

# SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

## *A Monthly Magazine.*

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“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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## SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

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### BUILDING ON THE SAND.

WE were travelling the other day on one of the main lines out of London. Shortly after the train had left the platform a gentleman in our compartment began to give away gospel tracts, and to speak with earnestness to all of us about our souls' salvation. Some of us gladly listened to what he had to say, others looked coldly on, wondering, so it seemed to us, that any *gentleman* should talk on such a subject to people whom he did not know. Possibly it was their scornful looks that led him to explain his reasons.

Not many months ago, so it appeared, he was as dark as midnight as to his true state before God. Baptised in his infancy, "confirmed" in his youth, partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper regularly, and never neglecting his prayers, he thought, naturally enough, that he had naught to fear. But God graciously showed him, so he said, that he was a Christian only in name, that he had never been born again, never converted, that he had never realised what it was to be a lost sinner. What distress, what anguish of spirit,

what sorrow, what repentance followed such an awakening is easily imagined! What joy, too, filled his heart when Christ was really known as his Saviour—not in word only, but in truth! From that happy day he had felt constrained to let no opportunity pass without speaking to others on this momentous subject, believing, as he did, that thousands were in the dark as he had been. “In myself,” said he, “I am nothing but a poor sinner; but Christ has saved me, and I know it—to Him be all the glory.”

Returning home the same evening with this interesting event fresh in our memory, we found lying on our table a parish magazine circulating in the parish in which we live, and in scores of other parishes in England. Glancing at it, an article on “Conversion” caught our eye, in which the writer said:—

“Those who have been baptised into Christ, and have committed no deadly sin afterwards, do not need conversion in the ordinary sense. Moreover, the Church demands of her children no absolute certainty as to their spiritual state. Consciousness and feelings are often delusive guides. We must trust in the grace of the sacraments which Christ ordained, and which, when faithfully used, convey to our souls the result of His Passion.”

Here, thought I, is the very doctrine in which our railway friend had been cradled all his days, and from which he deemed it a mercy to have

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been delivered. For *he* had been baptised; *he* had committed no deadly sin afterwards, and therefore needed no conversion. Absolute certainty as to his spiritual state, of course, "the Church" did not require, and all that he had to do was to trust in "the grace of the sacraments." That was enough. What more could he do? What more was called for? Surely nothing! Such was the doctrine of the parish magazine, and such were the tenets from which he blessed God for setting him free.

Let us briefly examine this teaching. Three points claim our attention.

1. That no baptised person leading a moral life needs conversion.

2. That we must trust in "the grace of the sacraments."

3. That no certainty as to our spiritual state is demanded. Consciousness and feelings are often delusive guides.

*First.* In the Christian economy baptism has a place, but are we ever told in Scripture that baptism is the means of communicating to us divine or spiritual life? In all our reading we have never come across a single passage where anything of the sort is said. Indeed, if baptism be a symbol of anything it is a symbol of *death*—of that death with Christ in which the believer, and he only, has his part, according to the explicit teaching of Romans vi. Never is it a symbol of

the giving of life. We can make no greater mistake than to suppose that the initiatory rite of Christianity gives us a part in those spiritual blessings which are announced in the gospel to perishing men. And when we speak of spiritual blessings we mean forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, present acceptance with God, and the assured possession of everlasting life.

Here it may be well to ask, Who were they concerning whom Paul had "great heaviness and continual sorrow" of heart? *Religious* persons, in the enjoyment of great religious privileges! (Rom. ix. 2-5). Who were they for whose salvation he so fervently prayed? *Religious* people, to whose zeal for God he could bear personal testimony! (Rom. x. 1-3). Who was he to whom the Lord said, "Ye must be born again"? A *religious* man, holding high office in the religious world! (John iii. 7). Who were they who said, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace"? Priest and prophet—the *religious* leaders of the day! (Jer. viii. 10, 11). Has all this no voice? Does it not bid us beware of blindly following religious guides, and to make sure that our religion is not human, but divine?

*Second.* And as for trusting in "the grace of the sacraments," he who does so leans on a broken reed and builds his house on the sinking sand. For he places baptism and "Holy Communion" where Christ alone should stand, apart from all

ordinances. Examine every record of the preaching of the apostles, and see whether they ever counselled their hearers to trust in "the grace of the sacraments." *They never did so.* What! Shall I build my hopes of heaven and everlasting happiness on my baptism and on my partaking of the Holy Communion? Precious as those institutions may be to the believing soul, if a man rely on them he is cherishing hopes that are bound to fade away. Does not the Lord Himself warn us against such vain confidences in Luke xiii. 25-27?

In that searching and solemn passage He foretells what will befall some in the day of the shut door. "Lord, Lord, open unto us," they loudly cry, as they stand without and knock and wait. "I know you not whence ye are" is the answer from within. But this denial they cannot take as meant for them. It is as far removed from what they looked for as east from west or heaven from hell. There must be some mistake. The Master of the house cannot know who they are who stand before the door. So they cry afresh, and tell Him in loud and earnest tones that they had eaten and drunk in His presence, and that He had taught in their streets. Surely He must know them! Again the silence is broken, and again they hear the Master's voice saying unto them, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity."

And so they had to go—these religious folks, who in the days of their pilgrimage here on earth had thronged His courts, sung in the choir, sat under the ministry of His Word, visited in the district, gone with scrupulous regularity to “Holy Communion,” and trusted in “the grace of the sacraments.” Out they went, with weeping and gnashing of teeth, leaders and led, deceivers and deceived, all overwhelmed in one common and eternal ruin. Such is the picture the Lord presents. Would to God that those who think they need no conversion might gaze upon it till they understood its meaning! Then would they begin to inquire what they must do to be saved (Acts xvi. 30, 31).

*Third.* If “the Church demands of *her* children no absolute certainty as to their spiritual state,” is it the will of God that *His* children should live in this condition of darkness and doubt? And if “consciousness and feelings are often delusive guides,” is there nothing else to guide us in this supremely important matter? Where are the Holy Scriptures? Do they throw no light upon it? Is there nothing in them to deliver the sincere and earnest soul from this state of terrible suspense? Is he like a man left to grope his way in the dark across a wild, trackless moor, not certain whether he is on the right road or not? They who say so only show how little they know of the simplest elements of the gospel. The glad tidings preached by the apostles not only declared

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God's willingness to forgive, but assured the believing soul that he was forgiven and justified from all things. Who can deny it in the face of Acts xiii. 38, 39?

But we close. Let me ask you, reader, whether you are placing any confidence on your baptism, your sacrament-taking, and other religious things that you can do. Or have you come personally to Christ without intervention of religious rites of any kind—as a sinner guilty, ruined, and lost? All of us are that, whether we know it or not. In the days when the Saviour was on earth one came to Him whose sins were many—a debtor, having “nothing to pay.” She went straight to Christ and stood at His feet, with weeping eyes and a heart deeply moved by His gracious words—you will find the story in Luke, at the end of chapter seven—and ere she left the house she *knew* the joy and certainty of forgiveness and salvation. So may we. No longer on earth, Jesus is now in heaven; but He is the same Jesus still. He alone should be the immediate object of our faith, and His Word, applied to the heart by the power of the Spirit, should be the only source from whence we derive the *knowledge* of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Not “in the grace of the sacraments,” but in the grace of Christ livingly, personally known, we must trust, and His Word shall give us no uncertain hope, but the unwavering assurance of salvation—perfect, permanent, and eternal.

## GRACE ABOUNDING.

JESUS, Lord, enthroned in heaven,  
 Glorious Thou art ;  
 Vast the portion Thou hast given,  
 With Thee to have part ;  
 Thou wast here, Thy people serving,  
 Thine to set them free ;  
 From Thy people never swerving,  
 Grace abounds in Thee.

Jesus, Lord, I know Thee risen,  
 Victor o'er the grave !  
 Through Thy name I am forgiven,  
 Life in Thee I have.  
 Thou art mine, O gracious Saviour,  
 Portion dear to me ;  
 I am Thine, in fullest favour,  
 Grace abounds for me.

Jesus, Lord, whene'er I ponder  
 Grace so rich as Thine,  
 Lost I am in praise and wonder,  
 Joy that all is mine.  
 Vain the charms of earthly pleasure,  
 Brighter things I see ;  
 Richer far the boundless treasure  
 Grace has won for me.

Jesus, Lord, Thine advent hailing,  
 Here I still abide ;  
 Pressing onward—grace prevailing,  
 Cleaving to Thy side ;  
 Soon will close my pilgrim story,  
 I shall like Thee be ;  
 Grace will consummate in glory  
 Ever more, with Thee.

*Southsea.*

J. T. R.

## A REVIVAL NEEDED.

“O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years.”

HAB. iii. 2

“O LORD, revive Thy work!” Thus prayed Habakkuk, and there was urgent need for him thus to pray. The chosen people of God were for the most part in captivity, and content to remain so. Idolatry was rampant amongst them; Babylon was preferred to Jerusalem; false prophets were held in greater esteem than the true messenger of Jehovah. Even the remnant that had returned from the captivity had settled down in apathy, and those whose purpose had once been to build the Lord’s house had abandoned the work and were now engrossed with their own ceiled houses.

All this weighed heavily upon the prophet, and, with a burdened heart, he cries, “O Lord, revive Thy work!”

Nowadays one is almost afraid to speak of a revival, because the idea often connected with it is that of some exciting movement got up by the zeal and enthusiasm of men, leading to results which are generally very shallow. I desire, however, to use the word as it is used in Scripture.

No true-hearted Christian, who looks around him with compassion akin to his Master’s, and

views things from a divine standpoint, can doubt that a God-sent revival is needed *in the world at large*. The fear of God is being largely given up; disregard for eternal things is on the increase. Men are more than ever lovers of pleasure and of sin; greed of gain, infidelity, the utter indifference of the multitudes to their danger and condition—all these combine to make the present time one of great seriousness, and urge us to cry to God with Habakkuk, “O Lord, revive Thy work!”

Then there is *the Church*, that which is God’s lamp-bearer in the world. Can we point to a moment when a revival was more needed in the Church? It has joined hands with the world, and is asleep. Evil men have come in and have sown tares. Instead of humble faith, “higher criticism” prevails. Sacerdotalism and formalism have largely displaced the simple gospel. Gorgeous buildings, worldly methods, bazaars, plays, and entertainments are openly advocated. Divisions abound, heresies increase, God’s Word is dishonoured, prayer is neglected, and the hearts of the many wax cold. What a call for those who perceive the state of things to pray the prayer of the prophet, “Revive Thy work!”

Consider, too, the state of *individual Christians*. How rarely does one meet a man “full of the Holy Ghost”! How little overflowing joy there is! How little whole-hearted devotedness to Christ! How little private study of the

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Scriptures! How little power in prayer! How little enjoyment of personal communion with God! Surely the contemplation of this state of things should make us cry, and that earnestly and continually, that God, by His Spirit, may bring about a mighty revival. Do we believe that God can do this? Then let us cry day and night to Him, "*O Lord, revive Thy work!*"

All will agree that true revival must begin with our own hearts. Assuredly if individual believers are revived by the Holy Ghost, there will be a revival in the Church at large, reaching out to the whole world.

I venture to suggest three or four things in connection with which revival is first to be looked for. May each of us be made to feel it must begin with oneself. Before we pray, "Revive us," or "Revive Thy work," our prayer must be, "Revive me."

(1) *There must be the revival of CHRIST in one's heart, or nothing can be right.* No labour, zeal, preaching, testimony, study, self-denial, can take the place of affection for Christ. Each of us should feel this, that every idol must go and that Christ must be our all in all. He must be the one and only object of our lives. Everything else must be subservient to Him.

Let us, by all means, do what we can for the blessing of others. But if *Christ* is not paramount in our hearts, all will be cold and legal service.

Christ is supreme in *God's* heart, He is supreme

in heaven, and He is worthy to reign without a rival in *our* hearts. Are we ready to fling away our idols, to awake from our coldness and pray, "Revive Thy work, *and begin with me*"?

(2) *There must be a revival of the Holy Ghost as the active power of the Christian's life.* We may be happily familiar with the truth that the believer's body is the temple of the Spirit, that he is sealed and anointed with Him. But lack of unction, joy, power, vitality, discloses a serious fact—that the Holy Ghost in such a case is inactive. He is hindered and grieved, instead of operating mightily as He would if the conditions were different.

One has only to read the first thirteen chapters of the Acts to see the wonderful effects of His dwelling in power with God's people. In those days men were *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and nothing could stand before them. But it is as possible for us as for the saints of those early days to be filled in the same way.

Alas! the trouble is that we allow so many things that grieve the blessed Spirit of God. Worldliness, covetousness, carnal ease, self-seeking, and many other things grieve Him, and the result is we are joyless and powerless.

Let me illustrate what I mean. I was standing on the wharf at Gothenburg one day, and saw a handsome and well-equipped tram-car lifted from a ship and placed by means of a powerful crane upon some temporary rails. There it stood—a

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wonderful product of human skill, and much admired by the spectators. But mark the point. As it stood there, as perfect as the manufacturer could make it, it was *totally inert*, and had to be moved along the rails by a gang of men with crowbars and levers.

By-and-by they got it as far as the permanent lines of the tramway. The arm of the trolley was connected with the electric wire overhead, and immediately the car became like a thing of life—power, motion, progress, all ensued.

Ah, my brother, you and I have been lifted out of the depths. We have been placed on the rails that lead to glory. In the words of Scripture, “We are His workmanship.” But in spite of all that, we shall, like the car, be inert and powerless and motionless until connected, by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, with the source and spring of power and blessing.

(3) *A revival of prayer.* Here I touch a subject of vital importance. A revival of prayer is needed, not only in the case of preachers, but with each one of us. “Men ought *always* to pray”—“pray *everywhere*”—and in scores of other passages of Scripture the importance of fervent, importunate, continual, believing prayer is pressed. Apart from prayer we are helpless. The soul gets out of touch with God; affection for Christ becomes deadened; loss of spiritual appetite and indifference to His interests are the sad results.

We need to pray for ourselves as well as for

others—to cry, “Lord, revive the spirit of *prayer*, and let it begin with me.”

(4) *A revival of the study of the Scriptures.* They are given for the perfecting of the man of God (2 Tim. iii. 17). How appalling to see Christians devouring books of travel and adventure, religious stories, newspapers, and other forms of literature, and yet pleading that they have no time for private Bible-study! The Word of Truth is neglected. Why? Not because we do not revere it and believe it, but because we have no appetite for it. With its sacred histories, its charming types, its exquisite parables, its profound teachings, all beaming with the brightness of God’s ways, and all stamped with *Christ*, it is read perhaps but once a week, and then in a perfunctory kind of way.

We pore over other books that interest, but we cannot glean from them what can be gleaned from the Bible.

Let me urge you, fellow-Christian, to use diligence in reading and searching the Scriptures. Meditate upon them; pray over them; great will be your reward.

Other things could be named in connection with which revival is called for. Enough has been said, however, to give rise to exercise as to the need of it. Let us unite in crying to God for a mighty revival. Like a stone cast into the water, it will make itself felt in ever-widening circles.

J. H. L.

## THE CASTAWAY.

“I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—1 COR. ix. 26, 27.

THIS passage is often cited to prove that a true believer may, after all, be eternally lost. Those who favour such a view contend that though the apostle Paul was a true believer, he here admits the possibility of his finally perishing.

But does the passage teach anything of the kind ? Paul certainly was a true believer, but can anyone show that he here betrays any doubt as to his final salvation ? Quite the contrary.

Let us look at the passage carefully, take it as it stands, and bow to the plain statements. The Scriptures form our only standard of appeal, and it is our highest wisdom to take them just as God gives them. If they substitute God's thoughts for ours it will be a happy exchange.

“*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly.*” The apostle's own testimony is plain enough : “*NOT as uncertainly.*” How people can make that mean just the contrary must be left to their conscience to explain. The energy of the apostle's running was not enfeebled by any doubt as to the end.

“*So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.*” Again, under another simile he assures us that he had no uncertainty. “Running uncertainly,” “beating the air,” are terms which would rightly

describe those who are not sure as to the end. It was just the reverse with the apostle. "*Not* as uncertainly," "*not* as one that beateth the air," is the description he gives of himself. *He* had no uncertainty.

"*But I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*"

Many misquote this as if it read, "Lest when I have been *saved* I myself should be a castaway," whereas it plainly reads, "Lest when I have *preached* to others." In other words, he is looking at himself on the ground of *profession*, and places himself among the preachers. Now, we know that Judas Iscariot *professed and preached* to others, for in Matthew x. 4 we are told that the Lord chose Simon the Canaanite as Judas' missionary companion, and that His commission to them was, "As ye go, *preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But Judas did not keep his body under. On the contrary, he allowed his avaricious propensities to carry him to such a length that he betrayed his Lord for money, and his name has become a byword for the basest form of treachery.

You may contend that Judas' was an extreme case. But how many thousands of mere professors there have been who will be his companions in eternity! The impartial historian narrates the evil lives of priests—carnal men, eating and drinking and fattening on their flocks,

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their ability being shown in shearing the sheep, not in feeding them.

But the apostle Paul was a real possessor, a true believer, and therefore he gave evidence of his reality by being consistent with his profession. If the God that had saved him was holy, then it was incumbent on him to be likewise holy. If he would reach a holy heaven, he would not sit down and give licence to carnal desires, as if conversion were a myth—being born again a mere theological term, running the race a mere academic expression and nothing more. No, no; these things were profound realities to him. Paul was saved by the grace of God *alone*. None knew that better than he. But he also knew that the grace of God carried positive teaching with it as to the Christian's course and life. It was he who wrote to Titus saying, "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. 11, 12). Thus he ran as certain, and thus he kept his body under, as having a certain end in view.

Finally, the apostle Paul does not state that he might *become* a castaway, but that he pursued a certain course, "lest that when I have preached to others, I myself should *be* a castaway." Here it is not a question of what he might become, but of what he then was. The word "castaway" in the original carries with it the sense of counter-

feit, spurious, and is in other passages translated "reprobate." For instance, Judas was reprobate or spurious. He accepted a place as a disciple of Christ, but he never was one in heart. Simon Magus was only a professed disciple without reality. He was a counterfeit or reprobate, and he too was made manifest in the end.

Now it will not do to take the edge off this solemn scripture. It tests all. But true believers will stand the test, and will be known as those who keep their bodies under.

Suppose, for instance, that I had before me ten coins, which by their colour, size, and imprint seem to be genuine sovereigns. Suppose, however, that I had reason to fear some of them were counterfeit. I send for the assayer to test them. Some are found to be real gold, and all the testing in the world would only prove them to be so. But others are counterfeit, and the test discovers them. I cast them away as worthless. They are castaways.

It is, indeed, a bad sign when souls are careless and think that because they hold the doctrine of eternal salvation, therefore they can do as they like. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. I should beg such to examine themselves, and to see if they are really in the faith. If they discover they are castaways, mere professors, and nothing more, may they repent while time for repentance is theirs. But real Christians will make their "calling and election sure." A. J. P.

## THE JOY OF ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

*(From a Letter to a Young Christian.)*

“**D**EAR ——,—You have doubtless often heard expressions used in prayer to the Lord as to our place of association with Himself before the Father’s face, and I dare say you have just as often wondered what the good people were praying about. I think the Lord would like you to understand what is meant by it, and then you can ask Him to let you know the joy of it. I am sure you will agree that it is a very wonderful and blessed thing to be in the joy of association with the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Let us try and understand it together. If you will open your Bible at 1 Corinthians xv. 22, you will notice two expressions there, ‘in Adam’ and ‘in Christ.’ Now we must seek to get at the meaning of these words. If I were to say to you that Mr. A. was born in humble life, you would at once understand what was meant. You would begin to picture a little cottage in the country, and the mother singing to her baby in the porch, while over the field comes the father, with his spade on his shoulder, from his day of honest toil. That word ‘humble’ would convey all that to you. If I had said Mr. A. was born in low

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life, you would at once begin to think of some city slum, the abode of thieves and bad men of all sorts. Then if I were further to tell you that Mr. A. now moves in high life, and even in Court life, your mind would at once revert to the nobles of the land as they surround Royalty itself. Now if I say to you that the grace of God found you 'in Adam,' I want you to think of all that is set forth in that name 'Adam.' He was the man that sinned and fell and brought into this world all the wretchedness on every hand. So the Spirit of God uses the term 'in Adam' to describe the whole condition of sin and estrangement from God in which we were all found, as natural men or women, boys or girls. It is all covered in the mind of God by those two significant words, 'in Adam.' The grace of God came to us when we were in that condition to deliver us out of it, and put us into an entirely new condition, of which I shall say something shortly.

"When the Spirit of God began to trouble you about your sins, it was because He wanted to bring you out of this terrible Adam condition. He made you feel your sins, and then you looked to the Lord Jesus and saw how He had died for you and that by the shedding of His precious blood your sins were put away. But after a bit another question began to trouble you, and it seemed worse, perhaps, than the first, and that was, that though your sins were forgiven, you

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had just the same evil heart as ever, and that you were constantly doing the very things that you earnestly desired not to do, and found yourself quite unable to do those things which you knew would be pleasing to the Lord. Romans vii. 15 to 22 described you exactly. Perhaps it is just that which you are now passing through. Well, all this is to teach you that, as a child of Adam, you are hopelessly, unmendably bad. This is what was meant in your baptism. Perhaps you did not understand it at the time, though others did. Now you are learning it for yourself by, perhaps, very bitter experience. Oh, how glad you would be to get out of this trouble! Well, now, listen. That which God could not *mend* He *ended* in the cross of Christ. God said, as it were, 'Man in Adam is now fully proved to be past recovery, he is unmendably bad; My sentence of death is more than justified, and there remains nothing but to put him out of My sight in death. But I will do it in the death of My Son.' Now do you consent to that? Do you from your heart say, 'Thank God, there was an end of me as a child of Adam, before God, in the death of Christ'? If so, you can say, 'I am no longer in Adam before God.' You are cut off from Adam by the death of Christ. Can you thank the Lord for this great result of His death for you on the cross? If so, do it before you read another line of this letter.

