. They are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. It need not surprise us that their studies differ from ours, for the elementary lesson, obedience, they have never learned. They have not obeyed the gospel. They have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. They study themselves—their possible past, their positive present, and their probable future; the world, with all that is on it, in it, or around it; but the God who created it and them they do not care to know. Thus, despising the Textbook which would solve their difficulties, they continue their researches with an energy and perseverance which often puts us to shame.

Then there are the drones of the hive—those who have no wish to learn, and only hinder those who would. Their motto is; “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.” They are often pleasant and agreeable in manner, and will talk by the hour on any ordinary topic of conversation, but any reference to that exalted Name so dear to us will bring out their latent enmity to the family of God.

Having these opposing influences around us, no wonder our thoughts often turn to the place “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;” and knowing the eternal blessedness that awaits us, we long for the place prepared in the Father’s house.

We are here not only to learn our appointed

lessons, but also to help others with theirs. We have brethren and sisters scattered up and down this world-wide schoolroom whom it is our privilege, as well as our duty, to care for as we are able; and surely the Lord Jesus watches to see how we are looking after those He fondly calls "*my* brethren," and to each effort for their good He will say, "Ye have done it unto *Me*." (Matt. xxv. 40.)

If a brother sins, our faith is evil spoken of, and our Father's house dishonoured; but if we had helped the erring one with counsel and encouragement, maybe he had never fallen.

From time to time one and another is taken away from amongst us. His school-days are ended, he has gone *home*. And our days on earth will soon be over—our Lord will gather us to Himself ere long. Then, no more in twos or threes, but in one triumphant host we shall leave this weary world—our school-time for ever ended, our eternal holiday begun. Then exultant, unhindered joy will fill every heart; for "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psalm xxx. 5.)

"Oh, the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
Oh, the wondrous words of greeting
He shall speak at last!
He and I in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share:
Mine, to be for ever with Him;
His, that I am there."

ANON.

RELIGION.

THIS is a word found often upon men's lips, but seldom in the Scriptures. By men it is used in different ways, some building their thoughts of happiness and hopes of eternal bliss upon it; as it is said—

“’T is religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
’T is religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die.”

Other men affect to despise religion, thinking that it is ever vain. Now, though Scripture seldom uses the word, it corrects both these extreme and erroneous notions.

We read of “*the Jews’ religion.*” (Gal. i. 13, 14.) When Paul stood before Agrippa, he said, “After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” (Acts xxvi. 5.) To this sect, then, we must look for the perfection of religion according to the flesh. We read much of it in the four gospels. They were so scrupulous in the observance of religious ceremonies that they would not eat without washing or baptising their hands. They ceremonially cleansed the vessels which contained their food, the couches upon which they reclined to take it, and their hands by which

they partook of it. (Mark vii.) They were so particular as to the tithes which were due to God that they tithed even mint and anise and cummin. (Matt. xxiii. 23.) Yet, for all that, they knew not God, nor practised His ways in judgment, mercy, and faith. When His Son was amongst them they condemned Him as irreligious, because He performed His acts of mercy upon the Sabbath-day, and, at the last, clamoured for His death as a blasphemer. He said, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matt. xii. 7.) That is, the manifestation of God's character is more pleasing to Him than any outward rites or ceremonies. But, alas! how could they exhibit His character whom they knew not?

In this "most straitest sect" of religion Paul had the *very chieftest* place. (See Phil. iii.) And yet, when his eyes were opened, how vain all his religion appeared! Pursuing it in the most zealous way, he found himself in open rebellion against God, His Christ, and His saints. The highest degree attainable in religion according to the flesh is worth no more than this. With all his boasted privileges and zeal he found himself the chief of sinners, dependent for salvation wholly upon that Jesus of Nazareth whom he had despised, and whose followers he had persecuted. He obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief;

and his heart rejoiced in that faithful saying which he wrote for others, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. i. 15.)

Dear reader, to which are you trusting for salvation—your religion, or Christ Jesus? If the former, your hopes are vain; take heed lest you perish for ever. If the latter, you are happy; for it is the knowledge of that precious Saviour which gives sweetest pleasures while we live, and sustains with solid comfort when we pass from this world.

Now James speaks in his epistle of "*pure religion and undefiled*." (James i. 27.) What is that? The reproduction of God's own character in mercy and holiness. And in whom does that take place? In those who can say, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." (v. 18.) They are begotten of God. Only in those who are partakers of the divine nature can the divine character be manifested. Many use the epistle of James in a very bad way, avowing that religion and works can render a sinner acceptable to God. But let us begin where he begins. Let us listen to him as he says, "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." He therefore exhorts

us to be swift to hear. Wherefore? Because the word of God, coming to us from Himself, is the instrument by which we are begotten, and by which all that is pleasing in His sight is wrought in us. All comes from Him. Let us never lose sight of this momentous principle in reading the epistle of James.

The Word acts upon the heart, and thus produces the results which are according to God. Others see the results and judge accordingly. Thus he says, "If any man among you *seem to be religious*, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." How perfect an expression of this we have in the Pharisees of whom we have spoken. Their religious appearance was wonderful. But their words to the Son of God, spoken out of the abundance of the heart, betrayed their ignorance of God and His ways. "Go ye," He bade them, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." (Matt. ix. 13.)

He would have them know their ignorance and need, that they might come to Him as the Physician who alone could heal them. Alas! they refused, and He could only pronounce judgment upon them as hypocrites, whose hearts were deceived, and whose appearance deceived others. (Matt. xxiii.)

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and

widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It is said of God, "In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." (Hosea xiv. 2, 3.) *We* were as fatherless in this world of sin and sorrow, for our hearts were bereft of all true comfort and blessing. There was not a thing we turned to for protection and solace but death struck it sooner or later. We turned to Him, as prodigals who had sought joy in a far-off country, but had found only deepening misery. We turned to Him who received us more graciously than tongue can tell, and took away by the sacrifice of Christ *all* our iniquity. We have obtained mercy. Now, as knowing Him, our Father, we may turn to this weary world to find objects of compassion in the fatherless and widows. We may follow in His steps of whom it is written, "He went about doing good." Precious occupation!

Are we religious in this way? Has this word its true place in our hearts? Do we diligently seek out those whom death has afflicted, whom sorrow has stricken? and do we take pleasure in ministering to them, not as an act of mere philanthropy, but as expressing the kindness of God? Note that we are not bidden to form or join charitable institutions, benevolent societies, sick clubs, or the like. Donations or subscriptions are not sought. It is said, "To VISIT." What is insisted upon is the personal manifestation of the

compassions of God in individual intercourse with the afflicted. And how sweetly may *all* do this who are abiding in communion with that heart from whence all true comfort flows; though some may have to say, with an apostle of Christ, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." (Acts iii. 6.) More than money he gave to that poor cripple, for he linked him with the all-powerful name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. That precious name of Him who meets all need may be borne by the poorest saint that loves it into the house of the afflicted and sorrowing.

But while *the grace of the Father* is manifested *the holiness of God* is to be maintained. How perfectly this was so in Jesus! The Father was fully manifested in Him in perfect love and grace; yet even demons owned Him as "the Holy One of God." The world has cast off God to do its own will in corruption and violence. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) Solemn words! How many allow what are called "charitable purposes" to link them with worldly ways and worldly people. Let us remember this, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father consists not alone in visiting the afflicted, but also in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. It has its two elements which

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cannot be separated; we are TO VISIT in the activity of love and grace; but we are also TO KEEP ourselves in the unrelenting exclusivism of holiness.

This is a day of much religion. The heart wearies amid that which has a form of godliness, but denies its power. May God, our Father, grant that our hearts may be abiding in holy separation to Himself, and in the full enjoyment of His love and infinite goodness, that so we may be found practising in this world pure religion and undefiled.

J. R.

 THE NATURAL LIFE AND THE DIVINE.

WHEN born into this world, we get a life which, if in a healthy condition, is capable of entering into and enjoying the scene and surroundings into which we have been introduced. In weakness and feebleness at first; but as the life grows, and is developed (which of course is dependent on the necessary air, light, and food by which that life is nourished), our capacity for the enjoyment of all that makes up that life grows likewise. Exactly in the same way when born of God. We get a life communicated, entirely independent of the old natural life, which introduces us into an entirely new sphere, with a capacity of entering into all that makes

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up that life—its tastes, enjoyments, and associations, which must be nourished and cherished with food, air, and light, suitable to that life. To attempt to mix oil with water would be fruitless; they are of altogether different consistencies, and will not assimilate. So with the natural life and the divine life. Each has its own traits and features, diametrically opposed to each other; therefore to attempt to nourish the one with things suitable to the other only, is not only fruitless, but produces exactly the contrary effect to that desired. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” (Galatians v. 17.)

One cannot get too clear as to this; viz., to trace every thought, word, or act to one or the other of these natures. That is what makes John’s epistle so beautiful—he goes to the root of things. Therefore he says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” It is not that a Christian never sins; but what the apostle maintains is, that the divine life which is in him, and which he has received of God, does not sin, nay more, cannot sin. On the other hand, “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy

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the works of the devil." When a Christian sins, he is letting the old nature act, which is energised by the devil. To destroy the works of the devil, the Son of God was manifested. As we have it so beautifully in Hebrews ii. 14, 15, "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." So that if sin comes in (whilst deploring it and judging myself for having allowed the old nature to act), I am not to be disappointed; for nothing else could result from allowing that to act which is evil in its essence and source. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit, either in myself or others, springs not from any improvement in the old nature, but is a manifestation of that divine life which was so perfectly displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but which, from various hindrances in us, is prevented from shining out in its fulness.

May we each have grace to clearly distinguish between the two natures, and to trace the workings of each to their right source. May it be ours also to pass on our pilgrim way, letting the life of Jesus shine in our mortal body, and thus bearing a bright testimony for Christ to this poor world which lieth in the wicked one. F. H. C.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. R.—In answer to your enquiry as to the difference between “*quickened*” and “*quickened together with Christ*,” we believe the latter expression goes beyond the former. If we think of a person being “quickened,” we think of him as one who was dead in trespasses and sins, but who now has received spiritual life from “God, who quickeneth the dead.” But “*quickened together with Christ*” conveys the thought of identification with Christ, which the word “quickened alone does not.” When the blessed Lord was here on earth souls were quickened; but not until He had died and was raised again could it be said of any that they were “*quickened together with Christ*.” Since His resurrection every quickened soul is quickened together with Him, though, alas! how few have by faith and divinely-given intelligence entered into it.

As to your second question, we fully agree with the author whose words you quote, that new birth alone does not fit any one to stand in the holiest. That no one can be there without being born again is most true; but it is often the case that when a soul is born again it feels, as it never felt before, its unfitness to be there. And this is easily understood, for if God gives me a new nature it is a holy nature, that hates sin, and it makes me keenly alive to the fact that I am a sinner, and have a sinful nature too. What makes a soul consciously fit to be where God is in the holiest is

the knowledge of eternal redemption by the precious blood of Christ. No doubt when a person is born of God he is entitled to enter the holiest, and made meet to be there, as far as the blood of Christ is concerned ; but he does not and cannot take that place of nearness to God unless his conscience is purged. How the Spirit of God labours, in Hebrews ix. x., to present that which would purge the conscience in order that those whose privilege it is to be in the holiest might draw near ! It is evident, therefore, that new birth alone is not enough to fit a man for the holiest ; his sins must also be put away according to the requirements of divine righteousness, and this is accomplished by the blood of Christ. And though it be true that the sins of the youngest and feeblest believer have been put away, yet until he knows that they have he will not be free in the presence of God, and in his conscience he will feel that the holiest is no place for him.

We trust these brief remarks will make the matter clear to you ; but if not, we shall be glad to hear from you again.

PHILIPPIANS i. 18.—It was in the fact that Christ was preached that Paul rejoiced, even though the motives that led some to preach Him were to be deeply censured. Alas ! that any should preach Him of envy and strife. Yet it was so. Such is the heart of man. But Paul did and would rejoice that Christ was preached. The reasons that disposed some to preach Him might be and were unworthy. With such Paul could have no fellowship ; but nevertheless Christ *was* preached, and that was a matter of continual rejoicing to the beloved apostle.

DEEP PLOUGHING.

THERE was nothing superficial in the gospel of Paul. His preaching was always searching. It did not skim the surface nor heal the hurt slightly by saying, "Peace, peace," when there was none. It did not call for a mere profession of faith nor a dead intellectual assent; nay, it laid the conscience bare, and put its finger on sin. It dealt not only with overt acts of evil, but with the corrupt nature from which they sprang. It left no stone unturned. It was influential, and resulted either in its deliberate rejection as a thing intolerable, or in its reception as a thing precious beyond comparison. It was either a warrant of death or "the power of God unto salvation." This is true of the gospel as such always; but in Paul we find the fullest and most abundant testimony to Christianity, and therefore it is well to refer to him as our model.

Thus in Acts xxvi. 20 we have a summary of his method and mode of work. He "shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." This is doubtless a fair sample of his style.

Three weighty truths burdened his soul, and lay at the bottom of his preaching—

1. Repentance.
2. Turning to God.
3. Works meet for repentance.

And these three truths, observe, were urged by him everywhere, and on all classes. Unto them of Damascus first, where he first saw the light, and where in the Jewish synagogue he preached that “Jesus was the Son of God;” then at Jerusalem, not yet finally judged, but having at least a semblance of God’s favour and privilege; then in Judæa; and lastly, to the Gentiles, ignorant of God and given over to sin. Everywhere and always the same appeal comes from his lips, for the simple reason that one response is incumbent on all.

Repentance is the *sine quâ non* for Jew and Gentile. Yes, repentance lies at the bottom of all true religion. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” said the Lord when on earth.

You may as well expect to see a house without a foundation as a saved soul without repentance. Such a thing does not exist.

Granted that “*all have sinned*,” then all must repent. Granted that “there is none righteous,” then all must repent.

It is an absolute necessity. It is a thing that cannot be avoided, nor can a substitute for it be found. Each one must for himself own his personal guilt and judge his evil condition.

Let us look at our three truths backwards—"Works meet for repentance." In these works we find the fruit growing on the tree. Anyone can tell that the tree lives and is healthy, because of the crop it is bearing. Its life is developed in fruit. If there were no fruit the tree had better be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. But there is fruit. It is the necessary evidence of the life. The fruit does not produce the life, but the life the fruit. You might decorate the tree with fruit, but that would not give it life.

Further, if the tree be corrupt, the fruit is corrupt too; but the good fruit declares the nature of the tree to be good also.

Then as to the second truth—"Turning to God." This is an act of the soul that, though subsequent to repentance, is yet prior to the production of works meet for it. It is the outward and upward glance of faith that lets in the sunshine. It is the completion of repentance—the obverse of the coin, whilst the works are the music of its ring and the witness of its genuineness. "Turning to God" implies not only turning to good works, for that is found in "works meet for repentance." In them you have morality, sobriety, honesty, truth, holiness, separation from the world, devotedness to Christ, &c.; but in turning to God it is confronting a living Person.

Philosophy turns you to a thing, perhaps a good thing. It may make a drunkard turn to

temperance, an impure man to chastity; but Christianity turns you, whatever you are, to *God*. Yes, to God, and to nothing short of God.

If thus brought to God, works meet for repentance are natural. How could the soul that is brought to God, in all the deep meaning of the fact, produce evil works? Impossible! Discoveries of failure there may be, but if the soul be connected with God it becomes indirectly like Him too.

Then lastly, *repentance*. This occupies the lowest and deepest place. It implies *self-judgment* in the presence of God. It is a change of mind in reference to myself, to others, and to God; such a change of mind that humbles me in the dust, putting me in my true and proper place before Him. I say then, like the prodigal, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Oh the unbounded value of this full admission of total demerit! If absolutely necessary, it is also profoundly blessed; if deeply humbling, it is also divinely elevating. It puts the soul right with God, it anticipates and averts His judgment of it, and acknowledges His holiness by a true confession of its own guilt.

But is there merit in repentance? None. It is one of the activities of faith—the initial, dawning activity of the Spirit of God as He

of all merit. Else why called *repentance*? An eternal difference exists between repentance and "doing penance"—the one is self-condemnatory, but the other is self-exalting. The one is seen in the offering of Abel, the other in that of Cain. Our days may not be worse than other days, but they have seen wave on wave of grace rolling over the world as never before. When was there more zeal in every branch of Christian work? or in a thousand ways the spread of the truth of the gospel? Light has been diffused by the God of all grace during the past half century as never witnessed since apostolic times, and on all hands men have awakened to the knowledge of this grace.

But here is the danger. Levity is fast gaining ground as legality disappears, and preaching that pleases the ear is preferred to that which deals with sin. It is well, therefore, to listen to the words of the apostle to the Gentiles, and to be reminded of that repentance, that turning to God and those works meet for repentance, that threefold testimony which he preached so faithfully in his day. To follow in his steps cannot be wrong. J. W. S.

FRAGMENT.

"God in the types of the last dispensation was teaching His children their letters. In this dispensation He is teaching them to put these letters together, and they find that the letters, arrange them as they will, spell Christ, and nothing but Christ."

“THAT’S MY HOME, SIR.”

WHEN distributing gospel tracts at a village in the Yorkshire dales, some dozen miles from any railway station, we entered the dwelling of a dear old saint of God, eighty-four years of age, who lived alone. One room was all she occupied, and every thing in it bespoke the most abject poverty; for if the contents of her apartment had been knocked down at the hammer, the whole would not have fetched much more than five shillings.

Being desirous of cheering and comforting my old friend, I remarked to her:

“Well, Margaret, soon we shall have done for ever with the trials and difficulties of the way, and be fully happy with the blessed Lord Jesus Christ up yonder.”

“That’s my home, sir,” said she.

Finding I had begun much below the mark, I sped on, with the view of helping her if possible, and said:

“Yes, Margaret, soon we shall be in that bright *home*, the Father’s house above, with the Lord Jesus, and around Himself, rejoicing ever in His presence.”