## 22 JOY OF ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

“Now, if that point is settled, the Spirit of God wants you to understand that you are one of the sanctified or set ‘apart ones,’ for that is the meaning of the word. First of all notice you are set apart from Adam. But is that all? Oh dear no. You are set apart for God—set apart as one who has been taken up by God for association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn now to Hebrews ii. 11. How wonderful! ‘He that sanctifieth’ (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) ‘and they who are sanctified (that is, you and me and all who believe) are all of one, for which cause *He is not ashamed* to call them brethren.’ How entirely we are delivered from our old Adam condition is shown in this, that the Lord Jesus is not *ashamed* to own us as His brethren. He and we are all of one, and He is not *ashamed* of us. What grace!

“Now we are beginning to understand a little of what it is to be ‘in Christ.’ Those two words describe my *new* condition just as ‘in Adam’ described my *old* condition. ‘In Christ’ we at once begin to think about the Lord Jesus in the presence of God—all His loveliness and excellence. His perfections, so delightful to God, rise up before our souls, and we smell, as it were, the sweet savour of the incense, like Aaron did in the holy place of old. Well, all this now describes my new condition before God. I am not only set apart from Adam, but I am set apart in association with the Lord Jesus Christ in all that He is as man

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS. 23

before the Father. How the contemplation of it lifts us up! We feel happier at once. Christ is before us—Christ in all His blessedness and infinite perfection as man before God. We delight in it, our souls rejoice, and all the time the Spirit of God is bearing witness to us that these are our new associations. Again let us stop. Can you thank the blessed Lord Jesus for this wonderful grace of His that picked you up a poor, lost, sinful child of Adam, delivered you out of that condition, and brought you into association with Himself the other side of death and judgment?

“May the Lord Jesus greatly bless you and light up the joy of all this in your soul by His blessed Spirit. Do not be discouraged if you seem to enter into it very little. Pray about it.

“G. W. W.”

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. C. M.—You ask us “whether the doctrine of *eternal* salvation by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ does not give a licence to sin.” We answer your question, Scotch fashion, by asking another: Is the doctrine true? Is it scriptural? If so, then it assuredly leads to godliness, and gives no licence to sin at all.

(1) Your question is based on a series of assumptions which are fundamentally false. It assumes that holiness of life is only followed through fear of heaven being lost at last. It takes for granted that the certainty of salvation loosens the bonds of Chris-

## 24      ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

tian morality, and disposes the believer to follow after sin as if he loved sin rather than holiness. It ignores the important fact that the believer is not only redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, but "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Peter i. 23). It takes no account of that divine life which has been implanted in his soul, or of the Holy Ghost with whom he has been sealed unto the day of redemption. It overlooks the fact that this new life—like every other kind of life—has its proper and peculiar nature, and that it is *natural* for it to aspire after holiness, even as it is holy. It fails to recognise that *love* is the most powerful force that sways the human heart, and is mightier far than *fear*. It forgets that love begets love, that "we love Him because He first loved us," and that if we love Him we shall keep His commandments (John xiv. 21). Nor does it see that all true devotedness to Christ springs from the knowledge of Himself as revealed to the soul first of all in His forgiving grace. This great principle is clearly shown in the parable of the two debtors in Luke vii. 41, 42, and the Lord's comment thereon. Any argument founded on a false premiss is worth nothing. It is like a sum on a schoolboy's slate, which being wrong in the first line, is bound to be wrong all the way through. You may depend upon it, that the more we realise how much we owe to divine grace, the more we shall seek to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

(2) That it is possible for a truly converted man to fall into sin we frankly acknowledge. But the case you suppose is not *necessarily* that of a truly converted man. We may *preach* to others—and God,

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS. 25

if it so please Him, might bless others through our preaching—and yet be nothing but a castaway. The sow that was washed went back to her wallowing in the mire. *She was but a washed sow*, and no sheep. We are not called, however, to judge others. They can be left with God. He alone can read the heart. But this we do know, that no sheep given by Him to the Good Shepherd shall ever perish. Bold is the man that dares affirm the contrary with John x. 27–30 before his eyes. Let him be careful, lest in so saying he should make God a liar (1 John v. 10).

(3) Hebrews vi. was addressed to *Hebrews* professing to be Christians, but the reality of whose profession had to be established by their holding fast to the Christian faith, and not returning to the Jewish system out of which they had come. Standing within the circle of Christian profession, and sharing in the privileges placed there, if any abandoned that ground and went back to Judaism, they did but crucify, as with their own hand, the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. “But,” adds the apostle, “we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” This passage, and others of a similar nature, are explained in *Fallen from Grace*, price 2d., to be had from our publisher.

Finally, the idle words of Matthew xii. 36 are simply idle words, but spoken more particularly against the Holy Spirit, so we judge from the preceding context. For these shall men give account in the day of judgment.

## 26      ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

P. T.—Will you allow us to put your inquiry in another form? In place of demanding some positive scripture that forbids the use of musical instruments at evangelistic meetings, let me ask whether there is any scripture which, either by precept or example, justifies or even encourages the use of them? We know of none. Do you? In all the records of apostolic preaching there is significant silence as to anything of the sort. But great spiritual power marked their ministry, and men were converted in large numbers. Great crowds, too, were often gathered together without the adventitious aids which you seem so eager to see employed. We observe, however, that even *you* are of opinion that if the singing went heartily, and life were put into it, no instrument would be necessary. We agree with you. So it becomes a question of musical instruments *versus* hearty Christian singing. We give our voice for the latter without hesitation or reserve. But our sympathies are with you in bemoaning the slow, dreary, drowsy way in which bright, beautiful, and joyous hymns are too often sung. The heart is absent, thoughts are wandering, while some sing not at all. This is to be deplored, but the true remedy does not lie in the direction in which you point. Can you think of no other?

T.—2 Chron. iv. 2-5.—Is there not an allusion in John xiii. 10 to the “molten sea” of this passage, in which the priests washed their hands and feet when they went in to accomplish their appointed service? “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” This feet-washing is a service of patient love which the Lord

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS. 27

Jesus is ever carrying on, either directly or through the instrumentality of others. It is "the washing of water by the word" of Ephesians v. 26. If the typical bearing of the molten sea is found in these connections, then the suggestive meaning of the oxen supporting it is not afar off. The ox is a figure of patient labour, and serves to remind us of the *unwearying character* of that service of love in which Christ is now engaged, in cleansing us by the water of the Word from all defilement and everything that would hinder our fellowship with Him.

W. A. M.—We do not think any ordinance will give you "power over the world and sin," and if you go to baptism with such a hope, we fear it will not be realised. Still we hold it right that you should be baptised, as you never have been. The point is not what *you will gain by it*, but is it the Lord's will, as made known in Holy Scripture, that you should be? If so, *that* settles the whole matter. "Power over the world and sin" is found in the heart being established in the grace of God, and in our walking in the Spirit. Romans viii. and Galatians v. are clear as to that.

A LEARNER.—In answer to your closing question, we should personally say *No*, but let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. Search and see what the Scriptures teach. Look up for divine guidance, and act accordingly.

M. L.—There is nothing in Scripture to support the theory of the sleep of the soul when the believer dies. His spirit goes to be with Christ, and the body is laid in the grave in sure and certain hope of a joyful

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and glorious resurrection when Jesus comes again. As to John xx. 23, it has nothing to do with *eternal* forgiveness. No one can forgive sins, in that sense, but God only. It is His prerogative, and He has not committed it to the Church, nor to anyone else. But forgiveness of sins in a subordinate sense, and in relation to God's holy government on earth, is another matter altogether. To this your passage refers. See also James v. 15 ; 2 Corinthians ii. 7-10.

A. H.—Such action as you describe we have never witnessed nor even heard of. We should regard it as most irregular and wholly unwarranted.

INTERESTED.—Matthew xviii. 10.—We have always connected this passage with Esther i. 14, and supposed that the Lord in speaking to the people used terms which they would understand. These seven princes "saw the King's face." They stood in nearness to the throne and to Him who sat upon it. So these "little ones"—thought nothing of by the many—were not so thought about on high. And to impress the mind with a juster view of their worth in God's reckoning, the Lord said, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." How far angelic ministry extends is an interesting inquiry, but one which, perhaps, cannot be too sharply defined. There is the general statement of Hebrews i. 14, and it is more than probable that in connection with God's government they fill an important place (Psalm ciii. 20), moving in a sphere into which our mortal vision is not keen enough to look (2 Kings vi. 17). We have our limitations, and things near at hand we see not unless it be specially granted unto us.

## “ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT.”

**B**ELOVED BROTHER,—There is a verse of Scripture which has been much before me of late, and to which I would like to call the attention of your readers. It deals with the subject of prayer—a subject which, as many know, has become very prominent amongst all earnest Christians. It is found in the second chapter of Lamentations, and runs as follows:—

“Arise, cry out in the night : in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord : lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.”

When this was written things were at a very low ebb in Israel, as they are in the Church to-day. Living in similar times of departure from God, and consequent barrenness, may we not do well to take heed to this striking exhortation given expressly to meet the condition of things then existing? It is, I believe, the only thing that can meet the condition we are in to-day.

The verse alluded to contains three points which I should like to emphasise. *First*, when we are to pray. *Second*, how we are to pray. *Third*, for what we are to pray.

First, when we are to pray. “Arise, cry out in the *night : in the beginning of the watches.*” Does

## 30 "ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT."

not this show the urgency of the matter? A man does not arise in the night except on urgent business. This leads me to put the question, Are we sufficiently impressed with the urgency of the moment—with the deplorable state of the Church where God is so greatly dishonoured, His truth neglected, and His people starved? Are we alive to the terrible danger in which multitudes of our fellow-creatures stand, living in sin and alienation from God, indifferent to the glorious gospel, and hurrying headlong to an eternity of despair,

"Where hope never comes that comes to all,"

the blackness of darkness for ever? We use these words, but can we weigh their fearful meaning? Do we see that the matter is of such urgency as to demand that we should "arise"—yes, even from a warm and comfortable bed—and "cry out in the night"? If the coming of a traveller after dark was of sufficient importance to urge a man to go to his friend at midnight in order that the needs of the body might be met, what shall be said about the needs of the soul? Shall we not arise in the night to plead with our Friend on behalf of those whose needs are so great, and yet who will not plead for themselves? Years ago there was a servant of God much used in winning souls who always slept with a rug at the foot of his bed to throw over him when in prayer, for his invariable practice was never to

“ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT.” 31

sleep through the night without rising to pray. Whitefield sometimes told his hearers, “I got this sermon at five o’clock this morning.” Any who have tried the same thing will be able to speak of its sweetness, and the sense of solemnity and nearness to God that it brings. The dead of night, or very early morning, when all is silent and hushed, is a time when the spirit is least disturbed and approach to God the most easy. It is said of a saintly Covenanter and preacher that “the night his wife died he spent the whole ensuing night in prayer and meditation in his garden.” The next morning a visitor came to see him; and lamenting his great loss and want of rest, he replied, “I declare I have not all this night had one thought of the death of my wife. I have been so taken up in meditating upon heavenly things. I have been this night on the banks of Ulai plucking an apple here and there” (Daniel viii.). Does not all this impress us with the gain of arising in the night to cry to God? It also says, “in the beginning of the watches.” In the ordinary way this would be at six o’clock in the evening, the beginning of the Jewish day. Let us also begin the day as early as we can with prayer.

In the case of Paul and Silas we see what midnight prayer can do. “At midnight,” it says, “they prayed and sang praises, and suddenly there was a great earthquake.” If we are to

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have spiritual earthquakes, must we not have midnight prayers?

Second. This verse not only suggests a particular time of prayer, but next, *how we are to pray*. Three things are stated as to this: first, "cry out"; next, "pour out thine heart like water"; lastly, "lift up thy hands." The cry, first of all, to attract attention. Having done that, there is the pouring out the heart like water in making known the request; and then the lifting up the hands for the answer.

We must cry out. There must be real importunity. This is the lesson, as we very well know, of Luke xi. It may be asked, "But does God's attention need to be attracted?" The answer to that is, "Yes" and "No." He neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear; and yet it is He Himself who tells us to cry out. There is no need in doing this to rouse the household. It is not lung-power, but heart-power that is needed—a cry from the very depths of our being. While everything really depends upon God, He makes as though everything depended upon us. Therefore, let us arise and cry out. And when we feel that we are really speaking to God, as a man speaks face to face with his friend, then, as it says, "pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord." Surely, what we need above all things to-day is to get face to face with God, and then pour out our hearts

“ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT.” 33

before Him. How water flows out when a vessel filled with it is being emptied! And when prayer comes from the heart like that, depend upon it such praying breath will not be spent in vain. Let us be like Elijah. It is said of him, “He *prayed* in his prayer.”

Our prayer also must be one of entreaty as well as of hope and expectation. “Lift up thy hands toward Him.” Is not this an intensified form of prayer? When the heart has emptied itself, and the lips are dumb, do not the outstretched hands seem to implore an answer? God says of Israel, “All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” As though when God Himself had exhausted every entreaty by word, He would still as a last resort stretch out His hands. Man may refuse God’s stretched-out hands. He will not refuse ours.

And we are to stretch out our hands for the answer as well as by way of entreaty, and God will not only fill our hands, but our mouths and our hearts. This, then, is how we are to pray: “Cry out,” “pour out,” “lift up.” “Cry out” with the voice; “pour out” with the heart; “lift up” the hands. And when voice and heart and hands are thus united an answer will surely come.

One word more on the last point in the verse. *What we are to pray for.* “For the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top

## 34 "ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT."

of every street." We know, of course, the special condition of things this referred to, but has it not a spiritual analogy to-day? Everything in that day depended upon the preservation of the lives of young children. If the rising generation perished, what would be the future of the nation? Is it otherwise to-day? Do not the young need special attention? And, thank God, if there is work going on to-day at all, it seems more amongst the young than anywhere. But more—a great deal—remains to be done. The Church of Rome puts forth her best energies and employs every conceivable tactic to gain possession of the young. Shall we not do well to take a leaf out of her book, though we cannot adopt her methods?

But our prayers, of course, are not to be limited to the young. How many there are of older people—both converted and unconverted—who faint for hunger in the streets through which we daily pass! Think of the hurrying throng, to be counted by millions, whose whole life is spent in pursuing that which can never satisfy. Some are consciously fainting, life is so hard for them. Others are as truly fainting, though they scarcely know it. People who live simply for this world must faint sooner or later. Those who live on husks can have no stamina. Death will feed upon them some day, taking from them everything they trust in, and leaving them without a vestige of anything worth having.

“ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT.” 35

May we not think, too, of multitudes of those dear to Christ who are in a state of spiritual starvation? What can be done for them? Their souls are not nourished by what they try to live upon. That which is set before them week after week contains no spiritual nutriment. What are we doing to break to them the bread of life? Have we anything to set before them? The man in Luke xi. went to his friend on behalf of another with the complaint, “I have nothing to set before him.” But he knew where to obtain something, and so ought we. What should we think of the man, however, if having received the loaves he kept them entirely for his own use and gave not a particle to his guest? Are we doing this with what God has committed to us? Is it not given us that we may impart to others?

As we contemplate the vast need on every hand, whether in the so-called Christian world or the heathen world—and wherever we look it assumes appalling dimensions—shall we not be constrained to arise, cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches pour out our hearts like water before the face of the Lord? Shall we not lift up our hands toward Him for the life of those who faint for hunger in the top of every street?

I am, dear brother,

Yours affectionately,

R. E.

## “RISEN WITH CHRIST.”

COL. iii.

“THIS paper is not for me,” says a young Christian. “I am quite sure that ‘*Risen with Christ*’ forms no part of *simple* testimony.” You are mistaken, my dear young friend; we *are* going to address our remarks very especially to you. No doubt there are heights in connection with the subject which few have ever fully reached. On the other hand, we are assured that the Holy Spirit would lead believers, both young and old, into an apprehension of what it is to be “risen with Christ.”

Shall we first remark that in the portion before us it is not said that we *shall be* “risen with Christ,” when the glorious resurrection morn brings forth from the grave all that are His? It is spoken of definitely as a *present* position true of believers, and which they may know while still in this world. This being noted, we shall easily understand that the apostle is not speaking of the resurrection of the body. What is in his mind is a spiritual thought connected with the believer’s present association with Christ in resurrection life by faith in the power of the Holy Ghost.

If we carry this thought back to the twentieth

## "RISEN WITH CHRIST."

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verse of the previous chapter, it will help us to understand the expression, "dead with Christ." Have you, dear young reader, in heart and conscience accepted the truth of your death with Christ to all that which goes to make up this present world? Before God it is an absolute fact; but as you look round, can you truthfully say, Thank God, I am apart from it all in spirit through my having died with Christ?

If you have not been brought by the Holy Spirit's work to the acceptance of that, it will not be of much use to consider the subject of "risen with Christ." But let us appeal to you before we proceed further. Can it be that you who owe everything to the death of the Lord Jesus are allowing any links to subsist between you and the world which cast Him out, and from which as before God you have been separated by the death of Christ? Are you hiding your light in cowardly fashion and going on in friendship with this present evil world, acting on its principles, and so forth? If so, are you not shamefully untrue to your Lord's death? You have been baptised? What did it mean? What does it mean to you to-day? Was it an expression of identification with the death of Christ? Are you practically denying this?

Let us come a little closer still. Do you take the Lord's Supper, recalling the solemn hour when He, the Lord of glory, went into death for

you? In that act you have expressed your communion with the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. x. 16). You have joined in showing forth the Lord's death (1 Cor. xi. 26), looking on to His coming again in glory. Oh, what a practical denial of all this you are guilty of if you allow the principles of this world to dominate your soul! For carefully be it noted, the apostle does not speak in Colossians ii. 20 of the gross outward wickedness of the world, but of its rudiments or elementary principles, *i.e.* that from which it all springs, or on which it is built up. Oh, beloved young reader, may the Lord give you grace to accept with your whole heart and soul your death with Christ to all that goes to make up this present evil world! Soon He will come for His own. Shall He find you as Lot was found in Sodom, and just force you out of a doomed world before its final overthrow under the judgment of God?

If this point is settled, let us proceed to the subject more definitely before us. Perhaps an illustration, frequently used, may be helpful to us here. We are all acquainted with the working of the barges up and down a canal. Canals, as we know, are not all on the same level. We remember seeing one near Birmingham with nine continuous locks, whereby the canal was brought down the side of a steep hill. Perhaps the reader has watched a barge coming up the

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lower reach to the point where the canal was carried on at a higher level. Here there is a lock, fitted at either end with strong wooden doors or gates, as they are more commonly called. The barge floats into the lock, and the gates behind it are immediately closed. Then the sluices in the upper gates are opened, and the water in the lock rises by degrees to the level of the upper reach. In this way the barge, rising with the rising water, floats out on the upper reach and proceeds on her journey. We will liken the believer to the barge. The lower reach of the canal is the world, in which the children of fallen Adam are at home. The upper reach is the new Christian position of the children of God. Now, if the believer is to reach in heart and conscience this new position, something must be done for him analogous to that which was done for the barge in the lock. First of all, the gates must be shut behind it. We liken this to the acceptance by the believer of his death with Christ, whereby he is wholly cut off from this world. The gates are closed. But something more is needful. Many a young Christian has got that far, and is thoroughly miserable. There is no joy in the lock. No rising up by merely shutting the gates behind. All is at a dead level inside and outside the gates. There is separation, but that is all. "Ah," they say, "you must be separate." "True enough," we reply, "but separation is not Chris-

tianity, though there can be no Christianity without it." Suppose we put the barge in the lock and open the sluices without shutting the gates behind it, will the water rise? Certainly not. It will just flow through the lock and be wasted. We fear this illustrates one reason why the ministry of the Word so little affects some of the Lord's dear people—the gates of separation are not closed, and, as far as they are concerned, the ministry has been wasted; they are not raised in their souls one niche. They sit unmoved and unaffected under the most precious ministry. Alas that it should be so!

But let us return to our illustration. The barge is in the lock with the gates shut. The Christian is brought to the acceptance of his death with Christ. Now we let in the water from above—that is, in figure, the present ministry of Christ, where He is now sitting at the right hand of God. It is brought home to the soul that not only is there a world from which Christ is cut off, and from which the believer too is cut off in spirit by the acceptance of his death with Christ, but there is another, a new world, where Christ is, and of which He is the centre. The Spirit of God witnesses to my soul that I belong to that world. It is not merely that I am cut off from this world by the death of Christ, but I belong to that new world where the risen Christ is. The witness of the Holy Spirit is made good in my soul. I am risen with

## PSALM CXXXI.

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Christ in spirit. Beloved young reader, has the joy of association with Christ in this new world entered into your soul? Do you merely look round on this world and say with a sad heart, He is not here? Or can you look up into that bright world and say, He is there—I know Christ where He is? He thus becomes an object to my heart—I am linked in affection to Him there. I am separated in heart and spirit from the place where He is not, and my life is hidden with Him in the place where He is.

G. W. W.

## PSALM CXXXI.

AN ECHO.

**A**S a child that is weaned of his mother,  
 As an infant laid to rest,  
 So behaveth my soul in Thy presence,  
 And there I am fully blest.

For Thou knowest my heart is not haughty;  
 Thy greatness belittleth me,  
 And to this world and all its false glory,  
 I am crucified with Thee.

To the heights of eternity's splendour,  
 To the many mansions fair,  
 Thou ascendedst, O Lord, as a Victor,  
 And Thy triumphs I shall share.

But while here, as a sanctified vessel  
 Keep my heart, and set it free  
 From the greatness, the glory, the folly,  
 Of a world that hateth Thee!

S. C. M. A.

## THE WAY OF POWER.

*(Notes of an Address to Christian Workers.)*

THE real truth about persons and things is not always seen on the surface. It does not do to judge by what is exterior—it would sometimes lead us utterly astray. Remember, “The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. xvi. 7). And this searching truth may have its application to us—professed servants of the Lord.

You may say, “That is striking a rather gloomy note.” Believe me, it is a necessary one. I am sure of it. I speak as one looking at things as they might be, and comparing them with what they are. It is better for us to face matters than to live in a fool’s paradise. I believe that, as servants of the Lord, we are in very low water. There is a great lack of power amongst us. Prayer and fasting, thank God, are not altogether unknown, but, if one may speak for another, the lack of power is great! Now God means to bless us—I have every confidence in that—but *He makes our soul-prosperity conditional*. We want to be the best servants going, but a very little mars our usefulness, breaks our communion, grieves the Holy Spirit and hinders God from using us as He would.

## THE WAY OF POWER.

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Let me turn you to 2 Chronicles xxix. 3-11. Here we get one of the most remarkable revivals of Old Testament times. But observe the one great condition the blessed God lays down—and it holds good to-day—*sanctity, personal sanctity*. “Sanctify yourselves.” That comes first, and then collective sanctity. “Sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers.” Personal and collective holiness—such is the great condition.

And if God enjoins sanctity He sets to work Himself to bring it about. He loved the people. His hand was in this revival. He wanted to get them right and to place them on a wave of blessing and of power. So He worked in a twofold way—first, in leading them to self-judgment, and secondly, in setting before them His own goodness. That is God's way when He wants to lift us up.

Nothing is more irksome to a Christian who feels he is not going on quite right than for him to try to be good. I dare say most of us have been on that line. We may not have had in our souls the sense of our pleasing God as Enoch had. When that is the case there is nothing more wearisome than trying to be good. But if the love of Christ constrains us there is nothing more blessed than to walk in the path of obedience. You cannot help it, because He makes His goodness pass before you, and it lays hold of you with living power. If

God is to raise us up and revive us, and make us men and women of power like Stephen, then that is the way God will work, blessed be His name! Where are the Stephens nowadays? Where are the servants of Christ like that man, full of the Holy Ghost, full of faith, wisdom, and power, looking up into the glory? Where are they?

In the Gospel of Luke almost everybody that received blessing received it low down. You will never get blessing if you assume to be anything. We have plenty to humble us, and God wants to lift us up; but *we have to go down* and God will then pass, in divine power, His goodness before our souls. What a blessed God to deal with us in that way! He does not use the whip, but pleads with us. That is the way he won my heart—a poor sceptic, a fatalist. I found I needed a Saviour if any man did, and learned that there was only one Man in the whole universe that was of any good to me. God sent Christ into the world not only to uphold His glory, but to break Satan's power, to save my soul, to win my affection, to gain my confidence, and to have me with Him throughout the eternal ages! That is the way God works.

Let us keep in view how God might use us in His sovereign grace, if we were only vessels more meet for the Master's use. Someone has said that God can use a crooked stick, but He cannot use

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a dirty one. Now I believe we are tainted with leaven. "Oh," you say, "that's a strong statement!" You think, possibly, that I am overstating the case. Well, I will take you to a scripture. Look at 2 Timothy iii. 10. Paul speaks of his doctrine and manner of life, and as you read the passage you can but feel there was no discrepancy between that man's doctrine and his manner of life in every circle of relationship and responsibility here. Will any one of us stand up and declare there is no discrepancy between *his* doctrine and *his* manner of life? In proportion to the discrepancy so is the leaven. Oh! may it become apparent to us—may God search us through and through! If we cannot take the ground the apostle took, why not? In ourselves, our family, our home, our profession, our business, our employment—is there any taint of leaven there? I leave the question. God search us all! And then as to the world—there are two sides, its profanity and its religion. Are we tainted with its motives and its ways? I ask the question and leave the answer to yourselves.

I go back to the history of this revival in Hezekiah's day. Observe how thorough the searching, the self-judgment was. They went down. They accepted the great principle of personal and collective sanctity. "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord," says Scripture. "The priests went into the inner

part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it." Everything was done thoroughly. May you and I be equally thorough. Let us not, I beseech you, assume to be what we are not. We want to be true, effectual servants of God—is, then, the Psalmist's prayer an unbecoming prayer for us? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I do not think it unbecoming, and if you agree with me, may I ask you to pray that prayer, and to cry to God as he cried?

There were *two* ways which God took to bring to pass His desire for His people. We have seen the one and now let us look at the other. See what is brought before us in verse 11. It is a wonderful tale of the sovereignty of God's love—"the Lord hath chosen you." Every bit of blessing we have received has reached us in the sovereignty of God's love, but the enjoyment of it rests with ourselves. If your soul is to prosper there must be sanctity. Then comes sonship. "My sons, be not now negligent." All this, for us Christians, takes us to the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which we are face to face with the sovereignty of God's love, then sonship, then liberty to stand before Him, as here. We see how that blessed One has come out for God's glory to take us from the dunghill and set us among princes, that our souls may prosper, that

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we may be vigorous, and that the whole truth of God may be vital, living and operative in our souls by the Spirit. It ought to be the delight of our hearts to meditate on all that God the Father has counselled from all eternity, on all that God the Son has effected for the Father, on all that the Spirit of God has come from heaven to earth to bear witness to us of. Then should we be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. i. 3).

It is thus that God spreads out before us the counsels of His love. He says to us, so to speak, "I want you to understand the deep desires of My heart. I have chosen you; you are My sons, you are in liberty before Me, and there is no cloud. As Christ is in My sight, so are you." Is this true to your faith?—Christ's place before God, as man, His place in the Father's heart—this your place and mine? And we shall be with Him and like Him, and every glory God has given Him He is going to share with us.

Look at the dignity and blessedness of the next clause of the verse: "The Lord hath chosen you." He seems to say, "I want you for Myself, for My own affection; I cannot do without you." And more, "to stand before Him, *to serve Him.*" Not to serve one another, nor brethren, nor saints, nor sinners, but to serve *Him*. I don't believe a

servant is worth his salt unless he has the blessed God before him. It is our Master we serve, and in serving Him we shall serve those we want to serve, and serve them well. In this we have His own example, for He was the pattern Servant. Our attention is called to Him. "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." We hear Him saying, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me," and "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He came here to serve His God, to serve me, to place Himself at my disposal, but the glory of God was what was supreme. Now God says here, "I want you to serve Me, to minister to Me." What, then, should be the motive in all our service? To give joy to the blessed One whom we serve, to minister to Him. That does not detract from our serving men in our day and generation. It adds dignity to our service.

Then what is the theme? They were to burn "incense." On the great day of atonement they were to have "incense beaten small." And what is the meaning of "incense"? What is it a figure of, if it be not the Christ of God? Our motive, the glory of God; our theme, Christ. There is no other man in the wide universe of the slightest use to you and me but the Mediator, the Daysman, the great Redeemer. He was the only one who could give us relief and bring us to God; for sin, death, judgment, and Satan's power had to be faced. What joy it is to preach Christ—to tell

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sinners of the mighty God, come in grace in the person of His beloved Son to bring them relief, and to set them before His face in all the value of Christ's precious blood and in the sweet savour of His person. Would to God it were livingly burnt into our souls! It is profound, indeed! The most stupendous fact in this world's history is the entry of the Son of God into this world, His passage through it, and His exit out of it. The burning of incense then is, first of all, the presentation to God of Christ, in our lives, our worship, and then to man in testimony.

One further thought. In verses 27-8 God says, if I may put it so, "As you go serving, I want you to sing." Happy servants! standing in all the value of the Atonement, knowing the sovereignty of God's love, rejoicing in the liberty of grace, their one motive to give Him pleasure, and their one theme the Son of God! There is nothing more profoundly blessed than to be endowed by God in this wonderful way. "When the burnt offerings began, the song of the Lord began also." They were to sing. Sing what? The song of redemption? No! You cannot serve till you can sing that song. You have no right to be a servant till you are in the liberty of grace. God would lead us to the highest point, and what is that? *Fellowship with God*. They sang the song of the Lord. It was the song connected with the burnt-offering aspect of the death of

Christ. There is the song of redemption. Israel sang it at the Red Sea. And we sing it when we see the foe defeated and stand on the other side of death and judgment. That is liberty. Now you can go on to fellowship with God in that aspect of the death of Jesus where He is seen as devoting Himself to death for the glory of God. "I want you," God says, "to share with Me in all the delight I have in the Son of My love. I want to raise you to the highest pinnacle of blessing. I want you to be out-and-out servants, and that your service should partake of this character, not only that you are in liberty before Me, but that you are in fellowship with me about My beloved Son."

The singing continued "until the burnt offering was finished." If your singing begins here, when is it going to end? Never; because the savour of the burnt offering is never going to end! Oh, beloved, this is the way God presents Himself to us. May God in His mercy recover us, if we need it, revive us, and then experimentally maintain us at the height of our calling. I believe, in my soul, that everything worth having is within our reach, although we are in a day of decline. God discourages the double-minded man. Such shall have nothing (James i. 6, 8). But He encourages the upright man—the man who gives God His rights. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." No good thing will He withhold from them that

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walk uprightly. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Everything is within our reach. But there must be sanctity. Before you go up in blessing and power you have to go down in self-judgment. God wants us to be in liberty, in all the sovereignty of His love, to know that we are sons, to serve Him, to minister to His joys, to burn incense, and as we go serving to sing.

May God in His mercy bless these feeble words to accomplish His own work in our souls, that we may be men and women of power, full of wisdom, faith, and of the Holy Ghost, having our hearts engaged with that blessed One. Do not be afraid of telling people that Jesus loves you. "We love Him, because He first loved us." "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." What we need is to have our affections right. The day of glory dazzles—well it may—but the coming of the Lord to receive us to Himself touches our affections. The dearest thing to the heart of Christ is the Church for which He bled. He is waiting with longing heart for the hour when He will come and present us to Himself—"a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." We must go in with Christ before we can come out with Him in glory. The greater thing, I believe, to the heart of the Son of God, is for Him to come and take His people up. Meantime, may God keep our hearts right.

T. O.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. McL.—Matthew xxv. 27.—It is curious what inferences are sometimes drawn from passages of Scripture. It never occurred to us that these words of our Lord furnished a warrant for placing out money at interest. It *may* be a legitimate use of the text, though far from its primary teaching. But when you ask us what investments a Christian could rightly touch, we can offer no opinion. Ordinary prudence counsels him to shun anything of a speculative kind, and experience leads us to bid him beware of accepting liabilities which, if called upon to meet, might end in great embarrassments.

The question of stewardship which your letter raises demands more prayerful thought than it often receives. We handle our money as if it were absolutely our own. But if we have presented *ourselves* as a living sacrifice unto God—if there has been this whole-hearted surrender, does it not involve our holding all that we have at His disposal, to be used for His glory? How joyously ought this to be recognised, and His right owned to everything we possess! Then would the poor be more tenderly cared for, and the various departments of service for the Master be helped on wisely and with a generous hand. Then we, who have not much, would gladly deny ourselves many a little thing that we might devote the money to objects dear to His heart, and which, alas! are too often allowed to languish unthought of and uncared for. Nor would the temporal needs of those who wholly devote themselves to the work of

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the Lord be forgotten (Deut. xii. 19 ; Gal. vi. 6). And all would be done not of necessity or as a matter of duty, but as a high and blessed privilege.

We recently read an affecting account of a maiden lady who lately died in New York City. "Her home was in the hall-room of a tenement house, and at her death, all her earthly possessions could be put in one common trunk. No executor or administrator was needed. Living in narrow circumstances, she had denied herself all luxuries, and even many comforts. But in the forty years of her Christian life, she had been able to give over £6,000 to the work of the Lord. Did we say she needed no administrator? It was because the Holy Spirit had administered her estate in the name of her Saviour, and her treasure was laid up in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

And this reminds us of a different story, told us some few weeks ago by one who seeks to serve the Lord. We relate it in substance, and not with verbal exactitude, for that were impossible. A Christian lady of abundant means dreamt that she had died. In passing in at heaven's gate, an angel met and walked with her. Presently they stood before a stately mansion, and the lady asked for whom it was prepared. "Your gardener," replied the angel. "My gardener!" said the lady in great astonishment. "Why, he has been accustomed to a tiny house on earth ; how could it be that he should have so beautiful a place in heaven?" Moving on, they came ere long to a cottage, small and humble. "For whom is this?" the lady asked. "For you," the angel said. "For *me* ! I who have lived all

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my days in houses great and grand !” “ Yes,” the angel said in grave and earnest tones, “ it is for you. Your Master—with all his care and skill—could only build a scanty house like this *with the material you sent on before !*” A dream it was and nothing more, but oh ! it tells a tale.

R. F.—The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are both taught in Scripture, and we must hold and teach both, though *we* may not be able to reconcile them. Remember, the mind of man has its limitations, and what is now hard to be understood might be quite plain were our understanding enlarged. The glad tidings of God are undoubtedly addressed to every creature, and all men everywhere are *commanded* to repent, and *besought* to be reconciled to God, and earnestly *invited* to take the water of life freely. We cannot press this too much. With the counsels of God men have nothing to do. Their part is to believe the gospel and be saved.

F. T. B——M.—The following note from J. N. D. may be a sufficient answer to your inquiry. “ Matthew only uses the expression, ‘ kingdom of heaven.’ It is often, in a general sense, capable of being interchanged with ‘ kingdom of God,’ as we see by comparing Luke. Notwithstanding, the two phrases cannot always replace each other, and Matthew uses ‘ kingdom of God ’ in a few passages where ‘ kingdom of heaven ’ could not be used (Matt. vi. 33 ; xii. 28 ; xxi. 43). Thus, ‘ the kingdom of God ’ was there when Christ the King was there ; ‘ the kingdom of heaven ’ began with Christ going to heaven. By-and-by, when Satan ceases to rule, it will be ‘ the kingdom of heaven ’ (and ‘ of God ’ too, of course), not in

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mystery, but in manifestation. 'The kingdom of God' has also a moral force which 'kingdom of heaven' has not; and in this way it is frequently used by Paul, and was peculiarly suitable to the Spirit's design in Luke."

M. R.—While it is quite right to help the poor and to do good to all men irrespective of their creed, it is altogether another matter to work for an *institution* whose object is to build up the Roman Catholic system. We must confess that this is a charity larger than our own and with which we have no sympathy whatever. Nor could we buy with our money—which is the Lord's—Roman Catholic books to give to any friend, even though we knew it would be acceptable. If we had the ear of "the sister" of whom you speak, we should earnestly plead with her to consider her ways, and beware lest she be drawn herself into that seductive but awful religious system.

A. R.—2 Chronicles xxi. 2.—You ask why Jehoshaphat should here be called king of *Israel*. We cannot say. In the Septuagint Version it reads "king of *Judah*," so that in the A.V. it may be an error of the copyist.

M. S.—We believe that all the redeemed from Adam downwards, and not alone the Church, will have part in the first resurrection and the rapture of the saints. "They that are Christ's" is a term which assuredly embraces both. The kingdom, in millennial days, will have its heavenly and its earthly side. The saints in glory, and Israel, and the nations of the earth will all be in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As to the Breaking

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of Bread, it is clear that in the beginning the Church came together on the first day of the week for that purpose, probably oftener. No stringent rule can be laid down as to it.

O. S. S.—Matthew xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 29, 30.—Those who tremble lest they should have committed that sin which “hath never forgiveness” are the last persons in the world to be guilty of it. Every *unholy* thing is a sin against the *Holy* Spirit, but the context shows the sin in question to be of a very peculiar nature. The gravity and atrociousness of it lay in ascribing the miracles of the Lord Jesus to satanic agency. Is any trembling soul likely to do that?

Your brother will get harm from the Bible-class if the leader teaches that everybody will be saved at last. We counsel him to heed the advice of Proverbs xix. 27. It is dangerous to listen to evil doctrine. The wisest course is to keep out of its way. 2 Thessalonians i. 7-10, Revelation xx. 15—to say nothing of numerous other passages—make short work of Universalism.

A READER OF S. T.—1 Timothy iv. 1-6.—This scripture plainly shows that apostasy from the Faith, and the giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons, may go hand in hand with the greatest pretensions to superior sanctity. Error arraying itself in such a garb is the more likely to deceive. To forbid that which is divinely sanctioned, and to command that we should abstain from what is expressly given for our use, is a device of Satan. Acts xv. 29 is based on Genesis ix., Leviticus xvii. These latter passages make the meaning of Acts xv. 29 plain.

## DEATH, AND AFTERWARDS.

AWAY back in the early part of last November one of the London papers published some observations, made by a Dorset clergyman, on the "*Saints in Paradise*." They provoked at the time a good deal of public correspondence, in which not a few conflicting opinions were expressed. A friend of ours sent the whole of it to us, suggesting that a short article on the disputed points would be of use to many. We think it might. But before we start, let me give the exact quotation:—

"At the Abbey Church of Milton, Dorset, the Vicar, the Rev. H. Pentin, preaching on Sunday on the '*Saints in Paradise*,' referred to the notice posted on the gate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle stating that 'Mrs. Spurgeon entered heaven at 8.30 this morning.'

"He was of opinion that the statement was untrue. Jesus Christ did not go to heaven as soon as He died, and neither Mrs. Spurgeon nor any other of God's saints had done so.

"If people went to heaven as soon as they departed this life, wherein came the great Judgment at the Last Day? he asked.

"The Protestant reaction against purgatory had gone too far. The Church of England taught truly that there is an intermediate state for the souls of the

departed, and that the perfect consummation and bliss of heaven is reserved for all believers until after the second coming of Christ."

The Vicar of Milton thus frankly avows his belief. No saint ever goes to heaven when he dies, nor can he go there till after "the great Judgment at the Last Day." We propose to see what light Scripture sheds upon these points.

I would first of all inquire—In what relation does the saint stand to "the great Judgment at the Last Day"? We mean by that the final judgment of the dead so vividly described in Revelation xx. Will he ever be called before that Supreme Tribunal at all? Is he to appear there as a prisoner before his Judge? Will his life then come under review, that it may be seen whether he is worthy of heaven or not? Many doubtless think so. Will Scripture support them? Let us see.

Take up your Bible, if you have one by you, and turn to John v. 22–29. Read the verses carefully, and if you have the Revised Version, read them in that. Four times in this narrow span of Scripture the Lord Jesus utters the word *judgment*.\* He is dealing with that solemn sub-

\* See verses 22, 24, 27, 29. Nor will any be misled by finding "condemnation" in verse 24 and "damnation" in verse 29, and not "judgment." It is the same word, as everyone now knows, in all the four verses, and in each case in the Revised Version "judgment" is employed, and no other.

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ject. All judgment, so He says, is committed unto Him. His the hand that shall hold the scales, turn over the pages of the Opened Books, and His the lips that shall pronounce the final sentence. Who can contemplate standing before the great White Throne and not quake for fear? But mark this, in verse 24 He who has received authority to execute judgment speaks of some who shall never stand before the great White Throne, and for whom there will be no judgment at all. Who are they? Those who have heard His quickening voice, who hearken to His word, whose faith finds anchorage in that blessed God who sent Jesus here to be the propitiation for our sins and that we might live through Him (1 John iv. 9, 10). Such shall not come into judgment; everlasting life is theirs—they have passed from death unto life. No plainer testimony can anyone have than that; it is the testimony of the One who shall sit upon the Judgment Throne Himself. Who could ask or wish for better?

And the teaching of Scripture as to the atoning sacrifice of Christ confirms, establishes, strengthens what the Lord has said as to the believer never coming into judgment. The tenth of Hebrews is as clear as noonday upon the point. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Who says this? The living God. And how can He utter such gracious words?

Because He has in view the "one sacrifice for sins" which Christ offered once for all at Calvary. So completely did that Sacrifice satisfy the requirements of the eternal throne that nothing more remains to be done. "There is no more offering for sin." Now the glorious results of the Saviour's finished work are not reserved for disclosure till the Day of Judgment. God, if I may reverently say so, makes haste to communicate to us the peace-giving news that He will remember our sins no more. This being so, we are exhorted to draw near to Him in full assurance of faith, as those who have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Oh, believer, are you in the joy of such gracious tidings? Do you draw near, not to be forgiven, for that you are, but to worship and adore the One who has blessed you thus?

If we turn from plain doctrinal teaching to that which is set before us in picture or parable, we shall find the same wonderful story told. Take Luke xv., for instance. Think of the returning prodigal—the picture of any poor repentant sinner—and of the father running and falling upon his neck and covering him with kisses. How this tells of the ardour of divine affection and of the greatness of the love that can thus welcome home one who had spent his all in the far country with dissolute companions. But more. The *best* robe is brought forth—which speaks, as

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all know, of Christ our Righteousness—the ring—pledge and proof of everlasting favour—and shoes for the feet. Thus arrayed, the welcomed son is brought into the house to share in all the gladness found within. If the deep, spiritual significance of this exquisite story be understood—if we know what the kisses mean, the best robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf—shall we be found living like one who trembles at the prospect of future judgment, and who might well exclaim, if judgment be reserved for him, “From Thy wrath and everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us”? We leave, dear reader, the question for you to answer. Thank God, we have no need to wait for the Day of Judgment to declare whether heaven shall be our home or not. It is our home *now*, and there, in spirit, we should dwell.

But what about death? Where does the spirit of a saint go when death comes? Does he go to heaven? I answer such questions in the language of another, whose words are better than our own.

“Strange to say, going to heaven is not spoken of in Scripture, unless in the one case of the thief upon the cross going to be with Christ in paradise. Not that we do not go there; but the scriptural thought is always going to Christ. Since He is in heaven, of course we go there; but being with Christ, not being in heaven, is what Scripture puts forward, and this is

important as to the state of the spiritual affections. Christ is the object before the soul, according to the Word, not simply being happy in heaven, though we shall be happy and in heaven. I speak of it only as characterising our habits of thought."

Yes, that is it! When the believer dies he goes to be with Christ. Thus Paul puts it in Philippians i. 23 and 2 Corinthians v. 8. It is *the Person* rather than *the place*—for what would the latter be without the former?