“I live there, sir,” was her bright and smiling reply.

Finding myself still very considerably in the rear, I with quickened step hastened forward, if it were possible, to offer a little help and cheer to my advanced sister in Christ.

"How blessed it will be, Margaret—will it not?—when we and all the redeemed, from every clime and of every age, are gathered around the blessed One, who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and when we are praising Him together in the glory for ever!"

"I sing there every night, sir," was her overwhelming and joyous reply.

Thus our expectations were far more than realized; for, instead of helping her, we were cheered and helped ourselves. And so it is: "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Proverbs xi. 25.)

Here was a soul, spite of adverse circumstances, going on in communion with her Lord, delighting in *Himself*, and knowing much of His love, worth, and excellencies. We visited nearly every house in the hamlet, and spoke to most of the inhabitants about their souls, and it was clear that this isolated believer was God's witness to the people among whom she lived. She is one of the bright lights in this dark world.

How happy to see a saint of God thus living *above* circumstances; yea, rather using those very circumstances whereby to glorify God! Not dragged down by trials, as, alas! so many are; but, through grace, using the trials to glorify the

One she loves, because He loved her first. "*Whom* having not seen, ye love; *in whom*, though now ye see Him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice with joy *unspeakable and full of glory*." (1 Peter i. 8.)

No doubts and fears with our old friend Margaret; no such dishonouring expressions as, "I am doing my best," "trying," "striving," "hoping," "feeling," and the like. No; she knows with divine certainty where her *home* is. She *lives there*, and *sings there* every night. Could any thing be more exquisitely beautiful this side that *home* itself? Impossible.

God grant that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who reads these lines may be led into the reality of such blessedness as characterized dear old Margaret I——, of B——. Most assuredly such will be the case, in proportion as we keep company with and are delighting in the One of whom the apostle Paul said, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me;" and who Himself said to His own before He went to heaven, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that *where I am, there ye may be also*." (John xiv. 3.)

"High in the Father's house above,
Our mansion is prepared;
There is the *home*, the rest we love,
And there our bright reward.

"With *Him we love*, in spotless white,
In glory we shall shine;
His blissful presence our delight,
In love and joy divine."

J. N.

ACCESS TO GOD IN THE HOLIEST.

HEBREWS x. 11-22.

THE great point in this part of the epistle to the Hebrews is access to God in the holiest, and here too we may learn what is needed on our part to be there.

It should not be forgotten that the epistle was addressed in the first place to Hebrew Christians. Therefore its great truths are presented in forms familiar to the Hebrew mind, and allusions made to things in which every Jew had been instructed from his youth up.

To approach God in the holiest when the first tabernacle was standing was the privilege of the high priest alone. None but he could enter there. Nor indeed could he enter when and how he pleased. "Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place *within the vail* . . . that he die not." Such were Jehovah's words to Moses. (Lev. xvi. 2.)

It is easy to understand that to a Jew the most awe-inspiring spot on earth was within that mysterious vail of blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen which shut God in and man out; for there between "the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat" God vouchsafed His presence. He dwelt between the cherubim.

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Hence the ark was called "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim;" and the most solemn and pathetic appeals for help were addressed to Him as dwelling there. (1 Samuel iv. 4; 2 Kings xix. 15; Psalm lxxx. 1.)

No wonder then that the Hebrew Christians were slow to take the place of nearness to God in the holiest which Christianity plainly declares to be theirs and ours. No wonder they were slow to perceive that liberty to enter the holiest was now the common privilege of all believers. No wonder the Holy Ghost leads the writer of this epistle, himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," to encourage them to draw near with a true heart; not timidly, but in full assurance of faith. And it may be seen in reading the ninth and tenth chapters what pains God graciously takes to remove everything from heart and conscience that would hinder their doing so.

But some reader may ask, How can it be possible for a poor sinner to find his present home in the holiest, seeing that his sins are beyond number, and that he inherits a nature utterly at variance with God? Would not the sanctity of that place be intolerable, and the holiness of Him who dwells there wither him up like a leaf? Would he not flee from such a spot, where nothing is found in accord with what he is? What shall we say to this but confess

that, speaking naturally, and of man in his un-renewed state, such would be the case beyond doubt? But, blessed be God, He Himself tells us what is required in order to be in the holiest without an atom of fear, and not only so, but the soul glad to be there, no place in the wide universe being more sweet and sacred.

If the reader will now cast his eye on the second part of Hebrews x. 22, he will find two things named, without which none can enter the holiest. First, the heart must be sprinkled from an evil conscience; and in the second place, the body must be washed with pure water. Both of these great privileges are attached to the Christian position, the latter being true of all believers alike; but, alas! there are not a few who know nothing of the former, and hence abiding nearness to God in the holiest they do not understand.

An evil conscience is a conscience not purged from a sense of sin and guilt before God. I do not say a hardened conscience; for indeed he who possesses it may keenly feel his sins, and bewail his unfitness for the presence of God with tears and unutterable groans. Prayers, penances, acts of mortification, religious duties rigorously performed with a view to propitiate God, may have been for a long time his chief occupation; still the conscience remains evil, and it lies upon the heart a crushing weight, grievous to be borne.

And well it might; for none of these things can give relief—nothing can sprinkle the heart from an evil conscience but faith in the blood of Christ.

The mention of the blood of Christ carries our thoughts to Calvary. There, through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God; and there, by the sacrifice of Himself, He made atonement for our sins. We may forget for the moment man's part in that cross—himself the willing tool of Satan—and fix our thoughts on the other side of it, in which man had no place save that which his sins gave him; for it pleased *the Lord* to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief. No other hand than His laid on the spotless Victim the iniquity of us all. Let the rent veil, the riven rocks, the quaking earth, attest the solemnity of that hour; and, above all, the mournful words that brake through the encircling gloom, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Ah, why was that? Why should He have suffered thus, and have been forsaken of God in the hour of His direst need? Why did deep call unto deep, until it could be said, "*All* Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me"? Was there no shelter from the pitiless storm? none to say, "Peace, be still"? Would not Righteousness relax her claims? Must the last farthing be paid? Who can answer such questions but the one who knows how impossible it was for

God to bless otherwise than righteously? or who attempt to solve the mystery of "the death of the cross" save those who, taught of God, know something of sin, on the one hand, and of divine righteousness on the other?

How great the peace that flows from knowing that our sins have already received their due reward! Not seeing this is one reason why so many are seeking, by various means, to reach a point where they hope God may meet them and bless them. To all such we would say,—Your labours, be they ever so abundant; your prayers, be they ever so earnest; your repentance, be it ever so sincere, can never bring true peace to your troubled conscience. If the endless doings of the Hebrew worshippers, their ceaseless sacrifices, and the perpetual work of their priesthood could not give a purged conscience, why should you think that aught you can do and say and feel will meet with better success? You are on the wrong track.

"Not through works of weary toil
Comes the sunshine of God's smile."

The needful work is already done. The blood has been shed, without which there is no remission. (Heb. ix. 22.) God is satisfied, and

"Dark though thy guilt appear,
And deep its crimson dye,
There's boundless mercy here,
Do not from mercy fly :

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“Oh, do not doubt His word,
 There’s pardon full and free ;
 For Justice smote the Lord,
 And sheaths her sword for thee !”

That the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, every Hebrew knew—their sacrifices and ceremonies bare witness to it. (Num. xix.) If this be so, and who would dream of denying it? then, “How *much more* shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” What a question! Let the reader ponder it well.

“Dead works.” It is thus the Spirit of God speaks of that vast system of “meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances,” from which the Hebrew Christians had partly turned away, and to which they were in danger of returning. What a crushing comment on the ritualistic pretensions of the present day, which in their best features are confessedly but clumsy imitations of the tabernacle and temple service, with its imposing ritual. Yet the religious duties which so many take upon themselves make the doers of them look so good! Early morning service rarely missed, “holy communion” received fasting that it may benefit the more, the festivals of the Church devotionally observed, works of philanthropy undertaken, and a thousand things beside, and all for what?—that God, as they

think, might be better pleased with them, and their souls' salvation placed on a surer basis! But all these seemingly pious deeds done from such a motive are nothing more than "dead works," from which the blood of Christ purges the conscience. For why toil thus? It is **THE BLOOD** that makes an atonement for the soul. Not the blood and something else, but the blood alone. Did any serve Christ with the energy of a Paul, and love Him with the ardour of a John, what would their service and their love add to the precious blood of Christ? Nothing! And it is by one offering that the feeblest believer in Jesus is perfected for ever. Can that which is perfect be improved, or anything added to what is complete? Now the believer's place before God is as perfect as the blood of Jesus can make it, and *in Him* he is complete. (Col. ii. 10.)

But this is not all. The body must be washed with pure water, as well as the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. Here is an evident allusion to Leviticus viii. 6. Aaron and his sons, when set apart for the priesthood, were thus washed ere being clothed in their priestly garments. That washing, as an act of consecration, had never to be repeated; it was done once and for ever. The washing of hands and feet in the brazen laver was of frequent occurrence, as often indeed as the priests went into the tabernacle to accomplish the service there (Exod. xxx. 18-21);

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but not so the washing whereof we speak. Will the reader kindly notice that? And it is to both of these washings that the Lord Jesus makes reference in John xiii. 10: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

There is no repetition then, we anxiously repeat, of the first washing. Once done, it remains in its undiminished efficacy; for the person so washed is "clean every whit."

Nor should it be overlooked that in both cases the cleansing agent is *water*, not blood. Out of the pierced side of Christ came both blood and water (John xix. 34)—blood to expiate, and water to cleanse. What then are we to learn by the words, "Our bodies washed with pure water"? The meaning should be plain. We believe it to be none other than the *new birth*; that mighty, moral cleansing which is effected when an individual is "born of water and of the Spirit." (John iii. 5.) It is hardly necessary to say that actual water is no more meant in John iii. than in John iv. 14, or in John vii. 38; but under the similitude of water is set forth the cleansing and life-giving power of the divine word when clothed with the energy of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the believer is said to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter i. 23.) The body is washed with pure water—once for all.

How suitably does the exhortation, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," connect itself with these two great blessings ! The new birth alone does not give conscious fitness to be in the holiest in blessed nearness to God, though none can be there without it. The power of the blood of Jesus must be also known ; for it is that which sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience. The former is God's answer to what I am, the latter to what I have done.

Do you, my reader, know what it is to have the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and the body washed with pure water ? Are you born again ? and have you apprehended in your inmost soul the value of the blood of Christ ? If you are a believer in Jesus, you have liberty to enter into the holiest. His blood gives you that. God Himself declares He will remember your sins and iniquities no more. It is no question of what you are, but of what Christ is. Oh, draw near ! Keep not at a distance, as if the veil were still unrent. Enter through the rent veil, even the flesh of your once crucified Saviour ; enter with holy boldness. God sees no spot on you. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Abiding nearness to God in the holiest is your assured privilege. Not to take that place is to dishonour the work of Christ, and to discredit the witness of the Holy Spirit, and to fall short of the grace of God.

LAW AND GRACE.

THERE is an immense difference between law and grace. The law demands everything, and gives nothing; while grace gives everything, and demands nothing. Thus nothing can be imagined more totally opposite in their principles. The law was given to show what man was. Grace has been put into exercise to show what God is. What a blessed contrast! Grace finds no spring of action in its object, but in the love of God, which *must* display itself; for God is love. Now, Christians are plainly said to have “become *dead* to the law by the body of Christ.” (Rom. vii. 4.) They have died under the curse of a broken law in the person of their substitute on the cross—the Lord Jesus Christ.

In every church and in many chapels we find the Ten Commandments written up in a prominent place, and Christians are exhorted from the pulpit to put themselves under the law “as a rule of life.” How totally opposite to the verse we have just quoted: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.”

When such a scripture is brought before the notice of such Christians, their common reply is,

“Oh, if I am not under law, but under grace, then I may go and sin as I like!” If such a one is reading this paper, we earnestly urge him to test his position by the alone competent test—the word of God.

The apostle Paul argues the point out in Romans vi. In verse 15 we read this question—“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?” With solemn and emphatic energy he replies, “God forbid.” Here, then, is the magnificent answer to all who cavil at grace. Then he brings out in the few following verses how we are set free from sin and death, and are now the servants of righteousness.

But God’s grace produces divine results in those in whom it is in exercise, in moral conformity to the One whose grace it is. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” (Titus ii. 12.) Thus we find the divine working of the scripture, “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. viii. 4.) Instead of sinning as we like, we fulfil the law, *because we are acting up to the grace of God*. The law is not our model, or “rule of life,” for it genders to bondage; but having our eyes and hearts fixed on Christ in glory, we unconsciously

follow in His steps, who more than fulfilled the law. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.) Having for our aim the higher object, we naturally fulfil the lower standard. Occupation with Christ tends to liberty, and genders not to bondage, like the law; "for, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." (Gal. v. 13.)

We wish to bring before the notice of our readers one or two passages which show how Christianity, whilst fulfilling the law, completely out-distances it. Moses said, "Thou shalt not steal." Paul said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Eph. iv. 28.) Here we find Christianity not only transforms the thief into an honest person, but turns him into a benefactor. How refreshing to illustrate the exhortations to practical Christianity of the epistles by the life of Christ in the gospels! He restored what He took not away; He strewed His gifts on His right hand and left hand with unwearied industry and loving profuseness; and at the end of His pathway He gave Himself. And now in glory the same ceaseless occupation is His: "When He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and *gave* gifts unto men." (Eph. iv. 8.)

In Exodus xxii. 22 we read, "Ye shall not

afflict any widow, or fatherless child." In James i. 27 it is said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To *visit* the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Christ, as seen in the gospels, is the pattern exponent of this verse. Think of the widow of Nain's son as one example.

The law said, "Thou shalt not covet." Paul, in his address to the elders of Ephesus, says, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.) What a contrast between the negative act of "not coveting" and the positive act of "giving." The law said, "Thou shalt not kill." The apostle John writes, "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The motive-spring of this is—that Christ laid down His life for us. But He died for us when we were *enemies*. Some might dare to die for a good man; but He died for His bitterest foes. (See Rom. v. 10.) The city which cast out Christ was to be the place where the sweet sound of the gospel was to be first heard. They took His life; He offered them everlasting life. Here, where the cries of bitterest hate had scarcely died away, were to be heard the offers of eternal life. "Where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound." (Rom. v. 20.) The law

said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Colossians iv. 6 gives us the positive blessings of speech: "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." A man who did that would more than fulfil the law. Many read this verse as if it were, "Let your speech be with salt, seasoned with grace." But how the grace should shine in our speech, albeit there would be the preserving element of truth in it! This would preserve against the honey of flattery. The grace of the Lord's words was such that they wrung from the lips of men this confession: "Never man spake like this Man." Yet His speech never lacked the seasoning salt of truth; for when He brought out the truth of over-abounding grace to the Gentiles, the Jews of Nazareth were filled with wrath, and cast "Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong."

Enough has been given to show the difference between grace and law, and how the one supercedes and out-distances the other.

May our eyes and hearts be more continuously fixed upon Christ, and our feet found in His footsteps. Then we shall be more than fulfilling a law, the letter of which kills. We shall be glorifying Christ in the world, out of which He was cast.

A. J. P.

A WORD TO THE DOUBTING.

DEAR anxious reader, you are unhappy; and why? There is every consolation in Christ, everything that is necessary to bring lasting peace and happiness in the word of God, if we only believe it. Ponder for a moment *whose* word it is we are called to believe, and the solemnity of doubting His word. If we do not believe God's word, we make Him a liar. Terrible thought! (1 John v. 10.) Think of His love. In infinite love and mercy He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John iii. 16.) Think of the love of Christ, who came down to this earth, suffered and died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Who can doubt such love? And God says that by believing on Him we *have* everlasting life. (John iii. 36.) Surely there is comfort in these words. If you do believe that Jesus died for *you*, then take God at His word. He says you shall never perish, but have eternal life, and that you have it *now*; for when by faith you receive Christ as your Saviour, you have that life in you, even Christ. "He is the *way*, and the *truth*, and the *life*." (John xiv. 6.) Accept by simple faith the salvation God offers free to all, and thank Him for it.

Rest upon His word, and He will undoubtedly give you joy and peace in believing. Oh, may we more fully and truly trust Him who has so loved us! He is faithful, and will abide by His promise. Believe Him now, and doubt no more. He would have us to enjoy settled peace by resting on His word, through faith in Christ Jesus. It is sweet to trust Him. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." (Jer. xvii. 7.)

M. P.

A FEW THINGS I SEE BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

IN *Christ promised* I see the blessed purpose of God to glorify Himself in the Person of a Man, notwithstanding the utter failure and sin of Adam, and to overrule his wickedness, and to bless him in spite of himself.

In *Christ incarnate* I see for the first time upon the éarth a holy Man without sin, a Man in whom God could find the perfect joy and satisfaction of His own heart, a Man who delighted in the will of God, even unto death. TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD.

In *Christ crucified* I see God infinitely glorified in the scene where He was dishonoured, the power of Satan overcome by the weakness of God, the whole judgment of sin borne once for ever. Man's cup too of iniquity is full, but "*the blood*

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of Jesus Christ His [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin."

In *Christ buried* I see the Man of God's eternal counsels, gone for the moment into the lower parts of the earth, to rob the grave of its victory, and to completely vanquish him who held the power of death.

In *Christ risen* I see the whole power of the enemy vanquished, his greatest victory proved to be his greatest defeat, and the believer's justification, reconciliation, and everlasting salvation secured for ever and for ever.

In *Christ glorified* I see God's answer to the death of His Son, the Man Christ Jesus exalted in highest heavenly glory, being a testimony to the whole universe, angelic and human, of God's own estimate of His work and Person.

In *Christ seated and crowned* I see a witness that He rests from the work that He accomplished alone upon the cross once for all, and which never needs the slightest addition in any way whatsoever—a *finished work*.