"Oh, heaven without my Saviour  
Would be no heaven to me!  
The pearly gates were darkness,  
And dark the crystal sea!"

I am not forgetting, nor let the reader forget, that departing to be with Christ is only the intermediate state, not the completed one. We await the resurrection day for our full measure of blessedness. Then, and then only, shall we be in our completed state in glory. But the testimony of Scripture is as clear as a sunbeam and as steadfast as the everlasting hills, that the departing Christian goes to be with Christ, that he rests where Christ is, inexpressibly happier than when in this earthly tabernacle. And there, with Christ, he waits for the dawn of that day whose sun shall never set—the day of glory. Then shall he receive his resurrection body and share in the glory which Christ shall have, glorified together with Him (Rom. viii. 17).

## THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES.

“I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

JOHN xv. 1, 2.

JOHN XV. is full of cheer and encouragement. The Lord Himself puts the key of the chapter into the hands of the reader in verse 11: “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and *that your joy might be full.*” Now, in the face of that emphatic statement, if any believer gathers grounds for doubt or fear from the chapter, then has he clearly failed to use the key.

The Lord begins by saying, “*I am the True Vine.*” Why the *True Vine*? Israel had been Jehovah’s vine, and no fruit had ever been found on its branches.\* Psalm lxxx. tells us how it had been brought out of Egypt, the heathen cast out, and room made for its planting. God, by Israel, was proving man—whether he could bear *FRUIT IN HIMSELF* for God. But did Israel bear fruit unto God? On the ground of “This do, and thou shalt live,” Israel did not bear one bunch of grapes. Romans iii. 12 sums up the whole case: “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofit-

\* It is not that we wish to imply that there was no fruit for God in Old Testament times, *but it never was the product of Judaism proper*, but the result of faith in God.

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able; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The demonstration, we need hardly say, was not for God—He knew the end from the beginning—but for man, that he might accept God's verdict upon himself.

No wonder the Psalmist laments, "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." Yet in the despair at the utter failure and the absolute barrenness of the earthly vine, David turns to the right source, and prophetically indicates where alone the remedy is to be found. "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." Israel will yet bear fruit to God, but it will be in connection with CHRIST.

And so we have to learn, as connected with Christianity and not with Judaism, that we have no power in ourselves to bear fruit, and that it is only as we abide in Christ that we are able to do so. The lesson of the past was—*In yourselves ye can do nothing*; the lesson to be learnt from the chapter before us is, "*WITHOUT ME ye can do nothing.*"

The fruitfulness of a vine is assured by two things. First, Is it healthy? Second, Is it well cared for? A healthy vine attended by

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an unintelligent or careless husbandman would be soon ruined. On the other hand, the best husbandman could not get much from an unhealthy vine. How encouraging, then, to hear the Lord say, "*I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.*" The two requirements could not be more fully met. The vine must, indeed, be full of sap and vigour (to keep up the figure) if Christ Himself is the True Vine. There can be no lack of vitality and nourishment in Him, and with the Husbandman—the Father—there can be no want of care. There is nothing but joy then in the Lord's statement: "*I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*"

But the reader may say, What about the branch taken away? We answer, It cannot possibly mean that a true believer may be finally lost. Were that so, the key would not answer, and instead of fulness of joy there would be abundant room for doubt as to the ultimate issue. No; this passage must be limited to its plain meaning, viz. *fruit-bearing*. It is not a question of vitally belonging to Christ, but of professing to follow Him, and fruitfulness is the evidence of the reality of profession. To be a member of *the body* of Christ means real vital connection, and that link is formed by the indwelling of the Spirit, and not by mere profession.

Mark well that Scripture is careful to say, "If a

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MAN abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." When He addresses His own, then He carefully says, "If YE abide in Me," etc. And, further, it is important to note that only the *eleven* disciples heard all this—that Judas, the false professor, had gone out. The Lord addresses the eleven, and distinctly says He had chosen them and ordained them that they should bring forth, not merely fruit, but *much fruit*. From this we gather that every true believer brings forth fruit. It would be childish to suppose that one chosen by the Lord—the subject of the Holy Spirit's operations, born again, converted, saved, with a new nature, with the springs of faith, hope, and love implanted in him—does not bear fruit. Nature and life *must* express itself.

And then to be such—not merely professing to follow the Lord, but to have vital connection with Him by the Spirit—is to settle every question as to the eternal future. Moreover, the Lord addressed all this to the apostles *before* His death and resurrection and the consequent gift of the Spirit, which clearly shows that the vine and its branches is not analogous to the One Body with its many members. The latter, we know, was not formed till Pentecost. Besides, it would be monstrous to talk of a member of Christ's body being cast forth and finally lost.

The branch not bearing fruit is taken away;

## THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES. 67

the branch bearing fruit is purged by the Father that it may bring forth *more* fruit. This is well illustrated by the cases of the apostles Judas and Peter.

Judas was a barren branch. He professed to follow the Lord just as much as the other apostles. Instead of abiding in Judaism like the unbelieving high priests and scribes, he professed to abide in Christ. He was continually in the Lord's company, yet without one single thought in common and without one real vital link with Him.

Peter was the other apostle notorious for his breakdown. Judas betrayed his Master. Peter denied Him with oaths and curses. Yet how differently they are treated! The Father is no Husbandman to barren branches. He takes them away, and it seems from verse 6 that He uses men for the purpose of completely showing them up. Judas—the barren branch—was told by the Lord, "That thou doest, do quickly." Satan possessed him, and suicide and hell followed with awful swiftness the betrayer's kiss.

How differently did it end with Peter! He bore the welcome fruit of ardent love to the Lord, yet with it was the encumbering wood of self-confidence and boastfulness. The Lord said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift thee as wheat: but I have prayed . . . that thy faith fail not." We all know the touching story of the Lord's look, which moved the backslider even to tears. Step by step his restoration was effected,

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and eventually he received the commission to feed the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock, and at Pentecost he is found charging the nation with the very sin that he had himself committed.

It has been happily said that never is the Father so near to the branch and never is love so proved as when the Husbandman takes the pruning-knife in hand. Pruning is not necessarily punishment, but discipline designed to rid us of that which would hinder increased fruitfulness. This discipline is often by poverty, ill-health, disappointed hopes, unrequited love, even on the part of the Lord's own people—all calculated to withdraw us from creature resources, so that we may find our life, our joy, our springs, our sustinment, our all in Christ. AND THIS IS WHAT IS MEANT BY ABIDING IN HIM. How much do we know of it? we may well ask.

How full of encouragement, then, is the passage; it searches us to bless us. For a believer to be abiding in Christ and under the Father's hand, so that he may bear MUCH FRUIT, leaves no room for doubts or discouragements. In spite of *our* failings and feebleness, *His* hand will never be removed from us, and will shrink from nothing that is for our good. What a blessed result—that "My joy might remain in you, and that YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL"!

Reader, one last word: see that you use the right key to the passage.

A. J. P.

## “OH, HE’S SO GOOD!”

SHE was old, bent, shabby; several faded shawls were wrapped round her on account of the cold; her clothes were short, her boots strong and heavy; she carried a basket and a bundle; her face was seamed by small-pox and brown from exposure; but her smile was peaceful and happy.

The question was asked her, “And what are you doing?”

“Doing?” a cheery voice replied; “doing the best I can to sell my laces.”

“Have you sold any yet?”

“Never a pair; but I’m doing the best I can.”

“Doing the best you can will never take you to heaven.”

“No, it will not.”

“Shall I tell you why? Jesus said, I am the way.”

“Ah, yes,” she said, “and well I know it. I knows it better than all the preachers can tell me, *for I know Him.*”

“Whom do you know?”

“Why, Christ.”

“And who taught you of Him?”

“My poor old mother. Yes, she did, but she’s dead.”

“And gone to heaven?”

“OH, HE’S SO GOOD!”

“Yes, she has.

“I’m sixty-nine, and things ’as altered since I was a gal. Why, we ’ad to ask leave even to play, and if my mother held up her finger it was enough to quiet us; but now the boys and girls, even going to Sunday-school, gaz an’ scoffs at I. But I says, ‘Run along, my little dears, run along; you’ll be late for school.’ And as to the Gospel, they waant so much as hear it. I gets my living working in the fields. I likes it best, and I earns sixpence or a shillin’, but it’s over wet to get on the land now. Sometimes I gets a cup of tea in the morning, and sometimes I doesn’t; but if I canna have one in the morning, He always gives me one afore the day’s out. Oh, He’s so good! I canna tell you all He is to me. I canna tell ’e—He be so good! I’s no one to speak to; I’s all alone except for the little birds in the fields I feeds sometimes and talks to. But”—and again she broke out—“I canna tell ’e what Christ is to me. I canna speak it all—*Oh, He’s so good!*”

Old, alone, poor, but happy, contented, rejoicing!

Perhaps you have all the luxuries of this life, but if you have not this dear old woman’s Christ you are poor indeed.

E. C.

L.

## MAN'S NEED AND GOD'S FULNESS.

**M**AN needs something to fill his soul, and that which he needs can come only from God.

He cannot fill himself; the world in which he lives cannot fill him. His soul remains *empty*, and if empty, then he must be unhappy; for the soul was made to be filled, and until it is filled he must be *unhappy*.

A man of genius, who died many years ago, a poet and a philosopher, loaded with fame and honour, said in his last days, "I do not remember a single day in my past life that I can really call happy." His was still the old cry, from the beginning to the end of his long life, "Who will show me any good?"

We knew a man of wealth who died as he lived—with a soul unfilled. He had travelled much, had seen many men and many lands. He had spent large sums in collecting pictures and marbles, with which to adorn a splendid house. He moved about; from town to country, from country to town. He visited every city of Europe, mingling with all society, and throwing himself into all gaiety. Yet nothing satisfied him. All was hollowness within: no peace, no rest. Once we had an opportunity of speaking to him of eternal things. He turned away; and his countenance gave us the impression, not so much of dislike to what we said, as of entire hopelessness. He afterwards told a friend that

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he did not understand what we meant. He was empty, and he knew it; he was trying to fill himself—but all in vain. It was a sad, weary, wasted life. He had no God. That was the secret of his sadness.

There was another. He toiled all his days for money; and he gained what he sought. He died rich, in a noble mansion, surrounded with luxuries. His whole time had been spent in *business*. He might be said to have lived in the counting-house and on the exchange. He was not a man of pleasure nor of literature, but of *business*. He was a thorough business man; honest and amiable, but so engrossed with one thing—business—that he seemed to lose relish for all other things. Yet business did not fill his soul. All was emptiness; money came, but no peace. He was not avaricious, but still money-making was his delight. His soul seemed to wither away in this poor employment. The more he threw himself into it, the less it seemed to fill him. He died as he lived—unfilled, unsatisfied.

These cases represent thousands of others in our world to-day. They seek rest, but find none. They try to fill their souls, but always miss the one thing that would fill them. Hungry, but they find no food; thirsty, but they find no drink. They are like those who dig wells in the sand of the great desert, hoping that water will flow in—but no water comes; or like shipwrecked sailors in their boat far out on the broad sea, who drink

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the waters of the ocean, only to intensify their thirst.

The world, with all its sorrow, has much in it to allure the eye. It looks very beautiful, and it is difficult to make men believe that its beauty is all unreal. It can do nothing to fill the human spirit, or to heal its diseases, or to dry up its tears, or to give it rest in weariness.

Travelling one day through a dreary part of the Arabian Desert, where there was no water and no verdure, nothing but rocks and sands, we were surprised to see at our right hand, and not far off as we thought, a lovely landscape, with noble cliffs, green woods, and a clear lake, over which light barques with white sails were moving. After a while the vision vanished away, and we were left on the hot sand-waste, unsheltered and unrefreshed. Of such mockeries the world is made up, and men are cheated daily with the gay unreality. The desert-vision, or *mirage*, did not deceive us, for we knew from our guides that we were in the very heart of the wilderness. Had we yielded to appearances, and pursued the deceitful landscape, we should have gone far astray, and been mocked at last.

By such mockeries are men led out of the right path. They spend their lives in chasing after vanities, and find their souls growing emptier and emptier every day. And all the while life hastens to an end, and the long, long future, which we call eternity, comes on apace. When too late

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they discover that all these beautiful appearances are only phantoms. They gain nothing and lose everything, and pass into the darkness of an unknown future without a hope.

Is there, then, such a thing as a real and sure hope? Can the soul really be filled? Can all its restless cravings be satisfied? Is there a resting-place for man's weary foot?

Yes. God has provided all these things most fully. He that made the soul has not left it to starve, or to pine away on the bread that cannot satisfy. He knows what the soul requires, and He has sent down from His own blessed heaven that which will fill the emptiest and gladden the most sorrowful. He calls it "the true bread," "the living bread," the "bread of God" (John vi. 33).

"But what does He give me to fill my soul?" a man may say.

"He gives you *His own love*."

"But can *love* fill my soul and satisfy all my longings, so that I shall not need to be always asking, Who will show me any good?"

"Yes; love can do all this. For love is the great comforter. Love fills the soul most wonderfully. Even human love does this; how much more the love of God."

"Do you mean that the love of God coming into my soul can do for me what gold and pleasure cannot do?"

"Yes; I mean that. When we come to know

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that *the great God who made us loves us*, and wants us to love Him in return, we feel as if we had got hold of a thought which makes us forget everything else."

"I know that human love has a most soothing effect on us, even in our most depressed and despairing hours. When disappointed, vexed, weary, and troubled, wishing that we had never been born, if we receive a message or a letter telling of a long-forgotten friend, who still loves us and wants to comfort and help us, the effect is wonderful."

"And does not this show you that it is *love alone* that can really fill the heart? If, then, the love of man can do so much, how much more the great love of God."

"But how may I know of this love?"

"God Himself thus writes to us concerning it: 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' " (1 John iv. 10).

"And what proof has He given of this love?"

"He has written to us thus: '*God so loved the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'" (John iii. 16).

"The gift of His Son, then, is the proof of His love?"

"Yes; could there be a greater? 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because

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that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him' (1 John iv. 9). Love like this—so large, so free, so holy—is that which alone can fill the poor, empty soul of man."

There are two things which the Bible specially reveals to us—the great sin of man, and the great love of God. God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. God must punish the sin which He hates, and show how He hates it, and what an awful evil it is. If, however, the sinner himself is punished for his sin, he is lost for ever. And if the sinner's punishment is to be remitted, it must be borne by another in his stead. It was for this that the Son of God came into the world. Though He was God, He became a man that He might bear "our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24). He finished this work of sin-bearing when He died on the cross, and thus not only showed the love that God hath to us, but made it righteous in God to bless those whom He thus so freely loved. "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" (Isaiah liii. 5, 6).

We have not to *buy* this love: it is free. We

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have not to *work for* this love: it comes to us when we are without strength. We have not to *pray for* this love: it comes to us unasked, like the sunshine or the rain. We have not to *deserve* this love: it is for the undeserving and the evil, otherwise it would not suit us at all. We have not to *go for* this love to any place, far or near: it is at hand, and round about us, like the air we breathe. We have not to *wait for* this love: it is already waiting for us like the dew of the morning, or the manna which fell all about the tents of Israel. We have not to *make ourselves holy or lovable* in order to get it: it is love to the sinful and the unlovable; to those who have never loved God at all (Eph. ii. 4).

Such is the great love of God, which has been revealed from heaven to the sons of men. It is free, holy, large, righteous love; love the like of which man never knew; love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown; love which survives years of sin and unbelief and ungodliness; love which is trying to find its way into each human heart, so as to fill that heart with God Himself, and to bring all heaven with its blessedness into the emptiest and most desolate of human bosoms.

A poor sorrowful widow was once passing out of the court of her desolate dwelling, into which poverty and death had found their way. Her countenance was sad. A Christian friend met

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her on her way ; they did not stop to speak. He saw at once her sorrow, and, without saying a word, he pointed *upward*. It was enough. Comfort flowed in ; light took the place of darkness ; her countenance was no more sad ; she saw there was *enough in God* for her.

And there is *enough in God* for you ! Will you believe it, and go to Him for that fulness which can fill your empty soul and make you happy for ever ?

Take God for your portion, we say to all who are seeking rest, but finding none ; who would fain be happy, but know not how. He is better than gold ; better than pleasure ; better than all the world can give. Let Him fill your soul with Himself and with His love. You will need no more ; you will have a heaven upon earth ; your soul will be filled.

The great message which the Son of God when here delivered to the weary sons of men was, "*I will give you rest.*" He came from the land of rest to bring the rest to us. He took our sins upon Him that He might remove everything that would prevent our obtaining rest. He purchased rest for us ; and He gives it freely. No one can say, "I am weary because Christ has not enough of rest for me, or because He refused to give it."

Now the way is open for us to go to God, and for God to come to us. The gate that was closed is now opened wide, and God Himself bids us

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welcome. If we are lost, it is not because God would not come to us, but because we would not go to God; not because God would not be reconciled to us, but because we would not be reconciled to God. There is love enough in God for the sinfullest; there is grace enough in God for the guiltiest; there is rest in the Son of God for the weariest. Let us at once arise and avail ourselves of the free pardon, and the full love, and the blessed rest.

“Let him that is athirst come.” This is the gracious inscription which God has written over the fountain of living waters. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17).

“Seek ye Me, and ye shall live” (Amos v. 4). It is God Himself, the great God of heaven and earth, who thus speaks to men; and He speaks with all the earnestness of unutterable love.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. i. 15). Here are the glad tidings of great joy; the belief of which brings the soul into peace and gladness.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts xvi. 31). Yes; it is simply by *believing* that salvation comes to the lost. The belief of God's glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ, His Son, brings to us all the life, and the pardon, and the peace which He has purchased by His death upon the cross.—*Abridged.*

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**“HADES.”***(An Answer to a Correspondent.)*

THERE can be no manner of doubt that “hades” is the equivalent of *sheol* in Hebrew, unfortunately rendered by the words “grave,” “pit,” and “hell” in the Authorised Version. The Greek translators (LXX) almost uniformly render *sheol* by “hades,” which sheds important light on its use in the New Testament. Derived from α (“not”) and ἰδεῖν (“to see”), it means, in the vaguest way, the invisible. It is hard to our English minds to divert it from the idea of locality, with which it has no more to do than death. To set it, for the believer, against going to be with Christ is not possible when the scriptural use of the word is weighed. Psalm xvi., quoted in Acts ii., shows that Christ went there. It is truly inseparable from death: they stand or fall together. When we know that hades is simply the state of the departed, the condition of separation of body and spirit consequent upon death, it will be easily seen how necessarily this is so. Where we find a good death, or death for the good as I suppose to be meant, there we shall find a good hades. “It is the word, in general, for the unseen or invisible world of spirits upon which, till the coming of Christ, darkness and obscurity rested, as we may see in the Old Testament. But as we find the same word applied to Christ, who went into paradise, we have preferred,” says the translator of the German Testament (J. N. D.) in his preface thereto, “to retain the Greek word itself (hades), that it may not be confounded with ‘hell’ (γέεννα), which is the place of eternal torment. In hades there may be joy

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as well as torment. The rich man and Lazarus were both in hades. In hell there is only torment.”

I now recall some of the passages from the Old Testament which help us as to the use of it in the New. Jacob looks forward to it when he believes Joseph to be dead (Gen. xxxvii. 35; xlii. 38). It receives all the dead (1 Sam. ii. 6). Thus Saul and his sons would be with Samuel there (1 Sam. xxviii. 19). The righteous look to deliverance from it (Ps. xxx. 3; Ps. xlix. 14, 15, where it occurs three times; Hosea xiii. 14). Psalm lxxxix. 48 expresses it in its universality and inseparableness from death (see vi. 5). For the gates of it (Matt. xvi.), see Isaiah xxxviii. 10; comp. ver. 18. Hezekiah's experience in view of it may suffice to show the general aspect of hades even to a believer in those times. Job vii. 9 and xvii. 13 may also be cited for this. The veil was not then lifted from the unseen, though streaks of the light of another world break through occasionally for faith on the passing scene of this one. It follows as necessarily, however, in the train of death as its sequel in the New as in the Old. But now what “eye hath not seen” God has revealed to us by His Spirit, and we look at that which is unseen. He who liveth and was dead is alive again for evermore, and has the key of one as of the other. Neither is the true portion of the believer. Faith triumphs over them (1 Cor. xv. 55), Satan has no more to do with either for the believer; for through death Christ has annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil—to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In Revelation xx. death and hades yield up at His command even those who

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seemed to be held absolutely in their power, *i.e.* those who went down into them in their sins ; and death and hades are brought to an end as no longer the condition of any person—they who are Christ's had been long since taken out of them at His coming—and this by an act which expresses God's judgment of the condition of separation of body and spirit that was never meant for man.

For us, if we fall asleep as to the body, hades is only to be absent from it to be with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8). "To depart, and be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 59). These are, in fact, the only four passages which speak of the death of the believer in the New Testament ; and they show how effectually our souls have been redeemed from death and hades, and why "*what is not seen*" is almost left out of the vocabulary of faith, save to express our triumph over it.

J. A. T.

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. A. M.—It is assuredly true that the forgiveness of sins which the believing soul receives is both present and eternal. This forgiveness is founded on the one sacrifice for sins offered by our Saviour at Calvary—a sacrifice which cannot be repeated. Nor could anything else ever put our sins away, so that if they are not completely and for ever gone from God's sight, they never will be, for Christ will not suffer for sins again. What a comfort to the burdened heart to know this ! What relief and rest it brings ! But

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there is more. Not only are our sins removed according to the powerful efficacy of Christ's atoning work, but we are "accepted in the Beloved." Christ is our righteousness, and He is also the measure of our acceptance. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Wonderful words, indeed! So we can look up into the opened heavens and see Jesus there, and rejoice that we are one with Him. Nothing can separate us from His love, none can pluck us out of His hand. We are bound up in the bundle of life with Him, and because He lives we shall live also. Shall we not praise God for such great grace?