In *Christ coming for His own* I see the realization of the glorious and certain hope of every believing heart, the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God in Christ before the world began, and the fulfilment of His exceeding great and precious promises.

In *Christ manifested in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords* I see also the fulfilment of all

His promises in relation to the kingdom, and the blessing of the whole creation—responsible or irresponsible—whether angelic, human, animal, or vegetable.

In *Christ giving all up at the end to God* I see the glorious and eternal accomplishment of all His immutable and unsearchable counsels, purposes, plans—revealed or unrevealed; everlasting righteousness dwelling in the scene of God's eternal rest; and the eternal blessing of redeemed men.

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."
(2 Cor. ix. 15.)

"To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." (Rom. xvi. 27.)

E. H. C.

CHRIST IN YOU.

WE need to get *God's* thoughts of Christianity—I mean of what becomes a Christian passing through this scene; *His* thoughts of what a Christian's daily life and walk should be down here.

One saint thinks one thing, and another another, as to matters of detail in practical life; and the thought comes into one's mind, Have we sufficiently waited upon God about it all? Have we sought and gained *His* mind as to what *He* would have us to be as His witnesses upon earth?

He has made us for *Himself*, and given us to

Christ. *Christ* is the 'One we have to please in *all* things—not saints, not ourselves—for we are not our own (1 Cor. vi. 19); though, doubtless, saints will be edified and ourselves made happy by a life and walk which satisfies Him who has *bought* us with a price—His *own* blood—and made us His *alone*.

Of course Christ, and nothing less, is the standard of pleasing so far as *God's* eye and heart are concerned; but then it is one thing to know what is required, and another to know how to do it. For instance, a student finds he has to pass a certain examination; he asks his tutor what sort of a thing the examination is likely to be, and in reply probably gets a test paper, such as that of a last year's examination, put before him; then he sees at a glance the sort of thing required, but discerns also that as yet he is not equal to it, and could not pass it. So he begins to study diligently and perseveringly, heaping up knowledge from the best and most reliable sources of information possible.

Christ is set before us as our study—the apostle Paul reminds the Ephesians (iv. 20) that they have not so "*learned*" Christ—and the Word of God is our source of information.

May we be good students, and not disheartened at the greatness of our task.

In the Holy Ghost within us we have a most patient and painstaking Teacher, ever ready to

take of the things of Jesus, and *show* them unto us (John xvi. 13, 14); but for *such* a lesson—CHRIST—we need the docility and spirit of a teachable *little* child.

May we all be made *quite* willing to have *God's* thoughts fulfilled most perfectly in us as to what this means—CHRIST IN YOU! Then surely Christ, the life within us, will go forth in all our words and ways.

- The Lord help us to this end, for His dear name's sake.

A. B.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. D.—We know of no Scripture that places the matter, concerning which you write, in the way you state. The passage which approaches the most closely to it, as far as we are aware, is 2 Cor. v. 21. Here the thought seems to be deeper than that the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He was made sin for us, becoming identified with our state—He who in Himself knew no sin—that we, in Him, might be made the righteousness of God. But in speaking of such a matter we desire to feel we are on holy ground, where we would tread reverently and with unshod feet. It is always safe to use the exact words of Scripture, and neither to go beyond nor to fall short of them. If we feel our inability to explain them—if we shrink from it lest we should go further than Scripture would have us go—it is better to be satisfied with quoting the very words the Holy Ghost has used, and leave it to Him to interpret them.

THE UNFAILING PHYSICIAN.

MARK v. 25-34 ; LUKE viii. 43-48.

THE daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, lay a-dying in her father's house. Everything that could be done for her had been done, but nothing could stay the relentless waves of death, which rolled onward as if resolved to quench the light of that fair young life. Will then the father and mother of the damsel have to part with this dear child of their affection? It must be so, unless Jesus would come and raise her up; and happily for them Jesus was at hand. Jairus goes to Him, beseeches Him to come and bid his daughter live; and the blessed Lord, ever gracious, ever ready to answer the cry of need, would go and rescue this child from the gates of the grave, and place her again in her parents' bosom. On His way to the ruler's house much people followed and thronged Him; and among them there is one to whose state and actions the pen of the inspired evangelist now abruptly turns our attention.

For twelve long years she had been sick, and her case, like that of the ruler's daughter, baffled the skill of the medical men. Physician after physician was consulted, and fee after fee paid, till all that she had was gone, and she was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. Oh

those weary twelve years, during which the heart of this suffering woman had been beaten about like a shuttlecock between hope and despair!—one day thinking she was gaining strength, the next day finding she was not; one physician given up and another tried, but all alike impotent to do her any good, until poverty and a long unbroken series of disappointments bade her hope for health no more, but prepare for the final issue—the coffin and the grave.

What a picture have we here of the sinner's condition! How it speaks of that incurable disease—sin—from which humanity everywhere is suffering, and of the anxious but fruitless efforts of many a soul to find spiritual health and healing! Yes, sin is an awful reality; and death and sorrow and crying and pain and tears are the bitter fruits of it in this world, and how infinitely more sad and solemn its results in the world to come. And this cruel and malignant foe has made a prey of every heart, and manifests its presence and its power in man's insubjection to God, in lawlessness, for "sin is lawlessness." It is a terrible thing to be a sinner, and the fact that all have sinned does not lessen the terribleness of it any more than the power of cholera to kill would be lessened by every individual in the kingdom being seized with it together. "All have sinned." Alas! alas! alas! that it should be so. Not one that has escaped, *not even you*, reader, for

you are a sinner—you have sinned against God and against His throne.

Many are the means which well-intentioned persons have devised to repress or at least check certain forms in which sin shows itself. There are societies for the promotion of temperance, of social purity; societies for the circulation of wholesome literature, and for the suppression of vice; but all such agencies, when they have accomplished their highest measure of good, leave the sinner's state before God untouched. The sore healed upon the surface frets underneath; the chained demoniac is a demoniac still; the rotten ship is not made sound by being painted on the outside. Stanch the bleeding wounds of humanity as much as you may, man remains a sinner, and the question for each is, *What do you purpose doing in reference to your having sinned against God?*

If you set yourself earnestly to work, determined to lead a better life in every sense of the word, in what way would that make your condition less hopeless than it is? If a man is deeply in debt, his circumstances are not improved by his resolve not to add to his indebtedness even to the extent of a single shilling. If for the future he pays cash for all he has, that does not liquidate his former debts—the past remains, and it is written that “God requireth that which is past.” (Eccles. iii. 15.)

It is the natural impulse of the heart to have

recourse to many physicians. No one likes to regard his case as hopeless. No one likes to believe himself lost as far as his own efforts go. When the prodigal's last penny was spent, and no man gave unto him, he did not begin at once to think of his father's house, nor determine to return thither. He will seek to mend his broken fortunes somehow; anything rather than go back in poverty and rags, and own the sin and shame and folly of his ways. But if God is dealing with your soul, it is to that point you must be brought, and the longer you fight against it, the longer will your misery last. If you still resist, God will suffer you to go on till your last guinea is gone, and your last interview with the physicians is over, and what will you then do? Poor and strengthless, sick and ready to die, to whom will you then turn?

The woman of our narrative had come to this when someone told her of Jesus. What her informant said we know not, but it is easy to imagine how hope sprang up afresh within her heart—hope which maketh not ashamed—as she heard of One whose power had been never known to fail. Here was a new Physician to whom the poor were as welcome as the rich, and from whom healing virtue flowed at the first touch of those who felt their need of Him. To Him then she would go, and go at once; so gathering her garments about her, she straightway mingled with the great crowd in the street.

Have *you* never heard of Jesus, the sinner's Friend and Saviour? Do you not know that He can do for you what no earthly physician can? He can save you, and it is *salvation* you need. Nothing does He ask at your hands; for the silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Will you not come to Him just now? You have tried others, and they have all failed. Come now to Him.

“Oh, what on earth appears
To comfort thy distress, and heal thy grief;
To dry thy bitter tears,
And offer thy poor sinking soul relief?

“How often, in the hour
Of weariness, would I have succoured thee!
But thou didst spurn the power,
And scorn the heart that loved so tenderly.

“I know thou canst not rest
Until thou art from guilt and sorrow free:
Earth cannot make thee blest;
Come, bring thy suffering, bleeding heart to Me.”

It is thus the Saviour speaks. Shall words so sweet and gracious meet with no response? Come, kneel at His feet, and say—

“Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee:
O Lamb of God, I come!”

Little by little did this afflicted soul elbow her way through the throng. Hope gave her fresh strength, and her faith led her to dare what

otherwise she would have shrunk from ; for, as men speak, the crowd was no place for her. But she said, "If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole," and this was no small matter for one who had suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. Silently and unobserved she drew near, and stretching out the hand touched the hem of His garment. The act was weak, but how rich in its results ! Like some great river that has its origin in tiny springs far away in the distant hills—small indeed in its beginnings, but broadening and deepening as it flows onwards to the sea, so the feeble touch of this feeble woman ended in her perfect cure. What she had sought in vain all those long years now came to her in a moment, not as the reward of incessant labour or almost endless research, but the happy fruit of a faith that brought her into personal contact with Jesus.

Nor is it otherwise to-day. The sinner that comes to the Saviour does not remain unblessed. The serpent-bitten Israelites lived when they looked on the serpent of brass ; and the conscience-stricken jailor at Philippi was saved the moment he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation to-morrow might do very well for any who are sure of living till to-morrow, but for those who know the uncertainty of human life a present salvation is required. This is what God presents. Salvation *now*, free and everlasting, is

found in Christ for every one that believeth. The soul that believes in Him *is* saved, everlasting life is his, into judgment he shall never come, he has already passed from death unto life. (John v. 24.)

And this dear, timid woman, having received healing, would now return home as unheeded as she came. Little did she think that her faint touch had been noticed by the Saviour; but it was happy for her that it had. So with His question and His look He called her from the clustering crowd. Fearing and trembling she came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. Everything was out. She who had secretly obtained the blessing is now in the presence of the Blessor, and what will He say? Will He blame her boldness in coming to Him as it were by stealth, and censure her lack of courage in not asking for healing in the open day? Far from that—He calls her to His feet that she might know the heart of Him whose power she had already proved. “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” She can now go back with the blessing confirmed in her possession, and her spirit rejoicing in the One who had blessed her thus.

When the soul has received eternal blessing from Christ it is well that there should be a firm confession of His Name. It was due to Him that this one should declare “before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.” Who can tell the

effect of this personal and public testimony? By it the faith that was ready to falter may have received strength, and some hearing of what Jesus had done may have hastened to tell of Him to others whose case was as hopeless as hers. Let us publish it far and wide. Let us tell what the Lord has done for our soul, for He hath done great things—"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm xl. 2, 3.)

Another point may be noticed. Numbers may flock around Jesus, and touch Him full many a time and oft; but at the touch of *faith* alone the healing streams flow forth. It is only when such a touch is given that the Saviour can say, "Somebody hath touched ME." And has this no voice for those who crowd around Christ, so to speak, in places where His Name is named? There they like to go once at least on the Lord's-day, and their going gives a tone to their respectability, which would not be complete without it. Moreover, it quiets the conscience and rocks it to sleep in the cradle of self-complacency. But, alas! how few among the many who handle the externals of religion have touched the hem of His garment in faith and in felt need! how few know Him savingly, yet not to know Him thus is not to know Him at all.

OBEDIENCE AND BLESSING.

IT is impossible to imagine such a thing as a united and happy family where there is no parental authority. Recognition of that authority is the bond of union. If there be no control, there can be no order; if there be no government, there must be anarchy.

Government, the enforcement of recognised authority, is the safeguard of every intelligent community. How could a country, an army, or a family subsist but for this?

Hence men speak of "the majesty of law;" for law, being amongst men the principal or central power of the nation, and that which obtains as the most suitable bond for the good of all, is clearly superior to every other power, so that any infringement of it, being a common injury, is necessarily and justly punishable.

If this be so with men, it is also true in the ways of God; and, therefore, we read that "justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne" (Psalm lxxxix. 14), the habitation (or establishment) indicating the pillars, as it were, on which the throne of God is built.

Order is the law of the universe, else all would be mere chaos, for in no sphere is God the author of confusion. Every thing must obey His voice

and submit to His power. Each department of His kingdom must recognise His government and be under His control.

This is true of the sphere of grace as of all else. Far as the kingdom of God extends, so far does He claim obedience.

Now, if we trace His ways we shall find how He always makes His authority the chief idea. The first consideration before Him is His own authority, and the judgment of all opposition and evil, in order that He may conserve His holiness and His glory.

Prior to the exercise of mercy there must necessarily (if justice and judgment establish His throne) be the actual condemnation of sin. Otherwise mercy would not be required.

But that throne must stand without a rival, and sin in its every form must be punished, in order that righteousness may be paramount. No truth is of more importance than this. The rebellious heart would oppose it, the self-will of the day deride it, whilst even in the Church it may be overlooked, and that not only to personal loss, but to a weakening of the testimony we would bear to the Word of God as a whole.

We value grace, and well we may. To it we are debtors for all that we are and for all we have. Oh, how sweetly do the words "according to the riches of His grace" sound in our ears!

It was grace that sought us, found us, sustained

us. It is by the grace of God we are what we are (1 Cor. xv. 10); and assuredly when the top-stone shall be laid, there will be shoutings of "Grace, grace." (Zech. iv. 7.)

All that is true; and the more we live in the clear, unclouded light of grace the better. In fact, the knowledge and joy of it have of late years been so granted of God to His people, that where formerly the heavy yoke of the law galled the neck, now the soul is free. Where clouds of legal self-occupation hung dense and dull, now, thank God, the light of liberty has shone. Where hearts were bound and burdened, there are now spirits emancipated, vigorous, and devoted to God.

Grace has done this, and shall therefore receive all the praise. Grace—the grace of God—has brought salvation, and such a salvation! How boundless, but how appropriate! Oh, how suitable to poor sinners, dear reader, like you and myself! And then we know it, and love it, and prize it, and will enjoy it for ever. Grace has brought us the knowledge of ourselves in our guilt and ruin, and of God in His holiness and love. We know God; we are His dear children; we are placed in that blessed and abiding relationship; we adore His grace.

But the God whose sons we are is holy, and demands in His children obedience. He would have us recognise His authority. If we stand in

His grace, we are also under His government. We are equally the subjects of His kingdom and the objects of His favour. We are no less disciples in His school than saints of His household. We are as much His servants under control as His sons in liberty. Grace attaches to this, but government to that. The consciousness of my sonship makes me cry, "Abba, Father." The sense of my subservience leads me to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Is this slavery? No! Legality? No! It is "the obedience of faith," and the glad response of love. Hence the Lord Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John xiv. 15.) Being placed then by grace in relationship with God, we find responsibilities attaching to it. We may be in relation to Him as His Church, as His family, His saints, or His servants, but each position carries its own kind of responsibility.

Observe, most particularly, that responsibility flows from relationship, and not the reverse. It would be the principle of law to assert otherwise, and it would plunge souls into bondage. It is the nature of Christianity to place the believer in highest blessing, and then to expect conduct corresponding. This is holy liberty. Hence the grace that brings salvation teaches the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts. (See Titus ii. 11, 12.) The "*denial*" of them! Yes; the most positive refusal of evil. The golden coin of grace has

for one side *salvation*, and for the other *practical holiness*. If you possess that coin at all you must have both its sides—obverse and reverse. If it brings the joy and peace of salvation, it enjoins also sobriety and righteousness and godliness.

Now to this we are bound in Christian responsibility, and it is a truth of immense value for the present day. We have seen, blessed be God, wave on wave of saving grace roll over the earth during these thirty years; we have read reports of innumerable conversions; we have heard of Bibles, books, and tracts of a scriptural nature being disseminated broadcast over the world; we have seen men of all kinds and classes abandoning their avocations in order to go and preach the gospel. Never was there such a mighty effort, nor such a gracious or abundant seal of blessing! But, alas! it is no new thing “to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness,” or to make the tender outflowings of His mercy an occasion for the flesh. This has happened. The state of the Church to-day is deplorable. The tide having ebbed, she, through indolence, is being swept back from her position of holy separation to Christ. Willing to be carried on the breast of the flowing wave souls have allowed themselves to drift backward as trial or temptation, persecution or isolation have come. The result is unfaithfulness to Christ, self-indulgence, mixing up with

the world in various ways, so that the peculiar separation that should mark the Christian (2 Cor. vi. 17) is unseen, and much, very much, blessing is lost. Where is the fault? In the grace of God? Far otherwise! It is in ourselves! And He, whose voice of old called the churches to *repent*, is loudly calling to us now. He dealt, in government, with those churches (see Rev. ii., iii.) because of their failure; and His hand is upon the Church to-day. Who will hear His voice?

There are present warnings, there are future awards; there is the Word of God now, there is "the judgment-seat of Christ" by-and-by. There is the grace of God on the one hand, and our responsibility on the other.

God deals with us intelligently. We know His will. He has given us His Spirit. He regulates and orders His household. He educates and trains His children. Now, what shall we do? Shall we be a disgrace to that Father, and a dishonour to that family?

There is such a thing as "pride of birth" amongst men, and family dignity too; but are we children of God to be a reproach to Him, and a shame to the heavenly family by our worldly ways or sinful deeds? May God forbid! "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John v. 3.)

J. W. S.

THE OUTWARD LOOK OF FAITH.

IT has been truly said, that faith is always an outward look. To look within is to see “no good thing;” but to look from self to Christ; to see Him coming forth from God into this world; to see Him go to the Cross, and lay down His life for us; to see Him bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; to hear Him cry, “It is finished!” and then give up the ghost; to see God raising Him up from the dead, the proof that all was done, and exalting Him to His own right hand; to see Him thus, as God’s provision to meet my need as a lost and guilty sinner, is to settle for me the question of my salvation for time and for eternity.

Faith looks out and up to Christ, and not within to self; faith accepts the solemn judgment of God upon me, a sinner that I am, vile in myself and guilty as to my conduct. It takes the ground that the tree is corrupt as well as the fruit, that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” (Isa. i. 5, 6.)

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It

is bad, yea, vile, and beyond recovery. Hence the solemn words, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Therefore it is written, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter i. 23.) It is from above, and of God, that the Christian is born; hence "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is no blending of that which is born of the flesh with that which is born of the Spirit. The flesh in the Christian remains the same, and instantly awakens to conflict the moment the Spirit of God dwells in the body of the believer. (Gal. v. 17-23.) The child of God is to walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. As it was with Amalek in the wilderness (Exodus xvii.), so with the flesh; we are to shew it no quarter, but look upon it as under God's irrevocable judgment.

Faith, then, looks out and up to Christ—Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified.

Christ *crucified* settles the question of sins for the believer, and his death with Christ the question of sin. Our old man was crucified with Him.

Christ *risen* assures us that God in every way is satisfied and glorified, and deepest assurance fills our hearts as the Spirit of God witnesses to us of the fact that Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25; Heb. x. 10-15.)

Christ *glorified* defines our present place of nearness to (Eph. ii. 13, 14) and of acceptance with God (Eph. i. 6), and of righteousness before Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) Christ is our subsisting righteousness before God. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 30.)

Christ is our all in all. Outside of and apart from Him we are nothing, and have nothing; but as seen in Him we have every blessedness. (Eph. i. 3.)

It is not that there is not the work of the Holy Spirit in us—that is necessary, and always exists where a need is felt and repentance is wrought; but it is not our feelings or our repentance that is the object for faith. Christ says to the heavy-laden sinner, "Come unto *Me*, . . . and I will give you rest." The Spirit of God says to the conscience-smitten sinner, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is Christ, a full and blessed Christ, who meets the need of the believing sinner.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" asked the Lord Jesus of the one to whom He had given sight. "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" were the words of one whose heart was made ready to receive Him. Jesus replied, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee."

His only reply could be, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him."

The two things go together. The moment I see Christ, the Son of God, incarnate, dead, risen and glorified, and believe on Him, for me all is settled. I know I am pardoned, justified, and saved. God in His Word says so. I believe it and rejoice; I am filled with joy and peace in believing.

And now I find my place at His feet as a worshipper. With an overflowing heart I praise God, who gave His Son to die; and I bless the Eternal Lover of my soul, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

Let us remember, then, that faith is always an outward look. It sees Christ incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ our intercessor, Christ our advocate, Christ our hope, and says, It is enough; it is enough; my need is met for time and for eternity. Blessed be God!

E. A.

The Love of Christ.—"If an angel from heaven were to come to my bedside, and tell me that Christ was occupied with me, as a member of His body, should I be more certain of His love than I am? It is no delusion but a fact, that Christ loves me, and will love me right on to the end; and He will not cease making me know it till He gets me into the Father's house to be eternally in the full fruition of it?"

AM I STILL A CHILD OF GOD IF I SIN ?

THIS question is constantly puzzling unestablished souls. It arises through a defective view of the infinite worth of the sacrifice of Christ, and His acceptance before God. We would offer a few thoughts upon the subject, which we trust may be helpful to any of our readers who may have this difficulty.

The unconverted sinner sins constantly. Every act, word, and deed springs from a defiled source. We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. (Ps. li. 5.) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. xvii. 9.) It is a corrupt fountain, from which a stream of sin flows continually. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and remains flesh to the end. (John iii. 6.) And "the carnal mind" (or the minding of the flesh) "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. viii. 7, 8.)

But God in His great love to us gave His Son. Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on Calvary, glorified God, broke Satan's power, and bore the judgment of sin. God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, thereby showing His perfect satisfaction in His finished work. On the ground of

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that work all who believe are pardoned, justified, reconciled, saved—*the children of God*. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons” (children) “of God,” &c. “Beloved, now are we the sons” (children) “of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John iii. 1, 2.)

Now, as it is in the natural relationships of life, so is it in the spiritual. Once a child is born into the world a relationship is established between the father and child which can never be broken. And once we are the children of God a relationship is established between God and us which is *eternal*. Being brought into this blessing, God looks for a walk and conduct consistent with the position of favour in which His grace has planted us. Having believed on His Son our sins are all forgiven for His Name’s sake. (1 John ii. 12.) God will remember them no more for ever. (Heb. x. 17.) And now we should live without sinning. The Spirit of God, who dwells in the believer, is the power to enable us to live to God, and to cease from sinning. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not” (or, in no way) “fulfil the lust of the flesh.” (Gal. v. 16.) Having believed in Christ, not only are our *sins* forgiven, but Christ having died to *sin*, we are dead with Him, and exhorted to reckon ourselves so, and

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alive to God in Christ Jesus, who lives to die no more. We are delivered from the dominion of sin, called to yield ourselves to God, and to bring forth fruit to Him. (Rom. vi. 11-13, 22.) The truth is very simple. I am not only saved from the consequences of my sins, and of being a sinner, what I have done and what I am, but I am saved by Divine grace to manifest Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost in all my ways; to live Christ instead of a life of sin. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." (1 John iii. 6.) A sinner in his sins does nothing but sin; but a child of God is saved to live without it. (Phil. i. 21.) We are responsible to refuse sin, root and branch, and to live Christ.

We think we hear some one saying, "That is just what I desire; but there's my difficulty. Sometimes I do not watch, and then I commit sin; my conscience is defiled, and I think I cannot be a child of God at all, especially as the remainder of the verse just quoted, 'Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not,' adds, 'whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.'" (1 John iii. 6.)

But this verse gives the characteristic state of a man who lives in sin. A man that sinneth does that which characterizes a sinner. It is a denial of Christianity, in which we have salvation from sin. In the first Epistle of John we have repeatedly the contrast between the Christian and the unconverted man, the one being characterized

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by a life according to God, and the other by a life of sin. The whole teaching shows that there is no license in grace. We are saved by grace and *for* glory, but *from* sin now; saved from its mastery, to live without it; hence, if we sin, we are practically denying our calling, and the Word touches the conscience and pulls us up at once. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."

But at the same time, such is God's wondrous grace, that He has made a perfect provision for His children in case we do sin. We ought not to. But "if any man sin," as has been so often shown in these pages, "we have *an Advocate* with the Father," &c. (1 John ii. 1.) We do not lose our Saviour, or our salvation, or our relationship. Grace took us up at starting, and grace will bring us through to the end. If God cast us off when, through unwatchfulness, we sin, He would never have taken us up, for then we were doing nothing else. Blessed be His Name, we have an Advocate. If a Christian sins it is as a child of God, and no longer as an enemy. And Scripture clearly teaches us that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) But if we fail to judge ourselves, and go on carelessly, we expose ourselves to the governmental dealings of God, because having delivered us in

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grace, He will not condemn us with the world. (1 Cor. xi. 32.)

The impenitent sinner, acting according to his own self-will, will reap eternally the judgment of God. The impenitent child of God brings himself under the government of God now in the world. The penitent child receives a loving Father's forgiveness. It makes all the difference whether we sin as enemies or children. The relationship of child once established cannot be broken; and God defends His erring ones against the foe. God will never deliver to eternal judgment that one who believes on His Son. But just as a man, though not surprised at the conduct of a badly-brought-up boy in the street, expects his own son to behave differently, so God looks for His children to conduct themselves suitably to the relationship in which His grace has placed them. How blessed, as has often been remarked, to find that though God changes His manner towards His children when they sin, He never changes His heart.

"If any man sin we have an advocate." "If." Mark it well. We ought not to. Sin is not Christ. The world is characterized by the one; the children of God should be characterized by the other. But if we sin, God in His infinite grace has made a perfect provision.

Cease then, trembling one, from your foolish doubts, which dishonour God. Every time a

child of God raises a question as to his relationship, he raises a question as to the infinite value of the work of Christ, and of the acceptance of His Person. He has become occupied with himself and his worthiness, of which he never had, and never will have, the smallest particle. Rest then in perfect peace, and true liberty of soul, on the authority of the unchanging word of Him who cannot lie, and enjoy the blessed relationship of a child, crying, "Abba, Father."

E. H. C.

The Invisible.—"The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and real. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in Him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. Oh that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask Him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling."

SERVICE AND COMMUNION.

“... IN connection with your work, dear brother, seek the Lord’s face, and lean on Him. When the body is not robust, one is in danger of doing it as a task, as an obligation, and the spirit becomes a little legal; or one yields to weariness, and is discouraged before God. Work is a favour which is granted us. Be quite peaceful and happy in the sense of grace; then go and pour out that peace to souls. This is true service, from which one returns very weary, it may be, in body, but sustained and happy; one rests beneath God’s wings, and takes up the service again till the true rest comes. Our strength *is renewed* like the eagle’s. Ever remember, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ May communion with God be your chief concern, and the sweet relationships in which we are placed with Him. All is well when we walk in them; then we discern and judge everything day by day, which hinders communion, and so the heart does not become hard nor the conscience blunted, and we readily enjoy those communications of grace which give strength. Yes, seek above all personal communion with the Lord.”

J. N. D.

HE CARETH FOR YOU.

“Casting all your care upon Him ; for He careth for you.”

1 PETER V. 7.

CAST all your care upon Him, poor, weary, burdened
soul ;

Cast *all* your care upon Him—He wants *not part*, but *whole*.
Why dost thou seem unwilling to trust a heart so true,
A heart which yearns in pity, and careth now for you ?

No thought e'en for the morrow the verdant grass conceives ;
No wish for future raiment the gentle lily breathes ;
The lowly sparrow chirpeth all day its thankful glee,
Content with present mercies, thus should it be with thee.

God's eye doth scan thy future ; His love for thee is aye ;
His own right hand doth hold thee, then wherefore thy
dismay ?

Though clouds be darkening o'er thee, and winds be rude
and chill,
Though burdens press thee sorely, yet thou needst fear
no ill.

He guides the mountain torrent, and spreads the sparkling
dew ;
The lightning's track He marketh, the rolling thunder too ;
The mighty and the feeble are both beneath His eye,
Thy very hairs are numbered ; He knows thy faintest sigh.

Then cast thy care upon Him ; He gave His Son for thee,
The loved One of His bosom, that thou might'st ran-
somed be.

Oh, cast thy care upon Him ! He'll prove Himself thy
friend,
And bear thine every burden until life's journey end.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JOHN ix. 2.—In asking this question, may we not suppose that the thoughts of the disciples were on Exodus xxxiv. 7, and that they were desirous of knowing whether it was for the misdeeds of his parents that he was visited with this calamity, or for some sin of his own, which, though not manifested to men, was nevertheless known to God? Viewed from this standpoint, all difficulty disappears, and the question of the disciples becomes clear and intelligible.

F. C.—One hardly likes to speak of the believer's *future* sins, for he ought not to think of committing any, though in fact we know that in many things we all offend. As to the Lord Jesus having borne our sins, we must remember that, however much we may shrink from speaking of future sins, yet it is true that all our sins were future when He died for them. Many are apt to think only of their sins up to a certain point as having been taken away; but the blessed fact is that He died for our sins, without any reference to past, present, and future; that is, He died for the whole of them, and they are gone from before God, and we are justified from them.

A TROUBLED ONE.—As long as the Church of God is upon earth matters will arise occasionally that call for the discipline of the assembly. The judgment arrived at by the assembly may not meet the views of every individual connected with it; one may think the judgment goes too far, or not far enough, as the case may be. At the same time, the individual who thinks so should remember that it is easy to be mistaken, and that probably the judgment of the assembly may be right after all. At all events he should go quietly on, and not set up his personal judgment (without the gravest reasons) against that of his

brethren, arrived at by them, it is always to be hoped, in the fear of God, and in dependence upon Him. Nor would the person, if thus carrying himself humbly and wisely, be subject to rebuke, much less to exclusion from the Lord's table. As long as a person does not sin against the judgment of the assembly, his privilege to be at the table of the Lord is not to be denied, nor even called into question.

A. M. C., MATTHEW v. 25.—We are not disposed to regard the term "adversary" in this verse as if it meant a foe, but simply an adverse party—one who had just grounds for contending with another. In this light God may be so viewed; but, blessed be His name, every point of contention that He has with the sinner may be settled at once; for Christ has died, and upon that mighty fact is based the ministry of reconciliation spoken of in 2 Cor. v. 18–21. If the sinner heeds not the warning words spoken by the Saviour for the sinner's good, if he refuse to be reconciled, the effect will be that God, in the end, becomes a judge to him; and out of the prison into which the impenitent sinner goes he will not come till he has paid the uttermost farthing, and this he can never do. But the passage may also be looked at from another standpoint, and in connection with the preceding context. There the offerer remembers that his brother has something against him—that he has trespassed. Let him hasten to be reconciled to his brother, and then return to offer his gift. Let him do so quickly; for God is not mocked, and whatsoever a man sows he reaps. Should he in pride of heart object to such a step let him beware; for in the government of God he is subject to divine discipline, and he must take heed lest he bring upon himself the chastening of God. We speak now of God's *government*, not of that which meets the demands of divine righteousness in respect of our offences; those demands are met by the blood of Christ alone.

“AMONG THE HEATHEN.”

“When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”—EZEKIEL iii. 18, 19.

WE shall do well to ask ourselves what the Lord would have us learn from this passage in His word. If it applies to us in its plain and literal meaning, a tremendous responsibility lies at our doors, which will require a lifelong endeavour to discharge.

We are all aware that vast multitudes of immortal souls pass into eternity every year without ever having heard the gospel ; that thousands of our fellow-creatures live and die, neglected and uncared-for, in ignorance and moral darkness, to whom the light of life has never been carried. We all know this ; but does it in any way disturb the quiet serenity of our lives ? or make us willing to make some little self-sacrifice to give to others what we so highly value for ourselves ?

The prevailing indifference as to whether the heathen hear the gospel or not is sorrowful to witness. Too often they might complain with the psalmist, “No man cared for my soul.” Are

we leaving the heathen to their fate? or complacently handing them over to the "uncovenanted mercies of God"?

This is a matter which deserves our earnest and prayerful consideration. We would affectionately ask the reader this question, Do you feel you are in sympathy with the Lord's mind about the evangelization of the heathen?

"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Surely a hearty desire to carry out the purposes of God ought to be as potent in arousing Christians as "a great persecution against the Church" was in the apostles' time to a similar end.

Reader, do you realize how very dark are those "dark places of the earth" where the "Light of the world" is still unknown? And have you thought what joy and light and happiness would replace the darkness were the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, taken there? How the bitterness of sorrow and the sting of death would yield to the power of that almighty Name!

Where, we ask, is our zeal for the Lord's glory, if we leave the enemy in undisputed possession of these lands? We read of adventurers of bygone days who sought out far-distant lands, and, unfurling their national flag, took possession in the name of their king and country; and may not we do as much for Christ? Shall there not be a witness for Him in every land and every

city—one voice at least to raise the cry, "Jehovah-nissi" ? (Exodus xvii. 15.)

What is called the "romance of missions" it is the lot of few to meet with ; but we have abundant evidence that persevering and prayerful witnesses are wanted all over the world. In many parts of Africa, China, Brazil, and the western coast of South America the gospel has never been preached. No wonder, when missionaries visited similar places, the simple-minded natives were unable to understand how it was they had never thought it worth their while to bring them such good news before !

Many very rightly shrink from leaving the Christian ministry and fellowship to which they are accustomed, fearing that they will suffer in their own souls by losing the advantages of intercourse with others more advanced than themselves. We all know what profit is found in the society of those well taught in the Word, and the prospect of losing all this would be a serious consideration to many. Yet in this their loss would be others' gain. They would unavoidably miss much of the valuable teaching which at present they enjoy, but far from anticipating spiritual shipwreck in consequence, we have no doubt whatever that, *if divinely called*, they would be divinely kept.

This leads us to another aspect of the subject. Knowing the special trials our missionary brethren meet with, and that but seldom they have the

advantage of warning or encouragement from fellow-believers, are we found often in prayer for them, that, fighting as they do in the front of the battle, they may be preserved both from the might and the wiles of the enemy? Few things can be more cheering to the lonely witness for Christ than the assurance of having the fellowship in prayer of the saints at home.

It is said a soldier dies a glorious death when he falls in the front of battle fighting for his king and country; but what shall we say of those intrepid men who, for the cause they held dearer than life, and for the King of kings, whose message of peace they carried, have fallen victims to famine, pestilence, or sword—who, uncheered by loving aid and Christian sympathy, have laid down their lives for the truth?

Though little known, and soon forgotten by man, the names and services of these humble heroes have a lasting fragrance for God, and each lonely grave—unmarked by man, and untended by human care—is seen by Him whose eyes are in every place, and noted as the last earthly resting-place of a devoted witness "faithful unto death."

Reasons against are about as easy to find as reasons for in most things, and Christian missions are no exception. Perhaps we all know of some earnest Christian whose missionary endeavours have been a failure, and who has returned, broken in health and spirit, only to confess he ought

never to have left his native land. We may be instructed, but not guided, by the experience of others; and we should never forget that, whether we go to preach in China or in the next town, we need to be sent of the Lord if we would count on His blessing.

Some say it is no use going where the Lord is not working. Can those who raise this objection point to any spot in the habitable earth where there is no work to be done for Christ?

The people won't have the gospel, I am told. Then do as Moffat did, preach and pray until they will, and may be you will gain as rich a reward as he. Surely the first missionaries to the South Seas might complain that there was no open door when, after sixteen years' preaching, they knew of no result; yet a wave of extraordinary blessing has since crowned their efforts, and at the present time there are over eighty thousand converts in the Pacific islands.

If you find the door shut, wait on in faith until God opens it. Many who once said, "I wait for the Lord," have proved the truth of the words, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me."

In Matt. ix. 38 we read what the Lord would have us doing: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." May we be found with this petition constantly on our lips, and in our hearts a readiness to respond to the question, "Whom shall I send?" "Here am I; send me."

ANON.

THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

NO heart that knows aught of the love of Christ can fail to be touched with the devotedness and faithfulness of Stephen, even unto death, as recorded in Acts vi. and vii. This blessed servant of God is first mentioned as a man *full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*, and was therefore chosen with six others by the assembly at Jerusalem, and appointed by the apostles, to the charge of caring for the temporal needs of the saints. (Acts vi. 1-6.) A mighty work of God's Spirit followed. And Stephen, *full of faith and power*, did great wonders and miracles among the people. (Acts vi. 7, 8.) Satan, ever on the alert, stirred up certain men to dispute with him, but they were not able to resist *the wisdom and spirit* by which he spake. (Acts vi. 9, 10.) Changing their tactics, his enemies charged him with uttering blasphemous words, and, producing false witnesses, they brought him as a prisoner before the council.

God was behind all the scenes, and, sustained by the power of the Holy Ghost, Stephen, the witness for Christ and Christianity, bore faithful testimony for his Master in the presence of the high priest, who represented Judaism, and the people who had refused and murdered Him. It

is a remarkable scene, and a deeply solemn moment in the history of the Jews.

Falsely accused, all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Occupied with Christ in glory, in the power of the Holy Ghost, his very face reflects the rays of His glorious countenance before them all. Then said the high priest, "Are these things so?" (Acts vi. 15; vii. 1.)

Calmly and fearlessly he answered by reciting briefly the history of Israel. Profound silence reigned through the great assembly as he brought before them, point by point, from Abraham onwards, the ways of the God of glory with His ancient people. Coming to the days of the building of the temple by Solomon, he said, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?" (For he had been charged with speaking blasphemous words against this holy place.) And then, knowing the unrelenting hatred of his foes, with unquailing eye and unflinching courage he charges them solemnly in the presence of God—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have

slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." (Acts vii. 51-53.) With irresistible wisdom and spirit he brings to bear upon their consciences Israel's four damning sins—the resistance of the Holy Ghost, the persecution of the prophets of God, the betrayal and murder of the Son of God, the Just One, and the breaking of His holy law.

They listen to him to this point, when suddenly their pent-up rage bursts forth in all its violence. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

His faithful testimony is received with every expression of the deep-seated enmity against God of which the heart of man is capable. Instead of being pricked *in* their heart, like many others (Acts ii. 37), they were cut *to* the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. But Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, gazing straight into the very glory of God (for the heavens were opened above him). beholds his beloved Master standing.

as the glorified Man, exalted at the right hand of God Himself. In living words he testifies of Him whom he saw, but his voice is drowned by the vociferous cries of the vast concourse before him. The high priest, the council, the elders, the scribes, the false witnesses, the people—all are against him; and not only so, but also against Christ. Rushing upon him, like hungry wolves, they “cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.”

Light from the glory shines before them. The Holy Ghost in Stephen bears witness to the glorified Man, Jesus, the Son of the living God, but they will have none of it. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. (John iii. 19.) As their fathers had done, as Stephen had said, so do they. (Acts vii. 51.) In longsuffering mercy God gave them one more opportunity to repent, and they use the occasion to dye themselves still deeper in wickedness; and their cup of iniquity, already full, flows over in the resistance of the Holy Spirit and the murder of Stephen. The awful enmity of man in the flesh against God in the death of Christ finds its expression once again in the death of His faithful servant. They are cut to the heart, gnash on him with their teeth, cry with a loud voice, stop their ears, run upon him with their feet with one accord and cast him out and stone

him with their hands. Their hearts, their teeth, their voices, their ears, their feet, their wills, their hands, are all against him.

A young man, Saul, mentioned for the first time, stands calmly by witnessing the awful deed. Himself ere long was to be taken up by the superabounding grace of God and become the most faithful witness for Christ the world has ever seen. But here, as a poor blinded religious devotee without Christ, he sees how a Christian can die for the truth of God, and an expression of the awful state of man in the flesh without Him. Afterwards he became the instrument in God's hand to bring the latter out for its world-wide publication in the forcible language of the epistle to the Romans. Chapter iii. 10-18 was manifested before his very eyes.

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he *fell asleep*." (Acts vii. 59, 60.) How deeply blessed to see the calm of this beloved servant of God at this testing moment! He had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master, and follows Him in the same lamb-like manner to a martyr's violent death. In spirit already in the presence of the Lord, he yields himself without a murmur to the hands of his enemies, swift to shed his blood. Bold in the defence of the precious truth of God not a word

escaped his lips in self-defence. Following closely in the footsteps of his Saviour, as the stones in thick succession fly about him, doing their deadly work, he called upon God, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He commends his spirit to Him who gave it, and then calmly kneeling down, his last prayer in a loud voice ascends to God—a prayer for his foes. He pleads for mercy upon his murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he *fell asleep*." One moment exposed to all the malice of a God-hating world, the next his spirit had passed away into the blissful presence of his Saviour. He went to be with Christ, which is far better; absent from the body, present with the Lord. (Phil. i. 23; 2 Cor. v. 8.)

The key to all this is found in Stephen's occupation with Christ in glory in the power of the Holy Ghost. Saved by grace, and sustained by Divine power, he bore an unflinching testimony that Jesus was indeed the Christ, glorified in the presence of God, sealing it with his blood. Hence he became the first Christian martyr, and stands upon the page of Scripture, throughout the hour of Christ's rejection from the world, an encouragement to faithfulness to every believer. May each be found having Christ at the right hand of God as the one object which fills the vision of his soul; so that, in the power of the same Holy Spirit, we may follow Him as our model and example here, until we behold His blessed face.

E. H. C.

GRACE AND GOVERNMENT.

AMONG the many names under which it has pleased God to make Himself known none is sweeter to the heart of the Christian than this, "*The God of all grace.*" (1 Peter v. 10.) To grace we owe everything; it is the parent-spring of all blessing. Exclude grace, and you exclude pardon and peace, eternal life and endless glory; for these are the gifts which grace—the free, unmerited favour of God—brings from the heavenly treasury. Let grace go, and nothing remains but our deserts; the light of day is gone, and we are shut up to a night that shall never end. It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men. (Titus ii. 11.) By grace the believer is justified (Rom. iii. 24); by grace is he saved (Eph. ii. 8); and in grace he stands. (Rom. v. 2.) The redemption which he has in Christ is according to the riches of God's grace, for *rich* in grace is He. (Eph. i. 7.) Moreover, in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 7.) Angels, principalities, and powers shall then see Grace in her garments of glory. Never will she look more beautiful than when her handiwork is fully seen in the taking of poor sinners from the lowest depths of degradation and displaying them in association with Christ in the glory of God. Well might Paul

exhort Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. ii. 1.) Well might he say to the Hebrews, "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." (Heb. xiii. 9.) And well might he declare for himself that his only desire was that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God. (Acts xx. 24.) Let us exalt Grace. Let us crown her with garlands—the rich, free, boundless grace of our God—for she is worthy to be praised.

But while it is true that every believer is set in the changeless grace of God, that he is always there, and never will cease to be in divine favour, yet let it be remembered that grace does not place him beyond the sphere of divine government. In this connection his actions, the state of his soul, the way he carries himself hour by hour, acquire an importance not easily exaggerated. Grace and government go on together—they proceed on parallel lines; and if the believer is the object of the former he is no less subject to the latter. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) This is an abiding principle of God's government, from the application of which, either on the side of warning or encouragement, grace exempts none.

The lives of many of the Old Testament

saints furnish striking examples of this great principle, by the aid of which we are able to clearly distinguish between grace and government. No one will question that Moses was a true saint and servant of the Lord. A greater name it would be hard to find on the roll of illustrious men whose lives adorned the day in which they lived—men of whom the world was not worthy. Called to be Jehovah's instrument for bringing Israel out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, his position, if one of honour, was one of peculiar trial. The people proved themselves rebellious, and their repeated murmurings against God were hard to bear. The forty years previously spent at the backside of the desert had done much for Moses. His impetuous spirit was subdued, and he who in younger years had been swift to avenge a wrong had learnt meekness in the school of God. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Num. xii. 3.) But the occasion came when the chidings of the people stung him to the very quick. They wanted water, and the Lord bade him *speak* to the rock, and the rock should yield water for the congregation and their cattle. Moses gathered the people together. Chafed and angry, he said unto them, "Ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he *smote* the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly." (Num. xx. 10, 11.) It

was, as we should say, but a little act, a trifling deviation from the word of the Lord under circumstances of intense provocation, a blemish hardly to be noticed in so devoted a man; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, *therefore* ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Sorrowful tidings, which must have made the heart of Moses sink within him. But is there no possibility of this sentence being revoked? Shall Moses, mighty in intercession for others, intercede for himself in vain? Moses himself shall answer: "I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God . . . I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. . . . And the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for *thou shalt not go over this Jordan.*" (Deut. iii. 23-27.) Against this word there was no appeal. He who had led the people in triumph across the Red Sea, and carried them in his bosom like a nursing father those forty years, must now resign his leadership to other hands, and be content to die on Mount Abarim, in the land of Moab. This is very solemn! That Moses went

to heaven when he died no one doubts, for afterwards we find him one of the favoured two in the company of the Lord on the holy mount. (Matt. xvii. 3.) *Grace* was able to blot out this and every other sin, but in the *government* of God on earth the penalty could not be remitted. Moses must suffer the consequences of his act.

In David also we have another illustration of the difference between grace and government. David had sinned a great sin, and the inspired historian with amazing fidelity lays that sin before us in all its harrowing details. In process of time David learns that private sins are public sins to Him whose eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good. Under the hand of Nathan the prophet David's conscience, so long asleep, wakes up. Bitterly did he bemoan his blood-guiltiness, and deep indeed was his repentance, as we may learn from Psalm li. But though Nathan tells him, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die," yet David must be told that because of his sin "the sword shall never depart from thine house . . . the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." (2 Sam. xii. 10-14.) Chequered was David's after-life, and waters of a full cup were wrung out to him, as we well know. Divine *grace* could and did remove David's sin from him as far as the east is from the west, while divine *government* bound the consequences of them upon him and his house for ever.

Let us draw another example from the same

source. Solomon's sin of idolatry had met with its reward according to the sure word of the Lord in 1 Kings xi. The kingdom was rent out of the hand of his son Rehoboam, and ten tribes gathered themselves to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Jeroboam was a scheming, calculating man, and destitute of faith. Fearing if the tribes under his rule were suffered to go to Jerusalem to worship, the kingdom would return to the house of David, he took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and under pretence that the distance to Jerusalem was too great, instituted a new order of worship, setting up his calves of gold, the one in Dan, and the other in Bethel. Thither would he and his people go. The great day came round for the public inauguration of this sinful departure in the worship of God. The king himself stood by the altar to offer incense. Under his own eye the ceremonies were to begin in which he would take a prominent part. All seemed to go well, and everything augured success, when into the midst of the courtly throng stalked a solitary stranger. He quailed not at the angry look of the astonished monarch, but cried against the altar in the word of the Lord. On that very altar, for so ran the message of this man of God, the priests that served it should themselves be offered, and there should dead men's bones be burnt. Jeroboam's anger waxed hot. "Lay hold on him," he cried, and suiting the action to the word, stretched forth his hand against him. At this moment God

intervened to vindicate and defend His fearless, faithful servant. The outstretched arm of the king withered, and the idolatrous altar was rent as if shaken with a great earthquake. Jeroboam was vanquished. "Intreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored," were the words of the humbled king, and the prophet prayed, and he was healed. But he who could pray for the offender was not to be beguiled into any apparent fellowship with him. Resolutely did he refuse to receive refreshment at the hand of Jeroboam, nor would he suffer himself to be enriched by any present of his. "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." (1 Kings xiii. 9.) Noble words! Firm to the end stood this "man of God," and he who feared not the wrath of the king was not to be won by his rewards. His mission ended, he made haste to go. And now his faithfulness to Jehovah's word is to be tested in another way. Sitting wearily under an oak, on his homeward road, an old prophet met him. Specious were his lying words, nor did he shrink from attaching to them the authority of the Lord. The rest is soon told. The "man of God," who in a supreme moment successfully withstood the threats and blandishments of Israel's idolatrous king, is caught

in the meshes of this subtle snare. Eating bread with the old prophet under such circumstances may have been a pardonable act, judged at the bar of human opinion, but in the *government* of God that disobedience to the word of the Lord cost this distinguished servant his life. He quitted the dwelling of the old prophet, a lion met him by the way, and slew him.

And this great principle of God's government changes not with the change of dispensations. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Let us not think that because we are the subjects of divine grace, therefore we are beyond the range of divine government. Not so. For what do those words in 1 Peter i. 17 mean? "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Do they not tell us that if sovereign grace has set us in eternal relationship with the Father, giving us the place of children before Him, therefore the Father observes our ways, judges our actions and their motives, and deals with us accordingly? What a man sows, that shall he also reap. If a saint of God sows to the flesh, what shall the harvest be? Shall he reap joy and peace in the Holy Ghost? Sooner shall men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.

In the face, then, of the fact that God does govern among men, let us ask ourselves, To what

are we sowing? What are the things in which our hearts and minds live? Are we sowing to the Spirit? Do we heed the word of God? Is the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven the One with whom we are increasingly occupied? There is untold blessing in being engaged with Him. "He that soweth to the Spirit *shall* of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Seek, dear believer, in Jesus, the things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; seek them as one that seeks for hidden treasure. Court the companionship of Christ; His company is worth having, and He will give it to the one who values Him. Then you will know, though it be but in part, the blessedness of heaven itself. You shall taste of heavenly springs. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so shall be your Beloved among the sons. You shall sit under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to your taste.

And if there be in our soul the humbling consciousness of having declined from Christ, we would desire to remember that we have to do with the God of *all* grace. However low we may have sunk, however great and grievous our declension, the thought of God as the God of all grace may encourage us to return to Him with a heart softened by the recollection of grace so unchanging, and loathing ourselves that we could have ever turned away from One whose grace is unwearied and inexhaustible.

THE VALLEY OF ACHOR.

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

ROMANS v. 20.

IT was a sorrowful event in the history of Israel which gave the name of Achor to one of the beautiful valleys of Canaan.

Israel had just entered the land under the guardianship of “the Lord of the whole earth,” with Joshua as their leader under His authority. (Joshua v. 14, 15.) They had crossed the Jordan on dry land, as they had previously crossed the Red Sea, and God had given Jericho into their hand by a signal act of His power.

The beginning of their history in the land was thus glorious and bright, and Jehovah was manifesting Himself in their midst in a character suited to their new place and circumstances as “Captain of the Lord’s host,” even as when they were pilgrims in the wilderness He had journeyed with them as their Guide and Protector, dwelling in their midst in a tent or tabernacle; or as when they were poor slaves in Egypt, He had become their Saviour and Redeemer.

His grace and mercy are thus seen active throughout their history from the first; while, on their part, rebellion and unfaithfulness, alas!

marked every fresh scene and circumstance through which they had to pass.

Still His grace and patience had exceeded, and so He brought them into "that goodly land" which He had promised; and, as we have noticed, their history there at first was bright and promising. But soon all was overclouded, and we have the story of Achan's sin—the repetition of an oft-told tale.

There is a saying in the world, that "history repeats itself," and the reason is not far to seek. The truth is, that man repeats himself, because the same sinful nature, so contrary to God, is in every child of Adam—that heart which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," beats in every human breast.

Whether it be man in Paradise in the days of his innocency, or on the renewed earth after the flood, or as seen in Israel redeemed from Egypt, or brought by divine power and goodness into Canaan, the end is the same. The flesh profiteth nothing; man spoils everything, grieving and offending the nature of God, degrading himself, and blighting every hope.

How fully all this comes out at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, which stands at the end of man's history as under probation or trial by God!

The brightest display of God's love and pity in sending His own Son into the world only

furnished the occasion for man to show himself in his true character. That bright morning when the Dayspring from on high visited this world, soon closed in the blackness and darkness of the night of the cross. And indeed it is there we must learn—if we would learn rightly—the awful truth as to what man is: his lost condition, his guilt, his hatred of God, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the power of Satan over his mind and will—all is seen there; and that, too, in connection with the greatest religiousness and highest profession.

This is sad and humbling. Yet it is on the very truth of all this that the Gospel is founded, and through this that the blessed God finds occasion to display “the exceeding riches of His grace,” and to manifest all His nature by bringing good out of the evil, and so acting as to lead man, thus ruined through his own doings, into brighter joys and higher blessings than those which he had lost.

But while it is only through the cross that all this is fully shown out, yet God was shadowing it forth, and giving many an illustration of it, in Old Testament times. Very beautifully do we find it so in connection with the valley of Achor. Turning to Hosea ii. 15 we read, “I will give her... the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she [Israel] shall sing there, as in the days of her youth,” &c. Thus the place where the

judgment of God against sin, and where the bitterness and sorrow of it were felt and known, is made, by His grace, "a door of hope." And has not He thus turned the death of Jesus into a door of hope for the sinner? What other "door of hope" is there? Thank God, none other is needed. Hope springs up in the heart, and songs of praise flow forth from those who have found in the death of Christ the door of escape from all their misery and judgment.

But this is not all. Deliverance is indeed known, and praise is rendered, as we find how the blessed God has given us "a door of hope" through the sufferings and death of Jesus, who died not for His own sin, like Achan, but for ours. But not only so, for He has purposed and prepared for us an eternal *rest*, where sin can never come, and where sorrow and mourning shall cease for ever, where we can lie down in safety, and

"Where we shall know without a cloud
His full unbounded love."

So in our illustration, for when we turn to another reference to the valley of Achor (Isa. lxxv. 10), what a beautiful picture we have of rest and undisturbed repose. His earthly people are there seen with their flocks and herds resting in millennial peace in the valleys of Sharon *and Achor*. Sharon appears to have been noted for its special beauty and verdure (see Isaiah xxxv. 2),

and Carmel and Sharon are referred to as indicating the richness and beauty which God will cause to spring forth even in the wilderness, as in chapter xxxiii. 9 the desolating effects of His judgments are expressed by the fact that Sharon was become a wilderness.