AN ANXIOUS ONE.—1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.—It is difficult to understand how any intelligent person can bring forward this passage as an argument against Christian women teaching little children about the Saviour. They must be in sore straits to be obliged to have recourse to these verses to justify their objection. If you and others have it in your heart to gather dear children together to read with them the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, we wish you "God speed." No phase of Christian service seems to us more in accord with the large and loving heart of Him who in the days of His flesh called little ones to His arms and blessed them, saying, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 14). Service is a very individual thing, and we are not called upon to sit still and do nothing till everybody approves of our purpose. If we are sure of our Lord's commendation that is enough.

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A. E. J.—Baptism is connected with Christian profession, and certainly everyone partaking of the Lord's Supper should have been baptised.

H.—It is quite possible that the five thousand *men* of Acts iv. 4 includes the male converts among the three thousand souls named in Acts ii. 4. If so, these numbers do not give us the exact total of the Jewish converts, as in Acts iv. no mention is made of any save *men*.

I. A. E.—Exodus xxxiv. 27 ; Deuteronomy x. 4.—In carefully looking at these scriptures, we are inclined to believe that the writing on the second set of tables was by the hand of Moses under divine direction. You must not, we think, attach much importance to the "he" in the closing sentence of Exod. xxxiv. 28 being printed in your Bible with a capital "H." In our copy it is not so printed, nor in the New Translation of J. N. D., nor in the Revised Version, nor in the Septuagint. In all these the pronoun is printed with a small "h," showing that in the mind of the translators the pronoun refers to Moses, not to God. Needless to say, this view leaves the authority of the scripture unimpaired. If I dictate a letter, the letter is *mine* though another hand writes every word.

GENESIS xlix. 10 has been the subject of much comment, and many interpretations have been offered. "Shiloh" is generally considered to refer to Messiah. Does it not seem to imply that the place of supremacy should be Judah's according to the purpose of God, and that there should never be wanting someone of Judah's line entitled to wield the sceptre till Shiloh (*i.e.* Peace, or the Man of Peace, the Messiah) come?

T. J. M.—An answer to your query is given in a separate paper called "*Hades*" in our present issue.

## SOME BIBLE "IFS."

(A DIALOGUE.)

"IT is all very well for you, my dear Harry, to bring forward passages out of the Bible to show that the sheep of Christ shall never perish. Very comforting doctrine, no doubt, to those who receive it. But we must not blink the fact that there are many '*ifs*' in the Bible, and it is hardly fair to pass them over and say nothing about them. Now these '*ifs*' appear to make our salvation a little less sure than you would have us believe. I know you will excuse my saying so, but there is such a thing as living in a fool's paradise, and it seems to me that in ignoring these '*ifs*' you swing open the door, and bid us lie down at ease in its bewitching bowers. But life is a warfare, and if we would reach heaven at last, we must fight for it to the very end. You remember what Isaac Watts sang:—

" 'Must I be carried to the skies  
On beds of flowery ease ;  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas ?

Are there no foes for me to face ?  
Must I not stem the flood ?' "

XXI.

E

"Yes, I remember the lines very well, but you are mistaken, my dear George, in supposing that I wish to pass by these important '*ifs*.' Nothing is further from my thoughts, and I can sincerely say that it will give me great pleasure to examine them with you, and to see the connection in which they stand. I will only ask you to remember that Truth is always and everywhere consistent. It is seamless, like the Saviour's robe, for which the Roman soldiers gambled—not made up of divers and contrary textures, but 'woven from the top throughout.'"

"If you mean that Truth is one, and no two passages of Scripture can ever contradict each other, I am quite willing to admit it. No one holding, as I do, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God could suppose that what is declared to be true on one page is denied on another. Were it so, then Scripture would be a house divided against itself, whose downfall would be sure."

"Exactly. Therefore, if one scripture teaches that to His sheep the Saviour gives eternal life, that they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of His hand, no other scripture can affirm the contrary. Now this is certainly taught in John x. 27-9. Again, if it be said that 'those whom God calls He also justifies, and whom He justifies them He also *glorifies*,' then nothing found elsewhere can possibly gainsay it. Now

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Romans viii. 30 does say so. Moreover, if we are assured that 'nothing in heaven or earth shall ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'—and Romans viii. 38, 39 does so assure us—then all the '*ifs*' that may be found can never shake this threefold testimony. But come, let us look at your '*ifs*.' With which shall we begin?"

"There is that in 1 Corinthians xv. 1, 2. The '*if*' is strengthened, too, by words which clearly show that it is possible for anyone to believe in vain. I ask you to observe that point particularly, and I shall be interested in hearing what you have to say about it. The passage I will now quote:—

"**'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, IF ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.'**

"What do you make of that?"

"I do not deny that one may believe in vain even as another may preach in vain. Indeed, on the supposition that the dead rise not, both the preaching of the apostles and the faith of the Corinthians are said to be vain. But what is it that makes them so? *A lying testimony!* If I preach a falsehood and you believe it to be true, what is the worth of my preaching and of your faith? A man may place ten thousand pounds in

an institution lauded to the skies. He may believe every syllable of the lying story that induced him to place his money there, and feel sure that it is as safe as if in the coffers of the Bank of England. Nothing can shake his faith. But one fine morning he is told that the whole thing has gone to smash, and that all the while he believed it to be sound it was really rotten to the core. His faith, though strong, was vain. Is not that the argument of 1 Corinthians xv.? At Corinth some were saying there was no resurrection of the dead. But, says Paul, 'If the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised.' 'If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, you must know that I preached Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again.' This is what you believed; this is that in which you stand and by which you are saved. On the hypothesis that Christ is not risen our preaching was only fiction, and faith in a fiction is vain and valueless. Believing in vain, then, is *holding to be true what has no foundation in fact*. But we believe that Christ is risen and at the right hand of God. Can that faith be vain that has Him for its object? Will He ever fail and put our souls to shame?"

"Certainly not. But that sets the matter in a new light to me. I must confess I had not seized the scope of the apostle's reasoning, but looked at the verse I cited apart from its context. I see now what believing in vain means, and the

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place of the 'if' in verse 3. It all goes on the assumption that Christ is not risen—a conclusion involved in the denial of the resurrection of the dead."

"Yes, that is it, and I am glad if our talk has so far cleared the ground. But that is not the only 'if' in your mind. Let me hear another."

"Well, there is a tremendous 'if' in Colossians i. 23. You will ask me to read the passage. Here it is:—

**"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight: IF ye continue in the faith."**

"It certainly looks as if our being presented holy and unblameable in His sight depended on our continuance in the faith, '*If ye continue.*'"

"And so it does. But observe what is predicated of these 'saints and faithful brethren in Christ' earlier in the chapter. Of their faith, hope, and love the apostle speaks in verses 4 and 5. Then of their forgiveness and translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and of their having been made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light together with other blessed things. All this comes first, before he speaks of their responsibility. Now these Colossians were exposed to a double danger, as we learn from chapter ii. *Rationalism* threatened them—the

proud and unholy speculations of the human mind which made a prey of all whose ear they gained. And they were menaced by *Ritualism*, with its meats and drinks, its new moons, its pretentious humility, its homage to angelic beings, and all its vain and tawdry paraphernalia. How important, then, to warn these unsuspecting 'saints and faithful brethren in Christ,' and to exhort them to continue in the faith—the Christian faith, of course—and not to be seduced from it by specious but delusive reasonings, whether intellectual or religious!"

"Then there was the chance of their not continuing, was there not?"

"But the warning was never intended to make them doubt, either of what grace had made them to be *in Christ*, where all is unchangeable and immutable, or of the ultimate issue of their walk and warfare here below. Its intention is to make us lowly, self-distrustful, and dependent on the power of Another to keep us. And if there are perils we need to be kept. 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps' (Jer. x. 23). But if this be so, shall we not earnestly look up to One above who is able to succour and to keep us from falling? Is there room for the least possible doubt or misgiving? The One whose finished work and faithful word we trust for eternity is the One we depend upon, day by day,

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to keep us to the end. To use the '*ifs*' of the Bible to shake the certainty of salvation, which so many passages encourage and enjoin us to hold fast, is sorry work indeed. It is to pervert Scripture from its plain and legitimate purpose."

"My dear George, you speak rather strongly. But what will you say about the '*ifs*' of Hebrews iii.—'IF we hold fast,' and 'IF we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end'? Can you explain these away?"

"I wish to explain nothing away, but to give room and weight to every word of Holy Scripture, to heed its admonitions as heartily as we welcome its confirming and assuring doctrines. Now in assailing the Hebrews, the enemy adopted other tactics than those employed against the Colossians. By birth and early training they had inheritance in the Jewish system, with its altars, its sacrifices, its priesthood, and its stately temple courts. Within that system there was much that appealed to eye and ear. But in the Christian circle there was none of these things. The Holy Spirit was there—the power for spiritual worship—but without living faith which laid hold of the unseen, there was but little to keep them from quitting Christian ground and returning to the Jewish fold. *That was their great danger.* Hence they are frequently warned against the sin of unbelief. Moreover, they are addressed as a professing body, among whom there might be some

who were professors and nothing more. They would remember that when their fathers left Egypt, 'a mixed multitude went with them' who were not of Israel at all. Would they themselves reach the Rest of God, the true and heavenly Canaan? Then they must walk with their faces thitherward. No looking back. Difficulties there were, but no one was called to face them alone. The living Christ was able to succour. He could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and was able to save unto the uttermost all who came unto God by Him. The evidence of the reality of their profession would be found in their holding fast to the end. Was there anything in all this to make them doubt whether they would ever reach the goal? Nothing at all. On the contrary, there was everything to strengthen and encourage. The throne of grace was theirs, the Word of God was theirs, quick and powerful and penetrating, able to bring to light whatever opposed their progress; and all the resources of the priesthood of Christ were for their help. But they had to be careful as became those engaged in serious business, and not to forget that 'the just shall live by faith,' and that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.' And so it comes to this—on the one hand, there is the soul's acceptance of all that Scripture witnesses as to the standing, state, and security of the believer, and on the other, the earnest heeding of all the warn-

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ings and counsel which divine love gives to guard us on our pilgrim way, not forgetting that the One who has put away our sins lives on high, able to save out of every difficulty and danger, till we come to our eternal rest."

"Well, you have given me something to think over. I had not looked at the 'ifs' in the light in which you have presented them."

"There are other 'ifs,' but what has been said may help in the understanding of these also. May God bless you, dear George, and give you an exercised mind, able to discern between things that differ. If further difficulties suggest themselves, we will look at them when we next meet, or you can send me a line and I will deal with them in the correspondence columns of *Simple Testimony*, which I know you regularly read."

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**The Bason and the Bosom** (John xiii.).—There are no two truths that we, as children of God, know less about than those taught by the bason and the bosom, yet they are of the deepest importance. The bason is the expression of the ministry which puts the heart at rest with the Lord Jesus, and then, as a fruit of that, the soul takes its place, as John here, and puts its head on the Lord's bosom.

W. T. P. W.

## AS THOUGH THEY WEPT NOT.

“They that weep as though they wept not.”

1 COR. vii. 30.

IT does not say they are *not* to weep, but they are to act, to labour, to live as though they had no cause for weeping; go on steadily denying self and pleasing CHRIST, just as though their hearts were not broken; not fixing their eyes on the wound, but covering it—if needs be—to all but JESUS, and walking on, on.

“They that weep as though they wept not”—not that they are not to weep; but there is for us in JESUS a power to live above the weeping; while the heart bleeds, to live as though it bled not; while the whole soul is shaken, as with an earthquake, by some trial from which there is no escape, for which there is no mitigation, still to be a comfort and steadfast help to those around.

If God has denied the luxury, or taken it away, of a human, sympathising heart to weep upon, there is still the secret chamber, where we may occasionally find, though alone, the relief of tears; and tears wept on JESUS' bosom *ought* to be as great a relief as those shed in the arms of an earthly beloved; and surely they leave more power to go out and stand before others “as though we wept not.”

*Extracted.*

## GOD'S CARE FOR THE POOR.

**“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.”**

LEVITICUS xix. 9, 10.

**W**HEN the golden sheaves were being reaped and the mellow clusters gathered “the poor and stranger” were to be remembered by the Israel of God because Jehovah was the God of Israel. The reaper and the grape gatherer were not to be governed by a spirit of grasping covetousness, which would bare the corners of the field and strip the branches of the vine; but rather by a spirit of large-hearted, generous benevolence, which would leave a sheaf and a cluster for “the poor and stranger,” that they, too, might rejoice in the unbounded goodness of Him whose paths drop fatness, and on whose open hand all the sons of want may confidently wait.

The book of Ruth furnishes a fine example of one who fully acted out this most benevolent statute. “And Boaz said unto her (Ruth), At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched

corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: *and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her*, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not" (Ruth ii. 14-16). Most touching and beautiful grace! Truly it is good for our poor, cold, selfish hearts to be brought in contact with such principles and such practices. Nothing can surpass the exquisite refinement of the words, "Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her." It was evidently the desire of the noble Israelite that "the stranger" might have abundance, and have it, too, rather as the fruit of her own gleaning than of his benevolence. This was the very essence of refinement. It was putting her in immediate connection with, and dependence upon, the God of Israel, who had fully recognised and provided for "the gleaner." Boaz was merely acting on that gracious ordinance of which Ruth was reaping the benefit. The same grace that had given him the field gave her the gleanings. They were both debtors to grace. She was the happy recipient of Jehovah's goodness. He was the honoured exponent of Jehovah's most gracious institution. All was in most lovely moral order. The creature was blessed, and God glorified. Who would not own that it is good for us to be allowed to breathe such an atmosphere?

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“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him : the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.”—LEVITICUS xix. 13.

What tender care is here! The high and mighty One that inhabiteth eternity can take knowledge of the thoughts and feelings that spring up in the heart of a poor labourer. He knows, and takes into account, the expectations of such an one in reference to the fruit of his day's toil. The wages will be naturally looked for. The labourer's heart counts upon them—the family meal depends upon them. Oh! let them not be held back. Send not the labourer home with a heavy heart to make the heart of his wife and family heavy likewise. By all means give him that for which he has wrought, to which he has a right, and on which his heart is set. He is a husband, he is a father, and he has borne the heat and burden of the day, that his wife and children may not go hungry to bed. Disappoint him not. Give him his due.

Thus does our God take notice of the very throbbings of the labourer's heart, and make provision for his rising expectations. Precious grace! Most tender, thoughtful, touching, condescending love! Could anyone read such passages and not be melted? Could anyone read them and thoughtlessly dismiss a poor labourer, not knowing whether he and his family have wherewithal to meet the cravings of hunger? Nothing can be more painful to a tender heart

than the lack of kindly consideration for the poor, so often manifested by the rich. These latter can sit down to their sumptuous repast, after dismissing from their door some industrious fellow-creature, who had just come seeking the reward of his honest labour. They think not of the aching heart with which that man returns to his family to tell them of the disappointment to himself and to them. Oh! it is terrible. It is most offensive to God, and to all who have drunk in any measure into His grace. If we would know what God thinks of such acting we have only to hearken to the following accents of holy indignation: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (James v. 4). "The Lord of Sabaoth" hears the cry of the aggrieved and disappointed labourer. His love tells itself forth in the institutions of His moral government, and even though the heart should not be melted by the grace of those institutions, the conduct should at least be governed by the righteousness thereof. God will not suffer the claims of the poor to be heartlessly tossed aside by those who are so hardened by the influence of wealth as to be insensible to the appeals of tenderness, and who are so far removed beyond the region of personal need as to be incapable of feeling for those whose

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lot it is to spend their days amid exhausting toil or pinching poverty. The poor are the objects of God's special care. Again and again He makes provision for them in the statutes of His moral administration; and it is particularly declared of Him who shall ere long assume, in manifested glory, the reins of government, that "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight" (Psalm lxxii. 12-14).

May we profit by the review of those precious and deeply practical truths! May our hearts be affected, and our conduct influenced, by them! We live in a heartless world; and there is a vast amount of selfishness in our own hearts. We are not sufficiently affected by the thought of the need of others. We often forget that the very persons whose labour ministers to our personal comforts are living, it may be, in the deepest poverty. If the Jews of old were taught by the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic economy to entertain kindly feelings toward the poor, and to deal tenderly and graciously with the sons of toil, how much more ought the higher and more spiritual ethics of the gospel dispensation to produce in the hearts and lives of Christians a large-hearted benevolence towards every form of human need?

C. H. M.

## THOU KNOWEST.

PSALMS lvi. 8 ; cvii. 4-7.

GOD over all, most blessed now and ever,  
Thou tell'st my wand'rings, markest out my life ;  
And no wild storm, nor blast of pain, shall sever  
My soul from Thee amid the billows' strife.

Not as a straw toss'd on the waves of sorrow,  
Nor on a desert that hath ne'er a way,  
Thou knowest my past, my present, and my morrow,  
Thou tell'st my wand'rings here, from day to day.

Of love Thou art the largest, truest Giver ;  
Thy sympathies flow ever full and free ;  
Thy peace, oh God, is like a deep, calm river,  
Whose currents bear me to Thy home and Thee.

And if the road that leads me to Thy dwelling  
Be called by Thee "A solitary way,"  
Thy light shall shine, its darkness all dispelling,  
Still more and more until the perfect day.

Not as one desolate I tread life's pathway ;  
\*The Servant leads me, journey'ng to Thy Son ;  
The day is nearing when His patient mission,  
And all His gracious guidings shall be done.

The moment when he says, "It is my Master,"  
With veiled heart I speed me on to hear ;  
With energies aroused I press on faster,  
For, in the twilight, He Himself draws near !

S. C. M. A.

\* Genesis xxiv. 61-5.

## “WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION.”

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”—PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

“DON’T be too sure of your salvation, Adam.”  
The speaker was a fellow-workman, who thus addressed a companion at their daily toil.

“Remember,” he added, “you’ve got to ‘work out your salvation with fear and trembling,’ so don’t be too sure.”

“You must have salvation,” quietly answered Adam, “before you can work it out. Don’t you see that?”

The aged workman was right. It is not a question of working *for* salvation, but of working *out* salvation. Indeed, never in the whole range of Scripture is the sinner told to work *for* salvation. On the contrary, we read, “*To him that worketh NOT*” (Rom. iv. 5); “*NOT of works*” (Eph. ii. 9); “*Not by works of righteousness*” (Titus iii. 5).

Let me emphasise these points by bringing before your notice two sets of words in italics.

It does not say *work FOR*, but *work OUT*. Again, it says, “*Work out your OWN salvation.*”

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Further, the exhortation is to *Christians*, those who are already saved and know it.

The force of the Greek word "to work out" is *to work out into result*. For instance, a father gives his boy a plot of ground in the garden for his own. Will the father be content if the boy does not work at the garden and produce something? No; the boy must work the garden into result. But should the lad fail the garden is still his, but the object for which it has been given has failed.

A mother may give her little daughter a ball of wool and some knitting-needles, and tell her to work it out into result, viz. a pair of stockings. If the girl works "with fear and trembling" she is less likely to make careless mistakes, and more likely to earn the approval of her mother.

Then, further, if you take the full context of the passage, it will greatly help to a clear understanding of its meaning. Evidently the Philippian believers had had the great advantage of the apostle Paul's presence. In a sense they had worked out their own salvation under his personal direction. They had obeyed, and in their obedience lay their salvation as *a present result*.

Even after he had left them they had continued with carefulness and earnestness the path of obedience, the path of present, everyday salvation. Christians call Jesus Lord, but it is a mere empty word if they do not obey him in everyday

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life. “And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* Him” (Heb. v. 9).

With the apostle absent, they had no patient teacher to point out their mistakes, no nursing father to care for their welfare in the special way that he had done. It is, then, no wonder that he says to them, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*”

It is like a pupil who is shown how to do a sum by his schoolmaster. As the boy proceeds the master points out the mistakes he is making, and they are quickly rectified. But the time comes for the master to tell the boy that he must do the sum by himself. How careful the boy is! With what fear and trembling he does the sum! How he checks each succeeding step in case he makes a blunder and then perpetuates it! So with believers. In *fear and trembling* lies their safety and strength.

I have known young men whose parents practically worked out their salvation for them. They were sheltered in the environment of home, taken to the meetings, taught the way of the Lord, watched over and prayed over. But one day circumstances threw them out of their environments; they left home, and had to face things for themselves and walk on their own feet, or in other words, by their own faith.

Instead of facing their new surroundings with

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fear and trembling, they stepped out, like Peter, who had lost the shelter of the Lord's personal company, in confidence, and, like Peter—failed!

By all means, young believer, fear and tremble, for in this lies your safety. You have a watchful enemy and a skilful foe. Consciously weak, you will cling to the Lord, and be able to say with another, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Now for the last point, and how full of encouragement and cheer! If we are exhorted to *work OUT*, it is on the ground that God *works IN*. "*For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*" The working *in* must *precede* the working *out*. If nothing is worked *in* nothing will flow *out*.

But what does God work in? Two things; both the *willing* and the *working* of His good pleasure—both the *desire* and the *power* to carry it out. Israel under the law was exhorted to work out, but absolutely failed because there was no working in. "All these things will we do," they confidently affirmed, but they failed because there was no working in.

On the contrary, with believers God works the willing—the desire to do His will. In this lies the whole secret, *and it lies with God Himself*. We cannot work up this willingness, but He does it by His Spirit, and with it the working out of His good pleasure.

With the heart right, all is right. "My son,

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give me thy heart.” “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Here lies the whole secret, and thank God, we repeat, it lies with Him. He has *won* the hearts of His people, and thus the working out is a simple and natural and spontaneous process.

“With fear and trembling,” however, is not in connection with our final salvation. That has been secured for us by a work done outside of us by our Saviour on the cross of shame. Therefore it is with no slavish fear, with no sickening dread of being lost ultimately, that we should seek to work out our own salvation. No, our desire, surely, is to glorify God, to answer to His mind concerning us, to follow in Christ’s footsteps, and cheered by the knowledge that God Himself is working in us the willing and doing of His good pleasure, we find our joy in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

May the Lord stir us all up to greater devotedness and carefulness of walk and ways, for His name’s sake.