And yet the valley of Achor is connected with Sharon as a place of enjoyment and rest—"The Lord will give *grace* and *glory*." But where will these spring from? Only from the death and cross of Christ. Shall we ever forget the death of Jesus? Shall we not in the glory know and feel in a far deeper way than here that we owe all to His sufferings and death? that it is the fruit of the travail of His soul? "Now is My soul troubled," we hear Him say in view of that cross; but He also knew that grace and glory would find a sure foundation there. "A door of hope" it would be to the poor sinner, and the means of everlasting rest and glory to every one entering by that door, when grace shall end in glory, and we shall apprehend more fully

"The tale of His measureless sorrow,
Of love that made sorrow so sweet."

No one can ever enjoy that rest eternal except those who have been first brought to know and feel in their own souls in some measure what sin is, and the godly sorrow which "worketh repentance to salvation." (2 Cor. vii. 10.) Sin *must* bring sorrow. The judgment of God against it must

be felt and learnt, either now in the soul of the repentant sinner (or saint either if he fail) leading to confession and mourning, which through the atoning death of Christ becomes the way of deliverance and blessing, or else felt by the unrepentant (however amiable, moral, or religious in life) in an eternity of misery under the abiding wrath of God. What a "valley of Achor" that will be, with no door of hope ever to relieve the remorse and despair!

It was a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold that cost Achan his life, and brought him to such a terrible doom; and how many there are in this day of religious profession, with the Word of God as plain for them as for Achan, who, to gain some present object which they have set their hearts on, lose their own souls. It is not what the world calls bad things that are always the snare. "Innocent pleasures," "harmless amusements," ordinary everyday things very often so occupy the mind and thoughts that the truth of the judgment to come and of the hatefulness of sin in God's sight is lost sight of. The solemn fact too that every thing unsuitable to His holy presence must be judged is forgotten, until perhaps on a deathbed, the discovery is made that the question of sin and unfitness for God's presence and home has never really been settled or gone into between the soul and Him, and remorse and despair for ever take the place of the fleeting

joys and pleasures of a life without God and without Christ.

How different is the case where the whole question has been already fully settled—eternally settled between God and the soul—where under a true sense of guilt the death of Jesus has been found “a door of hope” and a sure foundation for everlasting happiness.

Instead of judgment looming ahead like a deep, dark “valley of Achor,” he looks forward to the coming of the Bridegroom-Redeemer who bore the judgment, and now, risen from the dead, has given peace and joy and hope to the believer. For him the death of Christ is the valley of Achor, where judgment against his sins was executed—a judgment which he owns he deserved. By the resurrection of Christ this valley of Achor becomes “a door of hope,” and His coming again will bring in the eternal rest and glory for those that are “His own.”

S. M. A.

Rest of Heart.—“It was a sweet reply a woman once made, upon her death-bed, to a friend who asked whether she was more willing to live or die. ‘I am pleased with what God pleases.’ ‘Yes,’ said her friend, ‘but if God should refer it to you, which would you choose?’ ‘Truly,’ said she, ‘if God should refer it to me, I would refer it to Him again.’ Ah! blessed life, when our own will is swallowed up in the will of God, and the heart at rest in His care and love, and pleased with all His appointment.”

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. S. B.—You will find an answer to your first question in a paper of our present issue, entitled “*Grace and Government.*” In reference to your second we would briefly say that nothing the most devoted saint could ever accomplish would add one atom to the value of the finished and perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of which God justifies the feeblest believer. Our standing before God is according to the unchanging efficacy of that work, ever the same in our dark days as in our bright ones. And the standing of all believers is precisely alike. The convert of yesterday and the most mature Christian have but one standing, which is so perfect that it cannot be improved. Were it a question of our adding aught to the work of Christ, then the standing of the believer would admit of numberless degrees. But, thank God, it is far otherwise. It rests not on the shifting basis of our works, but on the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, always and evermore the same.

H. J. W.—While admitting in the fullest possible way that believers now are a heavenly people, we cannot understand why the fact of their being such should preclude them from admiring a lily or a rose should they happen to see one. If the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork, so do the flowers of the garden and the field, for the same Hand formed them both, and both utter His praise.

THE SIEGE OF JERICHO.

FEW things are more thrilling than the history of a siege. The endurance, courage, and skill called into exercise at such a time awaken our interest; while the privation, sorrow, and suffering that are entailed excite our sympathy.

History recounts many remarkable sieges—sieges in which extraordinary stratagems have been resorted to; yet it may be safely said that the siege of Jericho stands alone in the singular means employed for its overthrow by the besieging party.

Jericho was a city of Palestine standing a few miles distant from the banks of the Jordan. It was encompassed by a wall of considerable strength, which in those days might have been considered impregnable.

The people of Jericho had given up all fear of God, and consequently had plunged into every species of vice and wickedness. So dreadful had their condition become that, after having in vain given them space for repentance, God, in His righteous anger, determined to destroy their city.

He ordered the Israelites, His favoured people among whom He dwelt, to besiege and take Jericho, extirpate its inhabitants, and afterwards burn the city to the ground.

Now had the taking of Jericho depended upon

the prowess of the Israelites, they might have had trouble enough.

However, the battle was not theirs, but the Lord's; therefore they had simply to receive orders from Him, and abide by them. It is the peculiarity of these orders that renders the taking of Jericho so remarkable.

The men of Israel had merely to form a procession and march round Jericho, accompanied by the ark of God, and the priests blowing trumpets of rams' horns.

For six succeeding days they were to compass the city once; but on the seventh day they were to compass it seven times, after which they were to shout with a loud voice, and God would cause the walls to fall flat, so that without hindrance they might be able to accomplish their mission. And so it came to pass.

God's messengers of judgment then commenced their solemn work, and, without distinction, all the inhabitants of Jericho perished, with the exception of a few that had taken refuge in a house on the city walls.

Now we are not told that there was anything particularly noteworthy in the build or general appearance of this house—it was very similar to other houses of Jericho.

Yet, strange to say, instead of entering this house, and putting its inmates to the sword, the Israelites kindly led them to a position of safety outside the city

THE SIEGE OF JERICHO.

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We might naturally suppose that it was the family of some very excellent man to whom such a merciful exception was made, but in this we should greatly err, for in the whole of Jericho there could not be found one godly individual.

No; those who were thus saved when Jericho was overthrown was a harlot named Rahab, with her relations and friends.

It is possible that some readers may be quite at a loss to understand this matter, and therefore we will give a few words of explanation.

Previously to encompassing Jericho, Joshua had sent two spies into the city. These Rahab received into her house, sheltered from their pursuers, and enabled to escape by letting them down outside the city walls by a scarlet line from one of her windows.

She believed that God would deliver Jericho into the hands of the Israelites; and so she entreated the spies to remember her kindness to them, and to save her and her father's house. This the spies entered into a solemn agreement to do.

"And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. . . . And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window

which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window." (Joshua ii. 14-21.)

We believe the destruction of Jericho to be a solid historical fact. Yet none the less we may look upon this unhappy city, both in its moral condition and in the judgment which befel it, as a striking type of the world in which we live.

As to its moral condition, it was entirely obnoxious to God, and had not in it a single individual that pleased Him. And notwithstanding the enlightenment and civilization of the nineteenth century, the world is entirely contrary to God, nor is there in it one person who by nature seeks after Him. God has not yet, it is true, executed judgment upon the world as He did upon Jericho of old; nevertheless we read, "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness," and "The wicked

shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

This is a matter that calls for the serious attention of every reader.

The harlot Rahab, having heard of approaching judgment, awoke to the gravity of her position. It was a real thing to her, and she could not rest until she had learnt a way of escape.

Her safety lay in the simple obedience of faith. The scarlet line was to be bound in her window; and we may believe her to have been so in earnest, that the spies had not proceeded far from the house before she might have been seen eagerly carrying out the direction received.

Had any passer-by observed the line bound in her window, he might at most have thought it looked strange and untidy. But to Rahab, how precious was that scarlet line! Her life depended upon it, and that of all her friends.

And now we would ask the reader how he stands in reference to the day of wrath that is fast approaching?

There is but one way of escape, and that is in being under the shelter of that of which the scarlet line is but a figure—even the precious blood of Christ.

We feel that we are speaking upon a subject the importance of which cannot be overestimated, and we desire to be plain and simple.

God tells in His word of a coming judgment; but it is His desire that you should escape from

it. So great is His love that He gave His only begotten Son to die that you through Him might be saved. Christ suffered upon the cross the just for the unjust. God is now able righteously to receive and bless every sinner who puts his trust in nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Is the blood of Christ as precious to you, dear reader, as was the scarlet line to Rahab? To every sheltered one it is surpassingly precious.

Before God's judgments are poured out upon the earth, the Lord Jesus will descend in the air to catch away His own people. Just as the children of Israel went to that house alone to which the scarlet line was fastened, and carried the occupants away from the doomed city, so Christ, when He comes, will take none but those who are washed in His blood. If He were to come while you are reading these lines, would He take you away? or would you be left behind with His enemies?

It is not enough to know about the blood.

Persons may be very orthodox in their views of the atonement, and yet not have taken shelter from the coming wrath. If Rahab had simply talked about the scarlet line, and what had to be done with it, and had failed to bind it in the windows of her house, she would have perished miserably like the rest.

Having serious thoughts about death or coming judgment will not save.

Rahab was not alone in her fears. We read

that the hearts of all the people of Jericho melted for fear, yet they were destroyed.

How was this? They were not under the shelter of the scarlet line. Perhaps you have been alarmed on hearing a stirring sermon, or moved to tears by the affectionate appeal of an earnest preacher; but we solemnly warn you, that unless your fear causes you to flee to Christ you are as much exposed to the coming judgment as though you had never given the matter any consideration.

We would ask you to notice that those who escaped when Jericho was destroyed *were not spared on account of any personal merit*. Rahab herself had been a harlot, and in all probability her friends were of a character equally debased. The most amiable person in the city was destroyed if found outside the house to which the scarlet line was attached; but those within, though they may have been flagrant sinners, were carried into a place of safety, and not even a hair of their head was hurt.

Scripture explains this. We read, "*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.*" (Heb. xi. 31.)

There were then in Jericho two classes of persons—*sinners that had faith*, and *sinners who believed not*. There are but these two classes to-day.

Dear reader, we would earnestly and affectionately ask, To which of these do you belong? A more important question could not be placed

before you. You most certainly belong to one or the other. Before these two classes lies a widely different future.

Heaven with all its blessedness will be the portion of those that have faith in the blood of Christ, but there awaits the unbeliever an eternity of unutterable, indescribable woe in the lake of fire.

It is not our object to make persons miserable; but knowing the terror of the Lord, we dare not do less than persuade men to flee from the wrath to come.

Do you ask whither you shall flee? To Him who says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

It is quite possible that some reader is trusting in nothing but the blood of Christ, and yet is afraid he does not belong to the class that has faith, because at times he feels uncertain as to his soul's safety, and is often alarmed at the thought of death.

We would ask such a one to notice that the only faith needed for Rahab's safety was a faith that would lead her to bind the scarlet line in the window of her house.

It mattered not whether she felt happy or miserable, if the scarlet line were bound in the window, the spies had solemnly sworn to save her.

Rahab's safety then depended upon the scarlet line. Now, Christ has pledged His word, "that

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) If your trust is in the blood of Christ, this is all that is needed to ensure your safety; you have, as it were, bound the scarlet line to the window of your house; your safety therefore depends upon the blood. If, however, Rahab would be not only safe, but also happy, she must believe the words spoken to her by the spies.

As she saw the Israelites marching round the walls she may sometimes have trembled, lest after all she would perish with the rest of the inhabitants of Jericho. She would then call to mind the words so solemnly uttered, "Our life for yours;" and as she pondered them her doubts and fears would no doubt for a time be removed. Yet it is possible that even till the walls of Jericho fell down, and the spies came to carry her away from the scene of judgment, she may have been tormented with secret misgivings. This, however, though it would make her extremely miserable, would in no way affect her safety.

Now, though your safety depends upon your having taken shelter from coming wrath by fleeing to Christ, and putting your trust in His precious blood, your peace, like Rahab's, depends upon believing the word spoken. Our sins are forgiven directly we believe in the Lord Jesus; we know them forgiven directly we rest upon God's word.

Is not the word of God worthy of credence? Listen! "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED." (Rom. x. 9.)

But before laying down the pen, we would have one word with any unconverted and yet careless soul.

How strange an infatuation is thine! Thou art hurrying on to an eternity of woe, and yet art unconcerned. Has the habitation of demons a greater charm for thee than the paradise of God? Oh, awake, we beseech thee, to the reality of eternal things! Perhaps thou thinkest the life of the Christian very doleful; but in this thou mistakest. Thou art in a cold and selfish world; would it make thee miserable to have an unfailing friend?

The pleasures of earth are fleeting, and will soon be passed away from thee; would it be unpleasant to have a treasure eternal in the heavens?

Death is busy with unrelenting hand, bearing away the inhabitants of this world; is not then eternal life worth possessing?

All these thou mayest have by simply receiving Christ as thy Saviour. We urge thee at once to decide for Christ. Do so, and thou wilt never regret thy decision, but through the eternal ages wilt sing the praise of Him who called thee out of darkness into His marvellous light. C. H.

THE FAMILY OF GOD.

1 JOHN ii. 12-28.

IT is very interesting and instructive to notice that in Scripture God's people are looked at as in different relationships or positions. Sometimes they are spoken of as His house, the place where He dwells. (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15.) Sometimes as the body of Christ, united to Him who is at God's right hand. (Eph. i. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xii. 13.) Then again as the Bride of Christ. (Eph. v. 25-32; Rev. xxi. 9; xxii. 5.) And here in 1 John ii. 12-28 they are looked at as the family of God. And it is this scripture I would consider a little. In going over it we shall find that it is not the blessedness of being the children of God that is dwelt upon, but rather the dangers they are exposed to, and against which they are warned accordingly.

Now before we take up these verses in detail, let me call your attention to the fact that the apostle uses a somewhat different word for children in verses 12 and 28, as also in verse 1, from what he uses in verses 13 and 18. In the former it is a word that defines relationship—simply children; so the word “little” ought to be omitted. But in the latter it describes the kind of child that is meant—a babe. Now bearing this in mind, let us proceed.

In verse 12 the whole family are addressed. In verse 13 he divides them into three classes—fathers, young men, and babes. Then in verse 14 he begins again, and addresses each class separately.

I have said that in verse 12 the whole family are addressed, because what he says there is as true of the babe as of the young men and fathers. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." The sins of the babe in God's family are forgiven as truly as those of the young men or fathers. How different are God's ways from man's ways! It is very common with men to put the forgiveness of sins far on in the Christian path—something to be attained by earnest seeking and struggling. But when we come to the word of God, we find it is among the first things we learn in His school.

But some one may say, "I can understand the sins of God's children are forgiven, but how am I to know that I am a child of God?" Now for an answer to that question let us turn first to John i. 12, where we read, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Again turn to Gal. iii. 26, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Could anything be simpler or more conclusive? Has your conscience been exercised about sin? Have you been awakened to the sense of your lost condition? And have you turned in simple

faith to Christ as your Saviour? If so you are a child of God, and you are included among those to whom John writes, and of whom he says, "Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Not on account of what we are, or anything we do, does God pardon; but He looks at Christ, and because of what He finds in Him, and His atoning death on the cross, He freely and righteously pardons all who believe in Jesus. (Acts xiii. 38, 39; Rom. iii. 24-26.) The title of the babe is as sure as that of the young man or father. Such is grace.

And now, in proceeding, let me ask your special attention to the fact, that when the apostle addresses each class separately, he gives only half a verse to the fathers, three-and-a-half to the young men, and ten to the babes. Note the fact, that whilst he has a good deal to say to the young men, a good deal more to the babes, there is not one word of warning or exhortation to the fathers. Ought not such a fact as that to arrest our attention, and lead us to ask, Who are these fathers, that even John has nothing to say to them?

In looking at this, let me just remind you that it is no question of age; for a man may be bowed down with the weight of years, and yet be only a babe in Christ. He may have been only just converted, or, on the other hand, may not have grown.

What then is a father? This very scripture

informs us: "Ye have known Him who is from the beginning." They have Him before their souls of whom it is written, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John i. 14.) It is not the plan of the gospel, nor theology, nor ordinances, that engage their attention, but the glorious person of the Son of God. Like Paul in Phil. iii. 8, who says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He, in whom God had found His delight, was their souls' present, all-sufficient portion. What need, then, to warn such against the seductive influences of the world? They had found, and were enjoying that which enabled them to overcome the world. (1 John v. 5.) They had an object that displaced all else.

Passing on now to the young men, we shall find three things characterize them—Ye are strong—The word of God abideth in you—and, Ye have overcome the wicked one. They had spiritual strength and energy, and they had intelligence in the word of God, so that they could detect what was the truth of God, and what was the lie of the enemy. And thus he says nothing to them about the antichrists—false teachers. But they came short of the fathers, in that they had not Christ so exclusively as their object. What characterized the fathers was objective, but all that he says of the young men is subjective.

But you and I, dear friends, as creatures, must have an object; and if we are not occupied with God's object—Christ—we shall be sure to accept the one the devil presents, and that is the world.

Now you can understand why John says to these young men, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How could the Father fill our souls with the sense of His love, if we are going after the world that spat in the face of His beloved Son, and nailed Him to the shameful cross? In the following verse we have that vast moral system around us which is here called "the world," reduced to three primary principles—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These are the elements of all that which constitutes the world. All the pride, ambition, covetousness, and pleasure-seeking that mark the unconverted are reducible to those three primary elements, and it is of these things that the young men are in danger. In verse 17 you will find that our Father lifts the veil—lets us see the end: "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Are we going to listen to our Father, and be guided by His counsel? Or shall we take our own way, and go in for the world; like the younger son in Luke xv who thought he would be happier

away from the restraints of home? What the result was we all know. May you and I, dear fellow-believer, listen to our Father's counsel, and do His will—go in for that which is for ever.