A. J. P.

“No security whatever is assured by success in the Lord’s work, and if the Lord is using you, depend upon it that Satan’s sifting is not far off. The only path of safety is found in keeping near the Lord and far away from all that savours of the world and the heat generated at its fire of coals. To be ‘Hail fellow, well met’ with the servants of the devil is to ensure being tripped up by their master.”

W. T. P.

## NOTE ON SERVICE.

A SERVANT must be in his master's presence to get his direct commands. Receiving them immediately from him he has a much better idea of his master's wishes than if conveyed through a third person.

This is very beautifully set forth in the eleventh chapter of Mark's Gospel.

The Lord had a need, and two of His disciples were near enough to hear His desire expressed, and willing to obey His commands.

His wishes were given in very simple language, but they conveyed a request, the fulfilment of which required some faithfulness and self-abnegation on the part of the servant.

Note the errand: "Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him."

An ass in the East was not the slighted animal it is in this country, but often represented the most valuable livestock in its owner's possession.

Human reason would say, "This is a very queer business; it looks uncommonly like taking what belongs to another" (the ass was tied up, evidently under the owner's care, and he a stranger); "I don't like the job, and must decline."

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But this is only the first part of the instructions. He who sends out His servants knows, oh, so well! the hearts of those to whom they are sent. What a comfort and stand by this is for those who seek to serve Him! "And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him."

The *prepared heart* is willing to listen to the Lord's messenger, and to give without a question what the Lord requires.

"And *straightway* he will send him."

All this is in the servant's instructions, and how gracious of the Master to remove all doubt as to the result of the application!

Faith in His knowledge of all hearts, and confidence in the power of His word, are what is required of the servant if he is to be at ease in the carrying out of His behests.

Let us look at how the commission was carried out, and at its result.

"They went their way." No "buts" or "ifs," or arguments of any kind, no thought of their fitness or unfitness for the service, or of the unreasonableness of the message, but knowing from whom the command came, they set forth to carry it out.

"And found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him."

The work was not done in a secluded place, with none to note it, but in public, at the door,

where many eyes, including, as we may suppose, the owner's, rested upon them.

Some service is secret, where only the Master's eye rests upon the servant, and where there is no place for the approval or disapproval of others, where the sense of His desires being accomplished is the splendid reward of the faithful servant.

But here the work was done before men, and they had opportunity for helping or hindering.

"And certain of them that stood there said, What do ye, loosing the colt?"

In open daylight, without a word of explanation or apology, to commit what looked uncommonly like highway robbery might well bring forth the comment of the bystanders, to say nothing of the owner of the colt; but do please note, it is so precious, and contains in a few words the germ of all effective service, "And they said unto them *even as Jesus had commanded.*"

No additions, no flights of rhetoric, no soothing things or making it easy, or pleasant, nor any holding back or apologies, but "even as Jesus had commanded."

*And that message had power.*

Yes, there was power in His word, power over man, over hearts, over nature, over self-interest, over every hindrance.

*"And they let them go."*

"They brought the colt to Jesus," and they had fulfilled their mission. *His need was met.*

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Let us, then, just summarise what the steps were which led to this happy conclusion:—

They were near enough to hear the message.

They were willing enough to obey it.

They were confident enough to go forth.

They had faith in the word given.

They sought not to add to it.

They kept nothing back from it.

The word thus given had power.

The Lord's need was met.

Go and do thou likewise, O thou servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. C.

L.

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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ENQUIRER.—Every man is head of his own household, and his authority, in that sphere, may never be questioned. But if he be a Christian he will seek that the order of his house shall be such as the Lord approves, and then assuredly every moral propriety will be carefully maintained. The relative position of master and servant, though it may have no place in the Church, for there all are one, is not to be slighted in the home circle. Nor does it work for good if the moral boundary lines are overstepped by undue familiarity on one side or the other. Ungrudging thought for the comfort of those who serve us, an appreciative word sincerely spoken, and a kindly and constant care for their temporal and spiritual welfare should surely be shown. On the

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other side there will be faithful service, all the more heartily rendered because of the spiritual bonds that exist. Happy is that household whose interests are not divided. But the fullest recognition of this does not weaken in the least degree the obligation that rests on master and servant alike to act suitably to their several stations in life in the fear of the Lord.

W. A. B.—In our answer to "M. R.," in February issue, we frankly owned that the Christian should do good to all men regardless of their creed, though the Household of Faith must ever have the first claim. Now we do not regard the Household of Faith as embracing the whole of Christendom. We look upon it as the family of God—in other words, true believers, called by whatever name they may be. But caring for the poor in a large and generous spirit is one thing, and working for Roman Catholic institutions is quite another. These institutions are an integral part of *a system* which we view with the utmost abhorrence. Please observe that we are not speaking of persons, but of *a system*, dishonouring to God, as we believe, and so fearfully destructive to souls. We could not, in good conscience, help it on, but if a poor Romanist needed help we should gladly give it, if in our power to do so.

WORKING MAN.—1 Tim. v. 8.—A Christian man is bound to provide for the needs of his own circle. He is not to fail in this, that the Church might the better care for those who have no one else to care for them. Our remarks on stewardship give no encouragement to thriftlessness, which we regard as a

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great evil. If the nature of a man's calling only gives him employment for nine months out of the twelve, he would do well to see whether the earnings of nine months could not by careful management be made to meet the requirements of twelve. Kindly read our answer to "F. McL." once more. We scarcely think it requires explanation.

E. S. F.—Luke xv. 7, Rev. iv. 6.—Does not the Lord Jesus take people up on their own ground and argue accordingly? The Pharisees and Scribes thought themselves so good as to need no repentance. Esteeming themselves to be righteous, they despised others, as is stated in chapter xviii. 9. They were not really so. But without disputing it our Lord gives them to understand that there was more joy in heaven over the repentance of *one* of these despised ones than over *ninety-and-nine* who needed no repentance at all. As to Revelation iv. 6, we do not regard the four living creatures as symbolical of the Old Testament saints. These find their representatives among the four-and-twenty elders of verse 10. The living creatures rather represent the ways of God in providence and judgment.

H. J.—To refute the long list of unscriptural notions held by Seventh Day Adventists would occupy more space than we can give. They are crushingly exposed and answered in F. W. Grant's *Facts and Theories of a Future State*, pages 525-48. "Every peculiar feature of their system," says Mr. Grant, "is false—Sabbath-keeping, prophetic system, dates, sanctuary-cleansing, atonement, desolate millennium, annihilation doctrines—all. It is a thoroughly evil system, with neither

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a true God nor a true sacrifice, nor therefore a true salvation for its adherents. Christians may no doubt be entangled with it, but the system is unchristian and antichristian." Strong language, but not too strong, as Mr. Grant's examination shows. If you write again please let us have one or two questions at a time. We have not room for more.

ELACHISTOTERN.—Thank you for your interesting letter. Should a second edition of *Bible Dialogues* be called for, the point you name shall have attention. Yes, we fear large numbers of Christians "dream away their lives" in what we may call spiritual self-culture, forgetful of the thousands led astray by the emissaries of Satan. May God bless you in your service for Christ, and grant an abundant harvest.

W. N. G.—We cannot imagine what meaning you attach to the word *conversion* if you suppose that a person might be born again and washed in the precious blood of Christ, might receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and yet be unconverted. The prodigal son of Luke xv. was certainly converted at that point in his history when coming to himself he arose and returned to his father. Surely there is something answering to that in the life of every saved one. Of course, no two conversions are exactly alike, and if a person has always lived an outwardly blameless life the change might not be so noticeable as in others whose life has been of another sort. And the same holds good with those converted in very early years. Your questions on 1 Peter iii. 19, iv. 5, 6, we hope to answer next month.

## FORMALISM NOT FAITH.

**I** TAKE for granted that the reader of these lines is a professing Christian; that is, one who has been trained in the truth of Christianity, and who is acquainted with the letter of Scripture, and that if he were asked for an explanation of God's way of salvation he could readily give it. That his privileges have, in this respect, greatly exceeded those of a man brought up outside the circle of Christendom cannot be denied. It is foolish to ignore the immense difference between the nominal Christian and the heathen, or to deny the vastly superior privileges of the one over the other.

But then, privilege involves responsibility; and, in a similar proportion, the professing Christian has that for which he must answer, which the heathens have not.

I write of the professor. It is grace which alone makes any vital or saving difference; but, even when grace has not yet reached the heart, the light of the truth shines, with all its clear and brilliant lustre, carrying favours and privileges on the one hand, and, necessarily, imposing responsibilities on the other.

Now, let me ask you, dear reader, what has

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this favour done for you? What have your profession of Christ, your knowledge of the letter of the Word, your many opportunities—what have these things done for your soul? Are you conscious of any saving effect flowing out of them? Have they proved themselves matters of life and death importance to you? Have they been allowed to sink down deeper than the ear or eye, and to affect the heart? These are important questions, especially in a day when external forms are urged, with growing vehemence, as being in themselves sufficient, and that, if only the worshipper be covered with a fair and respectable amount of ceremonial and religious clothing, he needs nothing more.

We are told, for instance, by many that baptism makes us children of God, and that if, in after years, we do not break our baptismal vows, but yield true and proper deference to them and to their solemn consequences, we are spiritually qualified for heaven. Well, baptism has its place in the Christian economy as the rite which introduces to the profession—for "*there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism*"—and wherever the Lordship of Christ is owned, there, too, is the "one baptism." But to "say Lord, Lord" is one thing (it will be said by many to whom He will reply, "I never knew you"), and to be a child of God, as born of Him, is quite another. The one is external, the other internal. The one is

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administrative, as performed by man; the other is vital, and the work of God's Spirit.

And how can that which is material, affecting only the outside, reach the essential, or touch that which is spiritual? Impossible!

True, God may quicken the soul at any moment—that of baptism or any other—but it is God's quickening, and not baptism, that communicates the life. Hence it is neither baptism nor any outward form or ceremony whatsoever that can make us God's children; and well it is for each true servant of God that he should, by all means, by pen and by word of mouth, seek to expose the terrible snare, to break the subtle spell, and do all he can to warn the unwary of the sad delusion. It is well for him to urge on their attention that which the Lord urged on Nicodemus—the new birth—to be “born of the Spirit,” yea, to be “born of water and the Spirit”—where “water” cannot mean actual water, otherwise birth must mean actual birth; but where “water” clearly symbolises the Word by which we are “born again” (1 Peter i. 23).

This cannot be too much insisted on. It is evidently necessary, then, to go beyond outward forms in order to obtain that which saves.

Salvation is God's work, and, blessed be His name, it is also His “gift” (Eph. ii.). “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that

believe on His name: which were born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*, but of God" (John i. 12, 13).

Now here we have the truth balanced. Belief in the name of the Son of God is the condition on which we become children of God. That is our part, and the whole of our part (without baptism or any outward form whatever) in the wondrous work of introduction into the divine family—simple faith in Christ—a faith that is no merit, but which is in itself the negation of all merit. This is our total ground of blessing—receiving Christ by faith in His blessed name. The full relationship of God's children is there, then, and for ever our inalienable portion.

But, notice the equipoise, they are "born of God"! This guards the truth, and precludes the flesh from laying claim to a relationship so distinguished, so ineffably blessed, by a mere assertion of faith—a mere assent of the unrenewed heart—a mere acceptance, intellectually, of the facts of Christianity.

No; they are not only "*born of God*," but—observe most particularly the triple cordon of defence against such intrusion—they are born *not of blood*; again, nor of the *will of the flesh*; and again, nor of the *will of man*!

How impregnable does the Spirit of God make this fortress! How carefully He fortifies the truth of sonship in God's family against all the

ritualistic attempts of all ages, by this threefold line of outworks. First, it cannot be reached by blood—no pedigree from any spiritual ancestor avails—be it “father Abraham” or any other father.

Second, “nor by the will of the flesh.” No rite of circumcision, nor baptism, nor penance, nor good works, nor product of the flesh is of any use at all. Thirdly—“nor of the will of man.” This settles the matter definitely—“man” has nothing to do with it. He may reform you, educate, civilise, make you religious, but he cannot touch this question. This is God’s exclusive prerogative.

They are “born of God.”

But what is it to be “born of God”? Does He act upon us apart from all sensibility on our side? Does He, in the sovereignty of His grace, fashion us as though we were but clay in the hands of the potter?

Far otherwise. The process of the new birth often leads the soul through exercises of the deepest kind. All the sensibilities are called into play, and such searchings of heart abound as could be produced by no other means. The discovery of self—of a nature radically and essentially inimical to God—of the total absence of self-recovering power, of sin, of impotence—a discovery which may plunge the soul into profound depths of anguish until grace is known and

the truth of God's love—a love that provided salvation for such when the heart turns to God penitently, like the prodigal to the Father—and peace is sweetly enjoyed. All this in degrees greater or less is experienced. So that instead of a mere mechanical operation acting externally there is the most intense exercise whilst the soul is thus “born of God.” “Horrors of great darkness” often precede “the glory of that light,” and such experience is most wholesome, nay, it is necessary. For “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” was one of the terms placed by Christ before the moralists of Jerusalem (Luke xiii.).

But how could baptism, or any outward rite, produce such feelings? If “the wind bloweth where it listeth,” the sound thereof is heard, and that sound is anything but soothing. It is heard in mighty blasts that shatter the rocks of self-confidence and the ramparts of self-righteousness to pieces. The soul is wrecked on the shores of saving grace! Happy place! What will be the judgment befalling the deceivers? What the doom of the deceived? Blind leaders of the blind—they shall both fall into the ditch!

It may be as to the former that the Lord bids us let them alone. They sin against light. They know better. They can refer to that gospel whereby the truth is fully revealed. Persistency in this course of deception is the display of un-

pardonable self-will. They must answer to their Lord.

It is with the deceived we have to do—with the wide multitudes who are deluded by sacramentalism, and allow themselves to become the sport of their spiritual jugglers. Souls yet unconverted, though nominal Christians; yet unrenewed, though professors; yet unsaved, though possessors of privilege; yet without peace, though surrounded by ceremony. It is such for whom we tremble and over whom we would yearn.

With stealthy step and velvet paw, though with her fang carefully concealed, Superstition is creeping over an unsuspecting and sleeping Christendom. Anything like noise or outward cause of alarm is withheld, and never, until the victim has been secured, will the deadly snare be detected.

We therefore earnestly warn the reader to distinguish the real from the unreal, the life from the mere name, the truth from theory, and Christ from form.

It is "being justified by faith that we have peace with God," and by that means only.

Whatever denies that truth, let it be eschewed.

J. W. S.

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## THE WRONG WAY ABOUT.

“I have been praying for many years that God would give me the assurance of salvation, but my prayers are not answered. I cannot understand it, and I am afraid I shall be lost. Is it not true that a saved person always knows that he is saved?”

YOU have been praying, dear friend, all these years for something that is lying quite close to your doors. It reminds me of the oft-told story of the ship which hoisted signals of distress for want of water, and received as answer: “*Dip it up! Dip it up!*” She had come, without knowing it, into the mouth of a great river, whose fresh waters flowed far out to sea. Her sailors were dying of thirst, and all the while the water they wanted was round about them. They had but to dip it up. So with you. You are thirsting for the assurance of salvation, not knowing that what will quench your thirst is within a moment’s reach—it is flowing all around you.

Nowhere in the New Testament are we enjoined to pray for the assurance of salvation. The gospel freely preached to men, if simply received, not only brings salvation, but gives the immediate knowledge of it. Now the knowledge is not based on inward experience, but on outward testimony—not on something wrought in me, but on the clear, unimpeachable witness of

the Word of God. Happy experiences may and do flow from it; that is another matter. In other words, we are happy because we know that we are saved. The knowledge of salvation is the source of our happiness. To reverse the process is to put the cart before the horse.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” holds true to-day. Can any sinner believe on Him and not be saved? Impossible! Those two things are joined together, and no one may divorce them. Did not the awakened jailer know that he was saved? To be sure he did, and so may you (Acts xvi. 30-34).

“But I do not feel happy,” you may say, “and if I were saved I surely should.” We answer, You must know first and then feel. Faith goes before feeling—it always takes the lead.

We cannot be too clear as to that. Thousands, like yourself, are in darkness and doubt because they are waiting for a change of feelings and experience—a bright and blissful change. They want to feel that they might know, whereas the right way is to know that they might feel. It is the outward look at Christ, and not the inward look at self, that leads to blessing.

“Am I then to believe that I am saved, and not wait for feelings?” Yes, if you rest alone on Christ and His finished work. Only your assurance must have a firm foundation. Now feelings and experiences can never give you this. They

are as unstable as the sand of the sea. But what can be firmer than the Word of the Lord, which endures for ever, and which shall stand when heaven and earth shall pass away?

How did the woman in the Pharisee's house know that she was saved? Jesus told her so (Luke vii. 48-50). How did the rich publican know that salvation had come to his house? Jesus told him so (Luke xix. 9). How did the Ephesian believers know that they were saved? The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, told them so (Eph. ii. 5-8). How may any of us know? Exactly in the same way.

Do you reply, "But our case is different. They saw with their eyes the Lord Jesus, and heard Him speak, and it was easy for them to know and believe"? True, the woman in the Pharisee's house and Zacchæus thus saw and heard, but not those who believed after the Lord's ascension. Besides, among men a word in writing is worth more than one spoken by the mouth—the former is legally binding, the latter is not. "Have you got it in black and white?" asks the lawyer of his client. "If so, there is no getting away from that." Now we have it in black and white. Take John v. 24, for instance, and Acts xiii. 38, 39. "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; but is passed from

death unto life." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe *are* justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Notice particularly the two words "*hath*" and "*are*."

"Would you have me take those words simply as they stand?"

Yes, without the least reserve. They are intended to be so taken. And, remember, they are God's words. In believing them you *believe Him*, so that you can say as Paul did on board the sinking ship: "*I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts xxvii. 25). Simple, beautiful faith, which honours God and blesses him who has it!

There was one who was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared in their midst after His resurrection. The others told him they had seen the Lord, and that He was risen from the dead. It was a true testimony, enlightening the eyes and gladdening the heart. But Thomas would not believe it. Their word was not enough for him. He must see and feel, so he said, or he would not believe. How damaging to his own soul was his unbelief, how dishonouring to the Lord! You know the sequel of the story, and how the Lord said unto him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed

are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

We are among the "blessed" if we draw the knowledge of our forgiveness and acceptance with God from His Holy Word, apart from the evidence of eye and hand, such as Thomas demanded ere he would believe. Are you not something like Thomas? All these years you have been speaking to God, and all these years God has been speaking to you, but you have not listened. Now hold your peace and *hear God speak*. It is what He says to you, and not what you say to Him, that will give you the assurance of salvation. It is His word, and not your prayers, that yields the peace for which you long.

"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa. xliii. 25).

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. ciii. 12).

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12).

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

Could language be plainer? If you receive those words into your heart, the assurance for which you have been praying for years will be yours at once.

## VICTORY.

UNTIL I saw the blood, 'twas hell my soul was fearing,  
And dark and dreary in my eyes the future was  
appearing ;

While conscience told its tale of sin,  
And caused a weight of sin within.

Until I saw the blood, for mercy I was crying,  
As if to move the heart of God, or for His favour trying ;  
But all the seeking seemed in vain,  
The wished-for peace I could not gain.

But when I saw the blood, and looked at Him who shed it,  
My right to peace was seen at once, and I with transport  
read it ;

I found myself to God brought nigh,  
And "Victory" became my cry.

My joy was in the blood, the news of which had told me  
That spotless as the Lamb of God my Father could be-  
hold me ;

And all my boast was in His name,  
Through whom this great salvation came.

The fear of death was past, the sense of sin had vanished,  
And all my misery of soul was now for ever banished

By that blest truth which entered in,  
That Jesus Christ had cleansed from sin.

My hope was, through the blood, of being soon in glory,  
And learning in a brighter scene the fulness of that story,  
Which made my new-born spirit cry,  
And shout aloud for "Victory."

And when, with golden harps, the throne of God surround-  
ing,

The white-robed saints around the throne their songs of  
joy are sounding,

With them I'll praise that precious blood,  
Which has redeemed our souls to God.

## PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

1 PETER iii. 18-20 *et seq.*

OUR main help in understanding any passage of Scripture is to seek by the Spirit's teaching to enter into the scope of the part from which it is taken. Now I think we should have been kept from many a wild perversion of the truth if this had been observed as to the passage before us. Let us then first try to put ourselves into the position of those addressed in Peter's epistles.

These "strangers" (*v.* 1) "scattered" through various provinces of Asia Minor were a true remnant of God's ancient people. Through faith in an unseen Christ at God's right hand they had been brought into blessing, richer indeed by far, but very different in character from that which, according to Jewish expectation, depended upon the presence of Christ upon earth in manifested glory. Deliverance from enemies, and Israel set at the head of the nations, would have been the consequence of that. In their circumstances there was much that put faith to the test. Temptations were manifold, whether in suffering for conscience, as in chapter ii., or for righteousness' sake, as in chapter iii., or more directly as identified with the name of a rejected Christ, as

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in chapter iv. But they are reminded of the sure principles of the government of God as expressed in Psalm xxxiv., from which the apostle quotes in chapter iii. 10-12; though the time for the manifestation of it was not yet. Still, in His ever faithful government, the eyes of God were upon the righteous, and judgment would be the portion of the ungodly. While Christ was withdrawn from the scene, the righteous might be defamed (see chapter ii. 15; iii. 16; iv. 4), endure grief, suffer wrongfully; but it was better for them to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, inasmuch as Christ had "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And how great our gain in this if it involved for Him "being put to death in the flesh"! If He went to the cross, instead of to the throne of the kingdom, it was to accomplish that wonderful work by which, in all its perfection, we have been brought to God. A soul-salvation comes into view as the end of faith instead of temporal deliverance.

Being put to death in the flesh, He was "quickened by the Spirit." If He was not present in person, the Spirit was the witness of His glory as "gone into heaven" and to "the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him." The saved might be few and unbelief the prevailing state of the world. Not otherwise was it in the days of

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Noah, and with the testimony that was then rendered by the Spirit of Christ in that preacher of righteousness and prophet of coming judgment; for thus Peter presents the testimony of the prophets (chapter i. 11). As Christ was quickened, or made alive, in the Spirit, so by that same Spirit, though not then corporeally present any more than He was now, Christ went and preached to the spirits that were in prison. The reason of their being in prison is then given, "who sometime were disobedient when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." In those very days, and by the testimony thus rendered by the Spirit in Noah, He had said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

Here I note that there is nothing said of the disembodied spirit of Christ going to the prison. The terms used exclude any reference to the human spirit of the Lord; and what is stated only applies to Him as and when made alive by the Spirit. Nor is there a word about His going there, whether disembodied or not. Neither is it said in the passage that the spirits were in prison when the preaching took place. The importing of these ideas into it have really made the difficulty. Taking the passage simply as it stands, it will be seen how consistent the reference is with the facts as recorded in Genesis vi., and with the

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way Peter has already spoken of the Spirit's testimony in the prophets.

But having been led to refer to the deluge, he carries the instruction further: "While the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved through water." The fewness of the saved then, as in Peter's day, did not make the deliverance less real. In the ark they were saved through the storm of divine judgment. It was death to all that were exposed to it. "Which figure also now saves you, [even] baptism," as it must be read. What would have been nothing but everlasting ruin and death for us, Christ, whom we confess in baptism, has gone into for us, and we are saved through it. Only the apostle will not have it as the mere ordinance—the putting away the filth of the flesh—"but the demand as before God of a good conscience," as it reads more truly; that is, what a really exercised conscience demands to make it good, the resurrection of Jesus Christ—the wonderful proof to us that the sins that He suffered for are gone for ever.

But this is just what ensures the manifestation of the government of God as to those who reject the Saviour, and speak evil of the little band that followed a Christ who suffered for us in the flesh. He suffered that we might have the weapon of His death to wield against a life of self-pleasing in the flesh. They would have to "give account to

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Him that is ready to judge both the quick and the dead" (chapter iv. 5).

If the question were asked by those who, from their acquaintance with the Old Testament, were more familiar with the judgment of the living, How make the dead accountable? the answer flows from what precedes. The testimony rendered to them when alive put all alike on the same ground of responsibility to answer to God for their conduct in the flesh—save (and hence the "but") as any might have received the testimony—and then by a life received according to God in the power of the Spirit they were delivered from their whole state in the flesh, and would never come into judgment.

The solution of any difficulty felt in the passage lies in what is so simply consistent with the testimony of all Scripture. But it is extraordinary that, even where this is not seen, anyone should have consented to an interpretation of the passage that involves that from among all the departed these very hardened men of Noah's day should be singled out to have Christ preach to them after His death, men who had been warned and borne with so long, and as to whom God expressly put a limit to His long-suffering. No such doctrine is to be found in Scripture any more than, as we have seen, in the passage before us.

J. A. T.

## OVERCOMING.

ASTRONOMERS tell us that the earth is an insignificant speck in the universe, a mere dot, so to speak, in illimitable space. It was here, nevertheless, the great question of good and evil was to be resolved; and in the accomplishment of this, it was not enough that the nature of evil, as irremediably opposed to good, should be demonstrated, but that it should be manifested as antagonistic to God revealed in infinite goodness, and inimical to the creature whom He would bless. With this, the earth should be redeemed from the hand of a usurper, the originator of evil; for there God once saw everything "very good," as come forth from His creative hand. The Son of God was manifested that He should undo the works of the devil. In the achievement of this end there was necessarily *conflict*. Accordingly we read that when that glorious Person entered the arena, at the outset of His public service, He *overcame* the adversary (Luke xi. 22). He bound the "strong man armed," preparatory to spoiling his goods. That was in the wilderness. Subsequently, at the cross, He annulled the strong man. The Son of God took part of flesh and blood, "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."

One of the fundamental blessings of Christianity is the participation of believers in the fruits of the Saviour's victory. So God says (Rev. xxi. 7): "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." One can well understand how such words could apply to the only perfect Man, God's beloved Son; and a timid soul might well be supposed to shrink from appropriating them. There can be no doubt, however, that they apply to believers; indeed, *overcoming* in the scripture quoted stands in contrast to *fearfulness* and *unbelief*, which we see in verse 8. Our God counts upon full confidence in His goodness towards us. His grace would place us in association with Christ—a figure of which we may reverently perceive in the scene upon the tempest-tossed Sea of Galilee, when Jesus slept. Awakened, He rebuked the disciples for just the two things God holds in reprobation in Revelation xxi. The Lord said: "Why are ye so *fearful*? How is it that ye have *no faith*?" (Mark iv. 40). Overcoming, we may therefore conclude, necessitates confidence in God.

"But," says one, "I find evil around and within so tryingly assertive, sinful inclinations constantly arising, my ways in the past so reprehensible, that I dare not think of being associated with the perfect Christ, of being on terms of peace with God, or of regarding myself as in any sense an overcomer—I *feel* so guilty." There *is*, never-

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theless, a point in which even a convicted sinner is at one with God—*he justifies God*. One of the greatest proofs of unrepentant man's alienation from his Creator is, that he assumes to prove God inconsistent and unjust in His dealings. But the sinner who comes to himself can say, with David and Paul, God is justified in His sayings (and doings), and overcomes when he (in the proud and presumptive reasonings of unregenerate man) is judged. God alone is righteous. His holiness—hatred of sin—must sooner or later be acknowledged by all. Well it is when a soul *appreciates* God's holiness and righteousness now—when God's justice is owned in the condemnation of the guilty. It is no doubt some sense of this which makes one hesitate to appropriate God's offers of blessing; but it is much more the folly of unbelief which Satan uses, to cause hesitancy. A sinner is not more regardful of propriety than God; and if *He* offers blessing, we may be quite sure *He intends* it, and offers it upon righteous grounds. So holy is *He* that *He* unsheathed His sword against Jesus when *He* stood judicially identified with sinners at the cross; but *He* is righteous, and, in consequence, has raised His Son from the dead, when *He* had met every just demand, to God's infinite satisfaction. In *righteousness*, therefore, not merely in *grace*, *He* can, and does now accredit to the sinner, who believes in Jesus, the full value of the Saviour's work; so that the

believer, as God now regards him, is invested in unassailable righteousness (Rom. iii. 22). Whatever, therefore, *feelings* may assert to the contrary, the believer need no longer hesitate to take his place in association with Christ, and to enjoy the fruits of His victory. God is a just God and a Saviour. He is the Saviour-God. Salvation represents what God effects in behalf of men; and, this being accepted, *overcoming* is what He looks for from responsive hearts, when he graciously gives us a place of testimony to Himself here.

The Epistle to the Romans is the divine treatise on the great subject of God's justification of the sinner; and every believer knows something of the precious eighth chapter, and of the almost equally precious twelfth. The former is the charter of our liberty; the latter, the law of our practice. In the former God is seen on our side against the enemy. The challenge goes forth: "If God be for us, who against us?" This gives courage, so that we may be on His side against evil. In the latter (chap. xii.) it is said: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Evil may be Satanic in its persistent antagonism; but it is met by equally persistent reliance on divine grace which shields us from the foe. "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Those who have grown strong in the continued realisation of their own weakness, and in a true sense of depend-

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ence on God, are denominated "young men." To such John says: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God *abideth in you*, and ye have overcome the Wicked One." But he warns them against *the world*.

In conflict with the world, as in other conflicts, Christ is Leader. He says, "I have overcome the world." Satan sometimes presents the world in a religious guise to entrap the unwary. He mingles some Christian truths with pagan sentiments and philosophical reasonings, all emanating from the corrupt mind of man: and the apostle regarded the propagators of these deceptions as *antichrists*. Children of God were brought face to face with such teaching; but they had "an unction from the Holy One"—an anointing, the Spirit of God, in fact—which enabled them to discern its true character and to judge it. Accordingly the apostle can say: "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them. . . . *They* are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

But "the world" may be presented in ways still more insidious, appealing to sentiments regarding one's country, kindred, and father's house, refined and cultivated tastes, natural and perhaps apparently harmless companionships. But whatever the form in which the world appeals to the child of God, he must remember that Christ, with whom he boasts association, was

rejected by the unanimous consent of unregenerate men—whether refined or coarse, high or low, rich or poor. In submitting to rejection, notwithstanding His many claims upon the people's recognition, notwithstanding royal descent, wisdom, grace, gentleness, and other virtues—not to speak of divine power and glory—all of which entitled Him to an exalted place amongst men, He passed through this world utterly unaffected by its pretentious fascinations, and could say to those only too liable to be overborne by them: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "He was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by resurrection from the dead"—God's answer to a world which could not appreciate Him, cast Him out and crucified Him in spite of, yea *because* of His perfections. And all who enjoy a true sense of His glory, who know what participation with Him on the other side of death means, will assuredly care little for the foibles with which Satan holds worldlings enslaved—human hearts entertained, not to say satisfied, at a distance from God. Hence the apostle can say in almost the closing words of his epistle: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

J. R. K.

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

STALYBRIDGE.—2 Thess. ii. 13.—We do not look upon “sanctification of the Spirit” in this passage as a thing of gradual growth—“progressive sanctification,” as it is sometimes called—but rather that efficacious act of the Spirit by which we are separated once for all from the unbelieving world of which we were once an integral part. Being born of the Spirit, we are also, at the same time and by the same powerful energy, set apart for God, to be His for evermore. Added to this there is “the belief of the truth,” for faith necessarily accompanies this great spiritual work. The ends in view are “salvation” and “the obtaining of glory,” even that of our Lord Jesus Christ. The latter is still to come, and the former, too, in its fullest result, though, needless to say, soul-salvation is already ours.

L.—The great gift of the Holy Spirit assuredly follows faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins. Acts x. 42–45 is a case in point, and Ephesians i. 13 fully confirms it. We are not aware of any scripture which calls upon us to pray for the Holy Spirit *since the day of Pentecost*. Acts viii. 15 does not really contravene what we say. For remark, the Samaritan believers are not said to have prayed for the Holy Spirit themselves. “Peter and John . . . prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” Nor was He given without the laying on of their hands. But a special reason for all this makes the case wholly exceptional. There was, as you know, great and long-standing jealousy between the Jews and Samaritans. But Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the Lord confirmed the word with signs following. Would the Church at Jerusalem frankly recognise these Samaritans as their brethren and one with them

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in Christ? It was more than doubtful. Would the Samaritans suppose that as rivals of the Jews in past days they might still remain independent of them, though they were all sharers in the common salvation? It was more than likely. Behold, then, the wisdom of God! The gift of the Spirit—the great characteristic of Christianity—should be given to the Samaritans through the laying on of the hands of the apostles Peter and John, sent down expressly from Jerusalem. And the gift should only be thus given. Thus the Church at Jerusalem should formally own Samaria, and the Samaritans learn that they were not independent of the others—they were one in Christ. These peculiar circumstances, therefore, preclude our taking this case as having any bearing on the point you raise. As to Acts iv. 31, it is not said that the gathered disciples prayed even to be filled with the Holy Spirit, though we believe this might be justly done. Their prayer, recorded in the preceding verses, makes no allusion to it whatever. But it is stated that having prayed “they were all filled.” Moreover, there is a difference between our body being the temple of the Holy Spirit and our being filled. The former is the privilege of all believers, but we cannot say that the latter is true of all.

A BROTHER.—The personality of the Holy Spirit is a cardinal fact of Christianity, and is fully and blessedly borne witness to in the Holy Scriptures. For example, in John xvi. 13, 14, He is said to come, to guide, to hear, to speak, to show, to receive, to glorify. Observe, too, that the personal pronoun is used with each verb. *He* comes, *He* guides, *He* hears, *He* speaks, *He* shows, *He* receives, *He* glorifies. Surely an influence cannot be thus spoken of. So in Acts xv. 28 we read, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost.” In Acts xiii. 2, “The Holy Ghost said, Separate *Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I* have

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called them." Are Christ's servants separated unto an influence, and does an influence call and send forth after this manner? Again, in Ephesians iv. 30 we are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Can we grieve, cause sorrow, inflict pain if a mere influence be in question? See also 1 Corinthians ii. 10-14, a most remarkable passage indeed. Scripture is as clear as noonday. But if our own thoughts and reasonings are allowed to set Scripture aside, there is no telling to what depths of infidelity we may fall. Perhaps a small pamphlet entitled *The Comforter*, to be had of our publisher, might be useful. Price 2d.

H. E. M. B.—If a Christian couple are denied the privilege of Breaking Bread with others through infirmity, they can, nevertheless, be with them in spirit in the fullest, happiest way. In our judgment they should be thankful and content with that. The wish to partake of the Lord's Supper in their own room by themselves seems to us an undue craving after the form. Better to accept what their infirmities entail and count on divine grace for spiritual sustainment. If any think otherwise, well, to their own Master they stand or fall.

R. W.—The judgment of the Great White Throne concerns the unsaved dead alone. The believer will never stand before it, but whether he will witness that solemn assize is a matter about which we think it wise to be silent. Scripture, so far as we know, does not say.

J. W.—The confirmation spoken of in Acts xiv. 22, xv. 32, 41, was not a religious rite or ceremony, nor was it accompanied by the laying on of apostolic hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Confirming the souls of the disciples" is to strengthen, settle, establish them—for such is the meaning of the term—by the ministry of the Word. Acts xv. 32, with its preceding context, places this beyond dispute. First, Judas and Silas were *not* apostles, yet they

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"exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." Second, they did so by their establishing ministry, according to verse 22, expounding by word of mouth the short epistle of which they were the bearers. Third, "the brethren which were of the Gentiles of Antioch" had long since received the gift of the Spirit. Such confirmation, then, as we read about in the Scriptures "the souls of the disciples" constantly need. As to new birth and faith, about which you inquire, are they not two sides of the same divine operation—the former being God's side and the latter ours? Are they not simultaneous as a blow and the pain it gives?

J. E.—You will gain but little comfort from subjecting yourself to constant scrutiny to see whether you are in truth a believer, and therefore a saved man. It is the *outward* look of faith to Christ that brings the blessing. You need no one to convince you that you are a sinner, and you need nothing beyond the assurance of the Scriptures that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The Holy Spirit awakens within us the consciousness of needs and begets desires which find their full answer in Christ alone. We flee from self to Him—

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in Thee I find."

Commit yourself to Him *now*, and rest assured that none are ever cast out. His love is greater than your sin, and His pardoning grace is not exhausted yet.

A. B. B.—1 Cor. vii. 14.—Compare the passage with Ezra x. and the closing verses of Nehemiah and the meaning will be plain. The children of such parents were not to be counted "unclean" as in those old days. But though called "holy," they are only positionally so, and inward holiness is not implied. It is the contrast between the position of such under Law and Christianity. For an answer to your other question see Acts xvi. 15, 33, and 1 Corinthians i. 16.

## FEET-WASHING.

**"These things I command you, that ye love one another."**

JOHN XV. 17.

THE apostle John is the only one of the four evangelists who omits all reference to the Lord's Supper. But he records what none of the others record, viz. the Lord's washing His disciples' feet. With reference to the supper, we often hear the words "This do in remembrance of Me" referred to as the one request the Lord made of His own ere He left them. But is there not another, just as definite and commanding, contained in the words "I have left you an example that ye should do as I have done to you"? Important as the Lord's Supper is, feet-washing is not less so. Without it the former becomes little more than an empty piece of ritual.

In order to understand the subject of feet-washing, we must first see what the Lord's own act involves, and then, that He did it as an example to us.

The Lord was going away. "His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." But He was leaving His own here. He washes their feet that they may have part with Him. For Jesus knew "that the Father had given all things into His hands." Such was

His love to His own that He would see that they had the present enjoyment of what the Father had thus given Him. What a testimony to the love of Christ! No wonder it says "He loved them unto the end." Not only to the end of the time He was with them, and unto the end of all time, and throughout eternity, but in intensity as well as duration His love went to the very furthest limits that love could go. He could not do more than give them part with Himself. His love would not permit Him to do less.

This He would accomplish by feet-washing. We must not connect feet-washing with sin. It is to remove the defilement we contract apart from actual sin, so that we may be consciously near the Lord, and thus be comforted and refreshed. It is that, like John, we may lean our head upon the bosom of Jesus. That is the effect of it.

But if such is the Lord's love to us, He would have us manifest the same love one toward another. "For I have given you an example," He says, "that ye should do as I have done to you." "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." We are to serve one another as our Master serves us. And from the same cause and for the same end. The cause is love; the end that we may have part with one another even as we have part with Him. Does He not

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say, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"? Whatever the Lord had received from the Father He wanted to share; and whatever we have received from the Lord we ought to share. All the comfort and refreshment He imparts to us, as He reveals Himself to us, and communicates to us that heavenly store, which is all His own, we should seek to pass on to others.

How blessed to be comforting and refreshing one another! This is the thought we wish to emphasise in regard to feet-washing. No doubt there is what is removed, viz. the defilement we contract as passing through such a world as we are in. But there is, above and beyond this, the bringing in of the blessed sense of all that the Lord is to us and that we are to one another through His grace. If we are only near enough to the Lord and keeping the new commandment He has given us, our very presence may afford comfort and cheer. Some little act of lowly service, or a few simple words, that we scarcely thought anything about, may prove to be feet-washing. The apostle Paul could say of Onesiphorus, "For he oft *refreshed* me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently, and found me." Here we find a humble disciple could refresh an apostle. We are not told what he

said, but there was something at the back of that visit which spoke to the great servant's heart. So much so that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he has left it on record. Onesiphorus little knew that he was doing a service that day which would be remembered for all time. It was feet-washing. "He oft refreshed me," the apostle tells us. And was not this very comfort just what the apostle always sought, both to bestow and receive? Writing to the Romans, he says, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Rom. i. 11, 12).

How large a place "comfort" fills in the Scriptures! God Himself is spoken of as the "God of all comfort." The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. It is said of the early Church that, "walking in the fear of the Lord and the *comfort* of the Holy Ghost," they "were multiplied." Twice over the apostle tells the Thesalonians to comfort one another. Are we acting in accordance with this? We do well to ask ourselves this question, for sometimes we are engaged in an occupation very different from feet-washing. Instead of removing the soils of the wilderness, we only increase them; and in place of ministering comfort we only irritate and annoy.

R. E.

## THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

**"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,  
ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."**

1 COR. xi. 26.

**L**ET us remark some of the thoughts of the Spirit in connection with this ordinance.

1st. He links the affections with it in the strongest way. It was the same night on which Jesus was betrayed that He left this memorial of His sufferings and of His love. As the paschal lamb brought to mind the deliverance which the sacrifice offered in Egypt had procured for Israel, thus the Lord's Supper called to mind the sacrifice of Christ. He is in the glory, the Spirit is given; but they were to remember Him. His offered body was the object before their hearts in this memorial.

Take notice of this word "*Remember.*" It is not a Christ as He now exists, it is not the realisation of what *He is*: that is not a remembrance—His body is now glorified. It is a remembrance of what He was on the cross. It is a body slain, and blood shed, not a glorified body. It is remembered, though by those who are now united to Him in the glory into which

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He is entered. As risen and associated with Him in glory, they look back to that blessed work of love, and His love in it which gave them a place there. They drank also of the cup in remembrance of Him. In a word, it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now.

It is the remembrance of Christ Himself. It is that which attaches to Himself—it is not only the value of His sacrifice, but attachment to Himself, the remembrance of Himself. The apostle then shows us, if it is a dead Christ, who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning—the *death* of the *Lord*. How many things are comprised in that He who is called the Lord had died! What love! what purposes! what efficacy! what results! The Lord gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death. At the same time it is the end of God's relations with the world on the ground of man's responsibility, except the judgment. This death has broken every link—has proved the impossibility of any. We show forth this death until the rejected Lord shall return to establish new bonds of association by receiving us to Himself to have part in them. It is this which we proclaim in the ordinance when we keep it. Besides this, it is in itself a declaration that the blood on which the new covenant is founded has

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been already shed; it was established in this blood. I do not go beyond that which the passage presents; the object of the Spirit of God here is to set before us, not the efficacy of the death of Christ, but that which attaches the heart to Him in remembering His death, and the meaning of the ordinance itself. It is a dead, betrayed Christ whom we remember. The offered body was, as it were, before their eyes at this supper. The shed blood of the Saviour claimed the affections of their heart for Him. They were guilty of despising these precious things, if they took part in the supper unworthily. The Lord Himself fixed our thoughts there in this ordinance, and in the most affecting way, at the very moment of His betrayal.

But if Christ attracted the heart thus to fix its attention there, discipline was also solemnly exercised in connection with this ordinance. If they despised the broken body and the blood of the Lord by taking part in it lightly, chastisement was inflicted. Many had become sick and weak, and many were fallen asleep, that is, had died. It is not the being worthy to partake that is spoken of, but the partaking in an unworthy manner. Every Christian, unless some sin had excluded him, was worthy to partake because he was a Christian. But a Christian might come to it without judging himself, or appreciating as he ought that which the supper brought to

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his mind, and which Christ had connected with it. He did not discern the Lord's body; and he did not discern, did not judge, the evil in himself. God cannot leave us thus careless. If the believer judges himself, the Lord will not judge him; if we do not judge ourselves, the Lord judges; but when the Christian is judged, he is chastened of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world. It is the government of God in the hands of the Lord who judges His own house; an important and too much forgotten truth. No doubt the result of all is according to the counsels of God, who displays in it all His wisdom, His patience, and the righteousness of His ways. But this government is real. He desires the good of His people in the end; but He will have holiness—a heart whose condition answers to that which he has revealed, and He has revealed Himself. Is there failure in this? Communion is lost, and with it the power to glorify God. But if we judge ourselves there is restoration; the heart being cleansed from the evil by judging it, and communion is restored. If we do not judge ourselves, God must interpose, and correct and cleanse us by discipline—discipline which may even be unto death. (See Job xxxiii., xxxvi.; 1 John v. 16; James v. 14, 15.)