Now we shall pass on to the little children, or babes. It is of the deepest interest, and importance too, to see that he says not a word to them about the world. I am sure we can all understand that. Do we not remember, that when we were converted, when we got to know that the mighty God was our Father (for even the babes know the Father, verse 13), how little attraction the world had for us? In the enjoyment of our Father's love we could turn our backs on it all without a sigh of regret. But these babes are exposed to a danger of another kind; that is, false teachers. John talks to the babes about the antichrists. As he says in verse 26, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." A young convert, one who has just tasted the sweetness of the Father's love, is ready to listen to any one who talks of the "Fatherhood of God." And so he puts them on their guard.

"Many false prophets are gone out into the world." (Chap. iv. 1.) But how are these babes to discern between the false and the true? In verses 23 and 24 you will find a very simple test. It is Christ. He who is from the beginning. No matter how eloquently a man might speak of the Father,

if he does not believe in the Son—does not exalt Christ—he is a deceiver, an antichrist, and we are not to listen to him. A minister of Satan (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15) always promises *us* great things, makes man and his blessing the object, as we see in Gen. iii. 5, and Luke iv. 6. Whereas one who is speaking by the Holy Spirit makes Christ and His glory the object. So that if I find a man exalting Christ, I am, so to speak, safe with him.

If you consider this, you will see its vast importance in these days. Do we not hear on every hand of development, of progress, of keeping pace with the age in which we live? With many modern teachers, Paul, Peter, and John are old-fashioned, behind the times. But, says the voice of wisdom, “If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” Instead of going forward (2 John 9, N.T.) with modern teachers, we are led back to that which is from the beginning, that which was taught by the apostles, and being subject to that, we shall be preserved from the many snares of the present day.

Now, in verse 28, he returns to the whole family, and says, “Abide in Him [Christ]; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” The Lord grant it for His name’s sake. G. R.

“THOMAS . . . CALLED DIDYMUS.”

JOHN XX. 24.

ON the evening of the first day of the week—the resurrection-day, that day so big with victory—there had assembled secretly, and perhaps spontaneously, as drawn together by new bonds, a little company of men. They were the disciples of Jesus. Fear of the Jews had made them close the doors; for already diversity of religious interest began to separate the true from the false, and lead the faithful minority to seek shelter from persecution.

And as thus assembled, in the quiet hours of the evening, their hearts were free to dwell on the marvellous event of the morning. The Lord was risen. He had been seen and heard. The very Jesus whom they had seen nailed to the tree, and whose side was pierced, was now actually in resurrection life.

Often had He told them that He was to die, and be raised again the third day; yet never had they accredited His words. But now His death was a fact, for He had been buried, as they all could witness.

Sorrow filled their hearts, for they had lost everything. The whole scene was but a desolate

waste to those whose very being was wrapped up in a living Christ.

But they hear of His having risen. The hearts lately burdened now flutter with hope. His words begin to take shape in their memories. The third day had come, and with it the report of His resurrection. Could it be true? Who is to decide?

Hence the little meeting within doors. What an interesting meeting! What line did their consultation take? We are not furnished with any particulars; but whilst engaged in wistful deliberation, and conversing together about Him, Jesus entered—stood in their midst—and said, "Peace be unto you." Calm and calming, peaceful and peace-giving, did the risen Lord place Himself amid His assembled disciples. How full of gracious majesty!

A few hours before these very men had all forsaken Him and fled; yet now not a word of rebuke escapes His lips. He taunts them with no unfaithfulness; He upbraids them with no ignorance. He forsakes them not; but in their very midst He proclaims peace to them. Yes, peace, as the result of the battle fought and the victory won; peace made by the blood of the cross; peace, with pardon to the believer and eternal honour to the Saviour; peace, the fruit of the soul-travail of the Son of God, and the abiding portion of all who are His. What a salvation for

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such a company! What a word to burst from the lips of the risen One, as, fresh from the field, He owns them as His brethren!

"And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side," tenderly to corroborate, by tangible tokens, the veracity of His words, and evidently to identify Himself to them by proofs unmistakable.

Once more He said, "Peace be unto you." Then He sent them as the Father had sent Him. Then He breathed upon them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." How rich an investiture!

Having peace, they were free now to go as His missionaries in blest occupation with His interests, and, further, possessed of His life in the power of the Holy Ghost. Such was the result of this first meeting of the disciples after the Lord's resurrection. How pregnant with fruit for all ages!

"But Thomas . . . called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." How was that? Why was Thomas absent at such a moment? He had never expected that Jesus would preside there, else he would surely have been present. Was self-will at work? Had he heard the report of the morning, and discredited it? Was the news too good to be true? Was the resurrection of Jesus impossible?

Anyhow, Thomas was absent from this informal meeting of his fellow-disciples, and he was the

loser. He missed hearing those words of peace and of liberty. He missed seeing the hands and side. He missed that first sight of the Master, as in grace He placed Himself in the midst of His brethren. Ah, how much we may lose through a little wilful neglect! It is oftentimes ruinous to despise meetings of true hearts just because they are small. The Lord may select such as spheres of rich unfoldings of Himself in His word.

Well, the disciples tell Thomas that they had seen the Lord. He refuses to believe them. A mere sight of Jesus would not suffice for him. Nay, unless he could put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the side, he would not believe. So be it. The disciples had said all they could. It was outside their power to communicate faith to their unbelieving brother.

In such a case the help of man is vain. The perplexed and troubled soul must have to do personally, directly, and individually with God. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."

Thomas, though loud and wilful, was sincere. He loved his Master, and would have died with Him in Judæa, at the occasion of His raising Lazarus. His unbelief was of the head, and not of the heart. It sprang really from "cannot" rather than from "will not;" and so, after eight long days, the Lord, on the occasion of a similar

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assembly, bids Thomas to reach hither his finger, and behold His hand; to reach hither his hand, and thrust it into His side. He bids him gratify to the full his desire, and to find every satisfaction for his greatest difficulty—to discover indeed, in those unclosed wounds, those everlasting evidences of redeeming love, the complete dissolution of the doubts of unbelief. "Be not faithless, but believing."

"Thomas answered and said, My Lord and my God."

Enough. Could patient grace or perfect love have done more? Impossible.

Oh, it is not that signs could not be given or evidences produced! They are abundant. God could accomplish any external display. But if Thomas believed by seeing, they are more blessed who believe without seeing.

Israel will do the former by-and-by. We are called on to the more blessed part now. Yes, we are called on to believe apart from every evidence except the written word of God. It suffices for God. Let it suffice for us.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

J. W. S.

"We have a Father in the heavens above,
 We have a happy home prepared on high;
 We have a Saviour, whose surpassing love
 Made Him content e'en for our sins to die;
 He fought, and has our cruel foes o'ercome,
 And has engaged to guard, and bring us safely home."

THE CROSS AND GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IN the New Testament God has revealed to us two wondrous truths—*the cross* and *the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a solemn and blessed subject for the contemplation of our hearts, the death of the Son of God upon Calvary's cross on the earth, and His glorification at the right hand of the Majesty in the heaven above. How little our souls enter into these precious things, although the glory of God, and the eternal destiny of the whole of Adam's race, depends upon them. Without the death of Christ there is no salvation; and without the resurrection the death would have been ineffectual. The death of Christ was the voluntary act of a perfect, sinless, holy Man. Death had no claim upon Him; for death is the wages of sin, and in Him is no sin. (1 John iii. 5.) And death is Satan's power. (Heb. ii. 14.) But Satan had no power over Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John xiv. 30.) But Jesus laid down His life for the glory of the Father, the salvation of His own, and the deliverance of creation. The foundation of all this was perfectly laid in His death. God was infinitely glorified,

and sin's judgment borne by the Holy One. He cried, "*It is finished*," and gave up the ghost.

But if all ended there, the cross would simply show that man had wrought his own will against the Christ of God, and that Satan had gotten the victory. But where is He now? Buried in the grave, God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory. The enemy's greatest victory proved to be his greatest defeat. The cross is vacated, the grave is empty, and the Christ is risen. And the resurrection of Christ is a complete and eternal triumph over all the power of the enemy. The whole question of sin, sins, Satan, death, judgment, hell, found its answer at the cross. The resurrection is God's testimony to the whole universe to the fact that His holy claims have been all perfectly met, once and for ever, and that He is infinitely glorified in the work of His Son. He has exalted the blessed Man who did it to His own right hand. The once crucified is the now glorified One. The cross is exchanged for the throne. Jesus is made both Lord and Christ. Soon every created intelligence will celebrate His praise, and own Him worthy as Man of that exalted place.

And what is the fruit of all this for us, for every believer in His name? Whilst the world is lying in the wicked one, and under the judgment of God, the believer is now completely and eternally delivered from it. His sins are

forgiven, his soul saved; he is a possessor of eternal life, and of the Holy Ghost; an heir of God, and co-heir with Christ of all the glory into which He has already entered as the glorified Man, and the kingdom glory which will be shortly displayed. And not only so, but by the same Holy Spirit who dwells in our bodies, we are united even now to Christ in glory, and to each other on the earth. This is "*the great mystery*," fruit of the eternal counsels of God, and now revealed and brought about in consequence of the finished work of Christ, and His glorification on high.

The gospel of the glory of Christ finds us in the depths of degradation, sin, and misery, under judgment, in danger of eternal woe! and the grace of the gospel brings salvation to us in our lost estate, picks us up, delivers us out of it, links us with Christ, and will shortly bring us into the same glory as Christ Himself. There, in a body like His own (Phil. iii. 21), we shall see Him face to face, and share His blessed company for a cloudless day without end. At any moment He, the Lord Himself, may return, the Bright and the Morning Star, and our morning without clouds begin, when

All taint of sin shall be removed,
 All evil done away ;
 And we shall dwell with God's Beloved
 For one eternal day.

But if such is our glorious and eternal portion,

beloved reader, assured to us in the infinite value of the blood and the infinite acceptability of the Person of Christ, the Beloved, according to the sure word of God, who cannot lie, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of conversation and godliness? The finished work of Christ on the cross is the foundation of all our blessing; but, at the same time, it is the judicial end of man and all his glory in the flesh before God. Hence, if I am saved by that work, and presented to God in all the sweet savour of the One who wrought it, I am also responsible to accept the cross of Christ as my judicial end, and to renounce the flesh, the devil, and the world. Being linked with the blessed Man in the glory of God in all the blessing, I must not forget that I am also linked with Him as the One who died to sin. If I am a believer in Jesus, He not only died for my sins, but I died with Him to sin, and I am alive again to God in the risen One. What, then, is to be my path upon the earth? "To me," says the apostle, "to live is Christ." (Phil. i. 21.) And Christ, who knew no sin, passed through the world completely separate, morally, from it and all that is in it, a holy Man, doing the will of God, *His glory* the one object. If I aim at anything lower than this I have missed God's thought for the path of a Christian.

But be mindful, dear reader, that we cannot live Christ by fleshly efforts to come up to a certain standard. No, we must accept, in simple faith,

the judgment of the flesh, Satan, and the world at the cross, reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin (Rom. vi. 11), and alive unto God; and in the power of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us, fix the eye of faith on Christ in glory, and trace His steps, as revealed in the written Word, for our pathway in the desert here below. Occupation with Christ in glory and with things above has a moral transforming effect upon the soul; and the study of the pathway of the only perfect Man, in communion with God, will preserve us from all the paths of the destroyer.

We must never separate the glory from the cross. If I am occupied with Christ on the cross only, and my death with Him there, I shall stop far short of my proper blessing and privilege as a Christian. And if I am occupied with Christ in glory and my association with Him there, and forget the cross, I shall become lifted up, and unpractical in my walk and ways. The knowledge of the gospel of the glory of Christ involves corresponding responsibility. If Christ, the Beloved in glory, is the measure of my acceptance before God, Christ, and Christ only, is the standard and model for my walk and ways. May God, in His rich grace, give to every beloved Christian reader of these lines to enter more and more into our wonderful position before God, and to walk worthy of our elevated calling in our daily life and circumstances until we behold our Saviour face to face.

E. H. C.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. E. T. (Matt. xxv. 24–28, Luke xix. 20–24).—There are no grounds for supposing the wicked servant to be anything but an unconverted man—one who has not a single right thought about the master whose servant he assumes to be. Could anyone who knew the Lord Jesus speak of Him as “a hard man,” and “an austere man”? Such thoughts betray an inward state utterly at variance with any true knowledge of Him. The baptized multitudes of Christendom undeniably profess to own one Lord, and will be dealt with accordingly by-and-by. Alas! what numbers know not the Master they profess to serve.

As to your second point. We must not conclude from the parable that the wicked servant and the faithful ones stand in one company, and receive their reward at one and the same moment. Other scriptures forbid such a thought. The great fact pressed is, that a time of reckoning surely comes. Happy for those who have faithfully served so gracious a Master; but unspeakably solemn for those who take the place of servants, but care not for the interests of their absent Lord.

The Lord's Return.—“If the Lord were coming to-day at one o'clock, His Spirit could awaken thousands that are His, in one place even, to the truth. “He is coming back,” and that, too, from among those who never thought about it. They would not be at home in the subject, perhaps, nor practically their lives made ready for it; but as those to be alive and waiting for Him, they might have a child's joy in expecting Him.”

G. V. W.

EXCELLENT THINGS FROM THE VOICE OF WISDOM.

IN Proverbs viii. we get a world-wide cry. Wisdom lifts up her voice—"Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. *Hear; for I will speak of excellent things;* and the opening of my lips shall be right things," etc. (vv. 4-11.)

We would present to our readers *four excellent things* which this voice proclaims. They are found in the pages of the New Testament, and we trust that each reader will have ears to hear, so that these sayings may sink down into his heart, and become a source of lasting profit.

The first is found in Hebrews i.—the presentation of *the Person of Christ*. Verse 4 shows that He has obtained *a more excellent name* than angels. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us *by His Son*, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had

by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained *a more excellent name* than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" etc. (Heb. i. 1-5.)

This wonderful epistle presents in the most blessed way the Person of God's Son as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—*Christ Jesus*. First, we see Him as the Son incarnate, the Messiah, walking here upon the earth, in whom God, at the end of the days of law, spake to His favoured people the Hebrews. He is the appointed Heir of all things; at the same time the One who called all into existence by His word. The brightness of the glory of God, and the exact expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, yet He stooped to the awful woe of Calvary's cross to make purification for the sins of His people. And having accomplished this mighty work for the glory of God, He sat down—the glorified, crowned, triumphant Man—at the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, having obtained *a more excellent name than they*. It was all-important to establish the believing Jews in this blessed truth, they being accustomed to hold angels in reverence, knowing that the law was given by their disposition. (Acts vii. 53.)

In the latter part of chapter i. the apostle cites many psalms which present the Person of Christ as the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father, the First-begotten who is the object of the worship of angels, God whose throne shall be established for ever, the Lord of all, whose years shall not fail, when the creation of His hand, wrecked through sin, shall perish, and as the Man exalted above angels at the right hand of God.

What object for the occupation of our hearts to be compared with the Person of the Blessed One who has obtained *a more excellent name* than the angels! Wisdom's voice speaks to each heart, when Jesus said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." (John xiv. 1.)

The second excellent thing for our consideration is found in figure in Heb. xi. 4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." This verse presents to us in type the wondrous redemption work, wrought by the One of whom we have been speaking for the glory of God and the eternal blessing of every one that believeth. If God has revealed that Abel's sacrifice is *more excellent* than Cain's, how much more can such words be used of the perfect sacrifice of One greater than Abel, even Jesus, the holy Lamb, foreordained of God!

Cain approached God with the fruit of the

ground, produced as the result of his own toil. Abel presented of the firstlings of the flock and the fat. In what consisted the difference? Why did God have respect to Abel's offering and not to Cain's? The answer is simple; but, alas! how few comparatively have learnt its significance. Cain failed to recognize that his life was forfeited on account of his fallen condition as a sinner, and brought the fruit of his own work and toil to God; whereas Abel, by faith, recognized his true state before Him, and approached God upon the ground of a substitute, which was divinely approved—type of the death of the Lamb of God upon Calvary.

The principle is the same to-day. Tens of thousands approach God continually on the ground of their own works and religious doings—*the way of Cain*. A solemn woe is pronounced upon all such in the epistle of Jude, verse 11. Others learn that they are sinners, guilty and lost, and believing upon the precious name of Jesus, approach God upon the ground of the spotless sacrifice and finished work of Christ. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Every one who trusts in *the more excellent sacrifice of Christ* is accounted righteous by God also. He is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from

wrath through Him.” (Rom. v. 9.) Are you trusting therein? Wisdom’s voice appeals to you, saying, “O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools” (or foolish), “be ye of an understanding heart.” (Prov. viii. 5.)

The third excellent thing is presented to us in Heb. viii. 6: “But now hath He obtained *a more excellent ministry*,” etc. He who has obtained a more excellent name than angels, and has offered the more excellent sacrifice upon the cross, lives for ever in the glory of God. As the great High Priest of His people, He is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. There He ever liveth to make intercession for His loved ones during their desert journey to the land of promise, ever sympathizing with heart of perfect love, being touched with the feeling of their infirmities. (Heb. iv. 15.) He Himself has known what it is to walk here below as the dependent Man, doing the will of God.

And not only so, but as Minister of the sanctuary (or holy places), and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, He bears, so to speak, the names of His redeemed upon His shoulders and upon His heart in the presence of the unveiled glory of God. And there too, the veil having been rent at His death, His brethren can follow Him in spirit. By faith, all who know for themselves the acceptance and fragrance of His Person before God, and the infinite value of

His sacrifice upon the cross, can draw near to God according to His word as presented in Heb. x. 19-22, and pour out their soul in worship, adoration, and praise.

May each believer, who reads these lines, know what it is to enjoy the blessed privileges which result for him through Christ's ministry on high in the presence of God. It is the desire of His heart that we should both walk in the pathway that He Himself has trod here below, sustained by Him in the midst of our weakness, and also draw near with full assurance of faith, as *true* worshippers, with a *true* heart, in the *true* tabernacle on high.

Fourthly, we have another *more excellent* thing presented to us in 1 Cor. xii. 31: "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you *a more excellent way.*" The detail of it is given in chapter xiii. It is the way of charity, or *love*. Gifts are important in their place, and we are to covet the best earnestly, but the way of love is *more excellent still*. It is God's way. *God is love*. He would have His own essential nature exhibited in the practical ways of His people, in whose hearts He sheds His love abroad by the Holy Ghost. (Rom. v. 5.)

There is much talk about this love; but, alas! on all hands we find that a mere human love usurps its place. Many cry out for more love, and complain of the lack of it in others, whilst sadly

failing to exhibit it themselves. There is plenty of so-called love, which really means to be "Hail fellow well met," with everybody, and everybody's will at work in insubjection to God. But this is not *the love of God*. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John v. 3.) And again, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." (1 John v. 2.) Moreover, we are not taught to go about the world looking for others to show love to us, but we are exhorted, "Beloved, let us love one another." (1 John iv. 7.) We are to show it. Walking with God (who is love), love will be active in us towards our brethren, and will find its response in all who are treading the same pathway.

Now, in 1 Cor. xiii. we have a detailed exposition of the way of love. All would do well to ponder it prayerfully. Space will not permit us to go through it verse by verse, but we may learn from the first, that though a man were the greatest of orators, if he is not characterized by love in his daily life, he is become as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Or, if he were the chief of theologians or professors, or the most renowned on the list of those who live, or work, or heal by faith, and love be lacking, he is *nothing*. Or even if he were a philanthropist of world-wide fame. or the most heroic of martyrs. and

he have not love, *it profits him nothing*, absolutely *nothing*.

Love is of God, and love never faileth. This is the *more excellent way*. Many a man, we fear, whom his fellows have exalted on account of his powers of oratory or of mind, his professed work of faith, his self-denial or liberality, or self-sacrifice for his creed, when weighed in the balances of God's sanctuary, according to 1 Cor. xiii., will be found wanting. May our hearts be led to weigh these things before Him now. He is the searcher of hearts, reading the secret counsels and intents of every soul. All things are open and naked, and manifest in the sight of Him with whom we have to do.

And may each believing soul who reads these lines be found then listening to the voice of wisdom, with *the heart* occupied with Him who has obtained *the more excellent name*, *the conscience* at peace through *His more excellent sacrifice*, *the soul* enjoying the fruits of *His more excellent ministry*, and *His life* the exemplification of *the more excellent way*, that *God may be glorified in all*.

E. H. C.

Oil in the Vessel. Matt. xxv. 4, 8.—“When the eye-strings break, and the breath groweth cold, and the imprisoned soul looketh out at the windows of the clay-house, ready to leap out into eternity, what would you then give for a lamp full of oil? Oh, seek it now!”

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS; OR, THE TRUE BASIS OF PEACE.

EXODUS xii. 11-20.

THERE are two things in Scripture—righteousness and holiness—which are never separated, yet never confounded. Hand in hand they go, yet the difference between them is ever clearly maintained.

In considering the feast of the passover in its double aspect, we shall see that righteousness comes first, then holiness, though as a subjective work in the soul sanctification in Scripture is put before justification. (1 Cor. vi. 11.) But if you seek for peace with God upon the basis of holiness you will never find it, for righteousness is the alone basis of peace with Him. Holiness is connected with the nature of God, and with fellowship with Him, the common enjoyment of the blessing in which righteousness has set us. Righteousness is connected with the judgment of sin, and so has to do with the blood of Jesus. In the type God says, "I will execute judgment;" but "when I see the blood I will pass over you." There was no word about the unleavened bread in the destroying angel's commission. He had not to ask about the lamb, whether it was being eaten, or whether

it had been roasted. Nor had he to look into the houses and see whether any leavened bread was there. His one commission was to execute judgment upon man and beast, unless the blood was sprinkled. If we do not see clearly that the righteousness of God is founded upon the blood of Christ (v. 13), we shall be, as it were, mixing with it the unleavened bread, and thus never have settled peace.

In connection with the ordinance of eating unleavened bread, we may remark that while the blood of the lamb was provided to secure the people of God from the judgment which fell upon the land of Egypt, the soul eating leavened bread was to be cut off from *Israel*. In verse 13 the judgment has to do with Egypt, but in verse 15 with Israel.

If we turn to Romans iii. 21–27, we find there the basis of peace with God, and learn that God's righteousness rests upon the blood of Jesus. "Whom God hath set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness: . . . that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God's hatred of sin would never give me peace with Him; His judgment of it does, through faith in the blood. God's loathing of sin could only, the more we knew it, fill us with the sense of our unfitness for His presence. Put the sin away, and the way is plain for us into the holiest of all.

If I saw a snake in the grass, I might have a horror of it, and yet be quite unable to free

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myself from it; my horror of it would not free me. But if some one kills the snake, I am at once at rest; hating it still, but knowing that I am free from its power, because it is dead. God has found means of dealing with sin, and His word tells us that He is a just God and a Saviour. But while this is so, God never divorces righteousness from holiness. If I saw the snake lying dead, and said, "I don't mind; it is nothing to me; I have no antipathy to it," that would prove me to be an unregenerate person. In that case the work of Christ is of no use, as far as I am concerned, though God has been perfectly glorified by it. God's righteousness, as spoken of in Romans iii., is His consistency with His own character, and is based on the finished work of Christ. Thus the foundation of all our blessing is connected with the judgment of God, which fell upon Christ when He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) In this way alone can a soul be brought into perfect peace with God. Paul made no mistake when he wrote, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and said not a word there about holiness. It is not that he makes light of holiness, but he shows clearly what settles the question of sin, and the judgment of it.

None but a soul quickened by the Spirit of God can understand that Christ took *his* place on the cross. and that God there treated Christ as the

sinner deserved to be treated. The throes of the new birth are connected with this.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” There can be nothing to lay to my charge if the Lord Jesus Christ has settled the whole question of sins, and sin, and all that came into this world through the devil. If God Himself has interposed in the person of Christ to settle all that *I am* on account of sin, what else remains to be settled? The Lord Jesus did indeed make our guilt His own. He says, in Psalm xxxviii., “Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” And again, in Psalm lxix., “O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee.” He took my place, and bore my judgment; and now what remains? Nothing but the love that did it, and who can separate me from that? If He loved me when I was black, how much more when I am comely! If He loved me when I was in the distance of the far country, in my rags and degradation, how much more when brought into His presence, clothed, and made fit to be there!

God’s holiness raises the question of sin between Himself and me; His righteousness settles it, and leaves room for holiness. But it is clear that

my love of holiness cannot put away sin. Only the work of Christ could do that, and to that work nothing can be added, as from it nothing can be taken. The Lord Jesus Christ could say, "I have preached righteousness;" that was His text, as He came down to gauge the whole work of the devil, to measure what sin was, to estimate the whole question and to settle it. Righteousness was His theme, but who would hear? Those only in whom the Spirit of God had so wrought as to produce a hatred of sin and desire for God. What would be the use of working righteousness for the ungodly man, who cared nothing about it? As useless to do that as to set the godly man, the one with desires after God, to work to get into His presence, when he does not know how to get there. But when the righteousness of God is known as the basis of the soul's peace with Him, how sweet is the unleavened bread! While righteousness is through the blood of Christ poured out for us, holiness is the life of Christ poured into us. The blood of the paschal lamb was put upon the door-post to keep the destroying angel out of the house, but the feast of unleavened bread was kept because he was kept out.

Turn to 1 Peter i. 18-22, and mark the line which the apostle there carries us along. I was in the vanity of a worthless religion, and I find God interposing by redeeming power—and the ransom price is not silver or gold, but precious

blood, the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, foreknown before the foundation of the world—that my faith and hope may be in God, in virtue of that One whom He raised from the dead, and to whom He gave glory. I see where He has gone, and I know that that is where I am going. And what is to take me there? The blood of Jesus; nothing else. I believe in God *by Him*.

But if we read on to the next verses (22, 23)—“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”—we find quite another thing—“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit,” &c. Now we do not touch the blood. This is the unleavened bread, purification of the soul, new life, new nature, new birth by the action of the Spirit of God in the soul. And how do we get it? By obedience to the truth through the Spirit. The first act which characterised the old life which we had by nature was disobedience through the flesh. What is the first act which characterizes this new life which God gives? Obedience to the truth through the Spirit. And this is a plant which grows and develops. The apostle writes to the Thessalonians, “The very God of peace *sanctify you wholly*.” But there is no development in that divine righteousness, in virtue of which God justifies. It is never said, “May God *justify you wholly*,” for His righteousness stands

firm as the Rock of ages ; sin is ended before God, by virtue of the death of the One who poured out His life in obedience. But when the Spirit of God is working in the soul, creating a sense of need—it may be at first the desire to escape hell, then the desire to get to heaven, then the desire to see and know God, to be like Jesus—there is development in that soul. But all these feelings and desires produced within us are like the barometer or thermometer, ever changing. The growth and development in each person is different now, but all will be like Christ by-and-by. There is never any change in the righteousness of God, which rests on the accomplished work of Christ, but there is a great difference in the progress of a Christian's life. He may be now living in the presence of God in a way he did not even think possible twenty years ago, but it is not on any change produced within that the soul rests for peace. In 1 Cor. v. Paul speaks of the passover, and there we learn what the unleavened bread is —“the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” In Romans iii., where he lays down the basis of divine righteousness, he speaks only of blood, the blood of Christ, but of this there is not a word in 1 Cor. v. Again, we see that it is not the blood of Christ which gives us a new life and new nature ; they are produced by the word and Spirit of God. (John iii.) He came by water and by blood ; but the testimony of each is distinct, while also they agree in one.

E. C.

COME, LORD JESUS.

THE gospel of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work sets us in such liberty and peace as to wait for God's Son from heaven. It was so with believers at the first. They were saved "to wait." When Paul preached at Thessalonica, the effects of the gospel were, that they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and *to wait* for His Son from heaven," knowing that He had delivered them from coming wrath. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.)

It is very important to see that when the gospel is known in its full blessedness it not only brings us to God in all the eternal efficacy of the one offering of Christ, by which we are perfected for ever, but sets us to wait and look for Him who said, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This is not merely our accepting the doctrine of the second coming, as some say, but to be so rejoicing in the work of eternal redemption He has accomplished for us at such a cost as to *wait* for His return from heaven.

So also the Holy Spirit leads and teaches, and more than this. In the close of the Revelation we read, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." This is more than waiting or even watch-

ing. It is the heart of the believer so warmly responding to our Lord's presentation of Himself as "the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star" as to desire Him to come. What makes the passage so very solemn is the fact that the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer, not only teaches the precious truth that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for us, but that *He* says, "Come," and teaches all the true saints who form the bride of Christ to also say, Come. Observe, it does not say that religious people say, "Come," or that Christendom says, "Come," but it does state plainly that the Bride says "Come;" for she has had wrought in her, as born of God and indwelt by the Spirit, such bridal affections, that the warmest desire of her heart must be to see His face, to be with Him, like Him, and near Him for ever. "The Spirit and *the Bride* say, Come."

It would seem, in a former dispensation, that the desire of some was very earnest that Messiah should come, and they were serving God with fastings and prayers night and day. They waited for the consolation of Israel, and looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and were met by the actual coming of the Messiah. To one at least it had been revealed that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ; and he and others lived to really see and welcome the Messiah when He came into the world.

Again, in a future day, when the godly remnant of Israel, in their deep distress, cry to Jehovah, it will be followed by Messiah's coming in power and great glory. "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, . . . that the nations may tremble at Thy presence ! . . . We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . . . Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire : and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O Jehovah ? wilt Thou hold Thy peace, and afflict us very sore ?" (Isa. lxiv.) Again we read, "Bow Thy heavens, O Jehovah, and come down : touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." (Ps. cxliv. 5.) And again, "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts : look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine ; and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down : they perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance. Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom 'Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee : quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine : and we shall be saved." (Ps. lxxx. 14-19.)

Such will be the cries of the faithful remnant of Jews by-and-by, because they will look for the fulfilment of the Scriptures of the prophets, that "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah" (Isa. lix. 20); and in this way only will they expect their hoped-for blessing on the earth; for it is added, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever."

We do not expect their cries to go up to Jehovah until after the Lord has come, and we have been caught up to meet Him in the air; but that there will be this earnest longing and crying for Him to come as their Deliverer, and to establish them in their own land in fulfilment of all the promises to Abraham and David, there can be no doubt.

And who knows how soon the cry of the faithful now, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus," may bring the Lord from heaven to catch us up to meet Him in the air! Certain it is that during the last years not a few, both individually and collectively, have often looked up and said, "Come." No doubt our place is to "wait" and "watch" as girded servants with trimmed lamps; and yet more, for as He has said, "Father, I will

that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory," so the suited response on our part is "Come." If He says, "Surely I come quickly," how could any less utterance be effected by it in our hearts than "*Come, Lord Jesus*"? It may be that many a saint on earth, who now invites Him to "Come," will in a very little while have it blessedly fulfilled to his own eternal joy and rejoicing. Let us then never forget that nothing less than "Come, Lord Jesus!" is an adequate response on our part to such a presentation of Himself in tender and perfect love as the bright and morning star.

It is then a great test for our hearts as to how far in this respect we are in the current of the Spirit's teaching. But how can this be if the Spirit be grieved by our careless walk? If the world be attractive and *loved* by us, we have not only slipped away from the love of the Father, but we shall also find it impossible to look up to our Saviour and say, "Come." If self be our object, then we shall be so occupied with circumstances and things of earth as to find it impossible to have this blessed hope clear and bright, and near to our souls. But if He Himself be the Object of our hearts, if His word, His work, His interests, and His honour be what we are seeking, if the knowledge of His accomplished redemption, and all the offices He now sustains on our behalf

COME, LORD JESUS.

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in the presence of God, fill us with joy and peace, then the heart not only waits and watches for Him, but can truly look up and say, "Come."

Let not the Christian reader for a moment suppose that he has accepted the divine teaching of the Lord's coming because he allows it to be a doctrine of Scripture. It is so plainly stated there, over and over again, that it seems almost impossible for a fair mind not to admit it is there. It is when received and known as the "hope" of our souls, that it gives a heavenly colour to our life and walk. "He that hath *this hope* in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John iii. 3.) The heart then looks up into heaven, and catching the utterance of the Saviour's heart as to His coming "quickly"—coming to change our bodies of humiliation, coming to receive us unto Himself, to present us unto Himself a glorious Church, coming that we may behold His glory, coming for us, His joint-heirs, that we may enter upon and enjoy the inheritance with Him, the Heir of all things—we cannot but say, "Come!" Yes, He is coming to translate us from this vale of tears to the Father's house, from this path of present suffering that we may be glorified together. May this blessed hope have more power on all our hearts. Amen and Amen! H. H. S.

"THE worst things of Christ, His reproaches, His cross, are better than Egypt's treasures."

A CLOSING APPEAL.

“This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ : not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

1 JOHN v. 6.

FELLOW-TRAVELLER, you are on the voyage of the life that now is. As you journey on, have you eternity distinctly before you? It were wise, if not insured already, to seek insurance without delay. The terms are as easy to you, whoever you may be, as the security is perfect; for God is concerned in all, and His character and resources are at stake—the God of all grace who cannot lie. Let His interests be yours, as yours beyond doubt are His.

The terms were not easy to Him, for they cost Him His Son, His Only-begotten. They involved the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in a life of humiliation, in a death of suffering and shame. Was this all, wonderful as it is for such a One? It was but the outside, the pathway in its course and end here below, but not that which made the Saviour sweat as it were great drops of blood; nor yet that which drew out the cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Very weak servants of His have triumphed over torture for His name; the most vacillating of martyrs even fondled the consuming flame with his own “unworthy” but repentant right hand.

He, the Lord of all, in tasting death for every one, must drink the cup of divine judgment of sin, if any sinners were to be righteously saved. He must be abandoned at that supreme hour, if the believer, once consciously unclean and guilty, is not to be abandoned, but blessed now and for ever. What was this to such a Father of such a Son? What was it to forsake the Anointed One who had glorified the Father in obedience all through the days of His flesh? A deeper question was now raised. Would He, who is the eternal life, glorify God *about our disobedience*, about our sins, that righteous judgment might take its course, no less than saving grace? Would He suffer for sins once for all, Just for unjust, that God should be vindicated beyond measure in His truth, love, and majesty, and man be delivered from all that is against him in a way worthy of God?

The cross of Christ is the answer. The atoning work *is* done, not doing nor to be done, but even now accepted for, and applied to, every one that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Out of His pierced side, when already dead, flowed blood and water. John "that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." (John xix. 34, 35.)

You if you have not bowed to the truth of God.

and received the blessing in His grace, you need cleansing as well as atonement. Here not eternal life only, but remission of sins and purification are to be found, only in and through the Lord Jesus. Believe on Him and be saved. So preached the great apostle; so taught the beloved disciple. The Spirit who inspired both is truth. God calls you to believe the gospel. Come in, and be blessed of Him who will have the Son honoured, even as the Father is. Oh, tarry not without, unblessed of God, indifferent or hostile to the Son, a slave of self, sin, and Satan, with death before you, and after this the judgment. "He that believeth... hath everlasting life." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life."—*Extracted.*

A Word to Young Christians.—Where do you think the Lord would like you to begin to please Him? In your own room, where no eye but His can see you. There, alone, "pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Only seek Him. How striking is that verse in Proverbs xxiv., "Yet a *little* sleep, a *little* slumber, a *little* folding of the hands to sleep." We lose by littles, and we gain by littles, as in Isaiah xxviii., "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a *little*, and there a *little*." Our difficulties may seem like mountains to overcome, but hear the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel in Zechariah iv., saying, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." And again, "For who hath despised the day of small things?"

R. B.