J. N. D.

## WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”—ECCLES. xi. 6.

**T**HIS verse speaks to us in the plainest, simplest way. It says to each of us, “Use any and every opportunity which the Lord is pleased to give thee. Seek to redeem the time, for thou hast but one life here on earth, and that a very brief one as compared with eternity ; therefore make good use of it.” Oh, the blessing that results from attending to this ! On every occasion, under all circumstances, after we have sought the Lord’s blessing and are in a proper state of heart, let us drop a word for Christ here and there and everywhere, and after we have spoken it, bring it before God again, and again, and again, in prayer.

When the reaping time comes, and we find ourselves in glory, that child for whom we prayed will be found there. That aged cripple, whom we met incidentally on the road and to whom we spoke, will be in heaven. That person in consumption, whom we visited every day for a long time, and who gave little or no heed at all to what we had to say, will be found in glory, having at last laid to heart what we spoke so

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many times to him, and though we had no information about it, God blessed our word. Oh, the multitude of instances we shall find at last when our work, labour, or service has, contrary to natural expectation, been blessed!

Often and often it appears to us that the many opportunities made use of have been lost. Yet it will be seen that all was owned of God, all put down in His book of remembrance. Our labour, after all, was not in vain, and the reaping time has come.

But let us carefully see to it that, when the reaping time comes, there will be something to reap, because we have been *labouring*. If there be no labour, if there be a careless, thoughtless walk, without prayer and crying to God mightily, then let us not be surprised if, when the harvest time comes, there is no reaping, as far as we are concerned. But if there has been the crying mightily to God, if there has been the sowing, if there has been the laying out of ourselves for God, most assuredly we shall reap.

*"For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that."* We are ignorant of what God is about to do, because He does not tell us if at this particular time He will own our labour and service or not. Therefore our business is at all times to seek to lay out ourselves for God, for, as I have already said, *we have but one life, and this one life is very brief.*

## THE HOLINESS OF GRACE. 151

*"Or whether they both shall be alike good."* God may bless, not merely at one time, but both times. In the morning the work may be commenced; in the evening the Holy Ghost may deepen it, and God may bring double blessing out of our poor, feeble service.

Oh, let us seek to attend to this precious exhortation!

G. M.

## THE HOLINESS OF GRACE.

**T**HE well-known section of Holy Scripture, in Hebrews xii., which begins with the statement: "Ye are not come unto the mount that . . . burned with fire . . . but ye are come to Mount Sion," ends with the solemn words: "Our God is a consuming fire"!

Sinai's burning mount has given place, for the Christian, to the royal grace of Mount Sion and to all that connects itself with the present dispensation of grace, and yet our God—the Christian's God, the God revealed to us in these last days, and who "has spoken to us in His Son," is a consuming fire!

If, therefore, Sinai struck terror into the surrounding multitudes, and witnessed, by its fire, the holiness of the Lord, so, too, does our Mount Sion, fragrant as it is of compassion and pardon, declare the holiness of the grace that it freely ministers.

True, the worshipper is not consumed. The believer is a child of God, and enjoys a relationship which at least secures him from all possible judgment. Still, while this is divinely true, the ways of the Christian are tested.

There is such a thing as Christian responsibility. We are bound to fulfil relationship aright. Every position has its responsibilities; and just as grace puts us into positions of favour and dignity, so does it expect us to respond to the nature of such. Yet, being "under grace," failure does not involve judgment, nor the condemnation that rests on the sinner, but it fully recognises every defect, and thus the offender suffers in time. "Our God is a consuming fire."

The believer is dealt with in such a way that he must judge evil in his own conduct; he lives before God; he learns His holiness, and gladly allows the withering up of all that is false and unholy in his walk and ways. Grace is never unholy, nor can it allow unholiness in the saints. If the failing saint does not judge himself, then God takes him in hand and governmentally corrects him, so that he may not be "condemned with the world."

In the light of this the consuming fire which connects itself with Mount Sion is as intelligible as the burning fire of Mount Sinai.

God in law or in grace is equally most holy.

J. W. S.

## EVIL SPEAKING.

**"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."—GAL. v. 15.**

**T**HIS text touches a very grievous evil that exists amongst the children of God. What we refer to is making disparaging remarks about another behind his back, or even worse, giving ear to reports which we allow to affect our conduct towards another. How often this is the case! How often one Christian has not been able to account for the coldness and reserve displayed towards him or her! Some time ago a Christian became painfully aware that those who formerly had been on friendly terms were holding aloof altogether, or only extending to her the barest recognition. She could not understand why. No reason was given. At last the situation became so painful that it was spoken about. This led to an investigation of the whole matter. It revealed the fact that false reports had been spread and accepted, and those who had received them had allowed their minds to become evil affected towards the one implicated.

Now it cannot be too strongly stated that such a condition of things is not only altogether unworthy of the Church of God, but positively

sinful. I have no right to allow my mind to be prejudiced against another, or my conduct towards another in the slightest degree influenced by what I hear, until I have given the individual concerned the opportunity of being heard. This is according to a *divine* law. "Doth our law judge any man," said Nicodemus, "before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" And yet how often we have broken this law. We have listened to accusations or unfavourable reports, and we have sat in judgment and passed sentence without ever going to the person concerned. But it may be replied, "We had it on the authority of one or two we felt we could trust; and does it not say, 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established'?" Yes, it does. But in the first place they must be *witnesses*; and in many cases things are said which cause pain and sorrow, if not irreparable harm, by those who are only expressing their opinion or repeating what they have heard, and who are not witnesses in the true sense at all. In the second place, even if they are *bonâ fide* witnesses, their witness is of no value unless given in the presence of the accused. What judge on the bench would ever think of listening to witnesses, however credible in themselves, except in the presence of the party charged with the offence?

It may safely be asserted, then, that we are acting in such a way as to directly infringe a divine

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law when we allow our minds to be in the smallest degree influenced by what we hear about another. If we have not time to investigate, or are disinclined to approach the individual concerning what has been said about him or her, then we are bound in obedience to God's Word to dismiss the matter entirely from our minds. Otherwise we shall not dwell in God's holy hill; for he who dwells there is one who "*backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour*" (Ps. xv.).

It has been said that—

"Evil is wrought by want of thought  
As well as want of heart."

And no doubt the mischief to which reference is here made often results from want of thought, but it cannot be overlooked that it arises also from want of heart. If we can listen to a report which is in any way detrimental to another, and allow it to affect us, and perhaps pass it on to others, it proves there is a defect in us somewhere. And we believe the defect is not far from the region of the heart. If a disparaging report came to us of one we dearly loved, how we should resent it! If, then, we do not resent it, what does it prove?

Who can tell all the sorrow that has been caused, all the estrangement between brethren,

all the aloofness where there should be hearty co-operation, and sometimes lifelong separation, because of backbiting and taking up a reproach against our neighbour? The poet has said that mercy is twice blessed. But backbiting, which knows no mercy, is thrice cursed. It curses him who does it, the one who listens to it, and the person who suffers from it. How differently the Lord Jesus Christ acted! When John sent from prison that message of inquiry, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" it was no doubt a marked failure. But does the Lord dwell on it to others? Just the opposite. Instead of even pointing it out, He seizes the opportunity to enlarge upon John's greatness, both as a man and a servant. This is the divine way of acting; may it also be ours. It is said that while the Old Testament saints are often referred to in the New Testament, God never mentions one of their failures.

Do we not need to be most careful in the way we repeat things, and before we do so, ought we not to be quite sure we have the whole of the story? A single incident taken out of its proper setting may often look very questionable, which, if looked at in conjunction with all its attendant circumstances, might call for no remark whatever.

Some of the best and brightest among the saints of God have at one time been the most

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abused. Even the Lord Himself was a sign which should be spoken against. A well-known servant of the Lord some years ago was in a rather wild part of Scotland, and in need of a night's lodging. On crossing a field he met a lad. He said to him, "Can you tell me if there are any Christians in these parts?" But a vacant stare was the only answer. "Are there any believers about here?" "B'l'evers," said the boy, "what be they?" How to find out what he wanted to know was a puzzle to the evangelist. At last an idea struck him. "Are there any *hypocrites* in the place?" he inquired. "Oh yes," replied the boy; "there is a person living over there; she is reckoned to be the biggest hypocrite hereabout." The servant of the Lord made his way to the cottage. He found what he wanted. The inmate was a bright and earnest Christian.

God grant that instead of bringing in the grit that causes friction, and annoyance, and pain, we may be occupied in removing it. May we say with Abigail, "Let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." If David was so much to Abigail that she was prepared to wash the feet of his servants, surely we shall be ready to wash the feet of those who are dear to a greater than David.

R. E.

## OVERCOMING.

REV. ii., iii.

IN a previous article we considered overcoming as maintaining an attitude of faithfulness to God, in opposition to the flesh, Satan, and the world. The sides in the conflict were unmistakable, the issues clearly marked; and children of God, by their position and conduct, were distinguishable from children of the wicked one. Under the new circumstances, brought about by Satan's insidious craft, there is only too much room for such questions as: Who are anti-Christian teachers? and, morally considered, In what does "the world" consist? Formerly John could say of false teachers: "They went out from us, because they were not of us"; but now the mass of professing Christians have succumbed to the influences of the world opposed to God, and anti-Christian teachers have taken up an established position in the Church (so-called). The issues have become obscured, conflict is at a discount, and the true people of God find themselves in greatly magnified difficulties. Faithfulness to God is most sorely tried when "Christians" (many true believers among them) *temporise*; claiming the

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benefits which Christianity confers, while shunning the reproach of Christ.

The addresses from the Lord to the seven Churches of Asia give us in full terms His mind concerning the great decline, even in that early day of the Church's history on earth. Those who carefully study the Scriptures perceive in these seven addresses a kind of prospective history of the decline. This view is easily verified; but it may suffice here to point out that as Ephesus presents initial departure from *first love*, the true spring of devoted service, so Laodicea exhibits the final stage of the Church's history, namely, utter indifference to the Lord—a fast-developing condition—characteristic, in a broad sense, of Christendom in the days in which we live.

It is not the purpose of the present article to discuss the successive stages of decline. Our desire is rather to dwell upon the spiritual qualities requisite for overcoming. But we cannot turn from the lamentable climax presented in the end of Revelation iii. without noticing the persistent, never-failing grace of our blessed Lord—the resource of every tried soul—all-sufficient, however perplexing his circumstances. Christ is outside, excluded by man's pretentious self-sufficiency from the assembly at Laodicea. Yet He presents Himself to *even one* who may be in the appreciation of His goodness and worth: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear

My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me."

In the address to Ephesus allusion is made to the blissful occupation which awaits the Church, as the Bride of the Lamb. She shall eat of "the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The blessedness is revealed in order that believers may live in the anticipation of it, and find it to be more than compensation for privations incurred for Christ's sake, while awaiting His advent here. But the blessed Author and Giver of it, who Himself anticipates the joy of sharing with His own the delights of the heavenly paradise, has to notice with rebuke the assembly's decline from its first love; and only to the overcomer—the one who can appreciate the prospect—is the Lord, so to speak, *free* to unfold what is of such evident delight to Him. How much believers lose, *now*, through living at a distance from Him!

In the address to Smyrna the Lord promises to the overcomer a crown of life. He intends it as an encouragement to garrison him against the prevalent tendency to lower the standard of profession in view of persecution. The apostle James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that *love Him*." No doubt all true believers love Him, and all will reign with Him;

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but only those who hold on their course in face of persecution, inspired by a deep sense of His love, can have much appreciation of the prospect of a crown of life.

When the further stage of decline, indicated in Pergamos, was reached, the assembly had accepted the favour of the world and come under its rule. The faithful one in such circumstances became a nonentity even to his fellows; and only the Lord could appreciate, perhaps even understand, him. Secret intercourse with the Lord sustained the tried one, the overcomer; to him, therefore, the Lord speaks of eating of the *hidden manna*—the overcomer knew what this meant; and of “the white stone,” token of the Lord’s approval in his difficult circumstances.

In Thyatira the profession of Christianity reached the point corresponding, as regards condition and time, to that known as “the dark ages.” The professing Church accepted from Satan the power in this world which Christ Himself, and the Church when true to Him, had refused: the Church became a world-ruler. The faithful soul would chafe under such conditions, nay, more, would perhaps suffer persecution and death under the misappropriated power. But His time to rule would come, when the claims of Christ in this world would be truly acknowledged; and the Lord assures the overcomer of this (Rev. ii. 26, 27).

Sardis did not use to the full what it had "received and heard." The Scriptures (as at the Reformation) were restored to believers, capable of perfecting and thoroughly furnishing them unto all good works (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17); but the Lord did not find the works of Sardis perfect before God. There were some, however, who had profited, who had not defiled their garments—"hating the garment spotted by the flesh"; who adopted the principle of separation, too, keeping themselves "unspotted from the world" (James i. 27). Such would be overcomers and could understand the promise: "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy"; even as the Lord gives the definite assurance to the overcomer in this address: "The same shall be clothed in white raiment."

The Lord has only approval for the Church in Philadelphia. In the midst of general defection it stood alone. In this sense it was, therefore, an overcoming assembly. But the Lord addresses the overcomer individually; and judging from His promises to the overcomer, we must conclude that the approved one must have been very fully in the Lord's mind—must have had God's interests on earth much at heart. Only one so characterised could assume to profit by such an assurance as: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God." One often thinks of David's ardent desires in Psalm xxvii. 4 and cxxxii. 1 in

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this connection. The grace of our blessed Lord comes strikingly out in the reiterated expression "My God" in Revelation iii. 12. By it, He would give the overcomer now to taste the privilege of association with Himself; and the promises of open identification with His God, the city of His God, and His own new name, are the scarcely questionable reflex of present moral features in the overcomer.

Laodicea has already been referred to. Former counterparts of the world's present boasted enlightenment, progress in civilisation, literature, science, fine arts, etc., so obtruded themselves upon the fascinated observation of professing Christians, that Christ was shut out: the glories of this age became paramount in Laodicea, as they are fast becoming in the present day. Sober-minded inquirers may therefore well ask, "Where is now to be seen the overcomer in the cause of Christ?" If such are found, they are considered to belong to the order of fools; but they, knowing that their day is coming, rest in the word of the Lord's assurance: "I will grant him to sit with Me in My throne: even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Several other references to overcoming are found in the book of Revelation, which have to do with the introduction of a new dispensation. God will establish His rights in this scene after the Church is taken away, and in doing so His

power will be manifested in judgments. But who is worthy to undertake this rôle for God? "The Lion of the tribe of Juda . . . hath prevailed (Gr., overcome) to open the book" of judgments. The tenor of God's way will not by-and-by be that of "grace beseeching," but of force compelling, though even in this part of Revelation there are those who overcome by faithfulness unto death (trusting in "the blood of the Lamb," xii. 11). That force opposed to force is to be the rule may be inferred from the opening scene (Rev. vi. 2), in which the warrior on a white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer (Gr., overcoming and to overcome). The two witnesses in chapter xi. are overcome by force, and satanic power operating in the Beast overcomes the saints in xiii. 7, though these all ultimately triumph (xx. 4). The final victory (overcoming) of the Lamb over all the powers of evil is recorded in chapter xvii. 14, and again in xix., preparatory to the grand closing scene of earth's dispensations in chapter xx. In this closing scene overcomers live and reign with Christ a thousand years, and thence pass into the eternal state, when God will be all in all, and overcomers will be in the full good of Revelation xxi. 3-7.

J. R. K.

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”—JOHN iii. 13.

“For David is not yet ascended into the heavens.”

ACTS ii. 34.

THESE texts have been recently sent us from two vastly different quarters. In one case they are quoted to support the theory that man has no existence apart from his body, so that when he dies he is done with till the resurrection day. And in the other to show that “even God’s saints do not go to heaven when they die.” Each thinks that these scriptures give countenance to what he believes.

Now we make bold to say that any doctrine, however bad, may receive the sanction of the Bible if we are allowed to tear texts out of their connection and use them without the slightest reference to what they are intended to teach. But it is not permitted unto us to do anything of the kind, and against this evil practice we enter our protest. No honest lover of the truth would follow it with deliberate design.

We are not concerned to refute in this paper the erroneous contention that the body is everything and man has no existence apart from it. Were that theory true, it would be hard to understand the apostle Paul when, after having been caught up into paradise, he relates his experience while there (2 Cor. xii.): “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,” says he. “*Out of the body*”! Why if the body were everything, if there be no spiritual existence apart from it, there is no room for any such

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language at all. "*Out of the body*" implies that a man may be out of it and yet not cease to be. For when "out of the body," if indeed he was out of it, God only knew, he saw "visions and revelations of the Lord" and heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Of course, there is one way out of the difficulty, and that is to boldly say that the apostle did not know what he was talking about, and that had he lived in our day and had had the advantage of sitting at the feet of some of our modern teachers he would not have indulged in these "fictions of human speech." Well, we are free to confess, even at the risk of being thought arrant simpletons, that we prefer the teaching of Paul to that of any leader in the anti-Christian school of the Christadelphians.

Nor do we enlarge on the second theory, that "God's saints do not go to heaven when they die." There is no need, seeing that in our March issue we published a paper on the subject, entitled "*Death and Afterwards*." In that paper we sought to prove—and trust with some measure of success—that God's saints when they die go to be with Christ, and if Christ be in heaven, then they go there, though a still fuller measure of blessedness awaits them at the resurrection of the just. But let us look at the two texts and see in what relation they actually stand.

In John iii., the Lord, in speaking to Nicodemus, enlarges on the New Birth and insists on the absolute and universal necessity of it. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now this was no new truth. It was to the reproach of this "ruler of the Jews"

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that he was in ignorance of it. "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" said the Lord. This master of Israel ought to have known them, for they were strikingly taught in Ezekiel xxxvi., xxxvii, and chapters so important should have been known and understood by him. The New Birth then had its place among the *earthly* things revealed in the ancient Jewish Scriptures. But the Lord was here as the Revealer of things *heavenly*. "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" He, like an instructed scribe, was going to bring out of His treasure things *new* and old. And who, save Himself, could declare these *heavenly* things? None. "No man hath ascended up to heaven" to search out heavenly things and bring back the story of them to earth. "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," He alone could declare these *heavenly* things. And, blessed be His name, He was here to declare them, as the remainder of this most wonderful chapter clearly shows. But, let me ask, what has this to do with departed spirits going to heaven or their not going there? What has it to do with the question of our having an existence or none apart from the body? Nothing at all! It has no more to do with these matters than the colour of your coat with the mountains of the moon. What business, then, has this text to be quoted for such a purpose?

But what about Acts ii. 34? Let the chapter be read and see whether the great subject of it is not the *resurrection* of Christ and His exaltation, together with the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now, in establishing the great fact of the resurrection, the importance

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of which it is impossible to exaggerate, there was not only the personal testimony of those who were eye-witnesses, but there was the witness also of the prophetic Scriptures. The apostle therefore adduces the Psalms of David. Now he shows that these quotations could not have been fulfilled in any other but Christ, David's Son and David's Lord. No gloss, no ingenious interpretation would avail to limit their application to David himself, even if any were disposed to make the attempt. "David is not yet ascended into the heavens."

Who is there so dull as not to see that *resurrection* is the truth engaging the thoughts of the apostle? David's sepulchre was with them, and there still lay the body of Israel's great king and prophet. He had not ascended into the heavens, for the departure of the disembodied spirits of the saints, even in the full blaze of Christian light and truth, is never called "*ascension*." To great David's greater Son, then, these Psalms referred. In Him they had their fulfilment. Christ alone had "ascended into the heavens," exalted by the right hand of God. His sacred body was no longer in the grave. It was not possible that He should be holden of death. He is risen and ascended, but of David this could not be said.

Once more we ask, What has this to do with our having no existence apart from the body or with our going or not going to heaven when we die? And again the answer must be, Nothing at all. Let us then beware of the doctrines of men, buttressed up by texts wrenched from their divinely appointed place—doctrines which apart from this unlawful support would totter and fall to the ground.

## NO CLASHING.

**M**ARTIN LUTHER, it is said, was once rash enough to call the Epistle of James an epistle of straw. He was wrong, no doubt, but we can easily divine his reason for saying so. Justification by Faith—the grand doctrine of the Reformation—had just broken through the clouds and mists of centuries, and shone like a star of the first magnitude on the spiritual horizon. To the great reformer the epistle of James seemed to becloud its glory. Therefore, in his eyes, for the moment, it was but of little worth. In that Luther was surely mistaken.

Every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable—the writings of James as much as the writings of Paul. Believing this, our ears are not assailed by a multitude of conflicting voices when, with reverent minds, we enter the vast Temple of Truth. It is no Babel. All is harmony there, for the voice of one Spirit alone is heard in its sacred courts.

That Spirit, speaking by Paul, says:—

**“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”** (Rom. iii. 28).

The same Spirit, speaking by James, says:—

**“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”** (James ii. 24).

To a casual reader these statements seem to

clash—of course they do not. But it often happens that in argument one person strenuously presses Paul to the ignoring of James, and another James to the ignoring of Paul. No solid good ever comes of that. We must hearken to what the Spirit says by both.

What is Paul about in the third chapter of Romans? He is proving that all classes and conditions of men without exception are in a state of hopeless guilt before God. Every mouth is stopped, all the world is guilty before Him, and there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Such is the verdict. Easy to read these words, and easier still to miss their meaning. Easy to scan the general statement, and easier still to elude its personal application. But if "every mouth is stopped," that means *mine*: if "all the world is guilty," that includes *me*. Do I realise this? Am I truly alive to my position? What is it? That of a prisoner at the bar, whose crimes have been proved up to the hilt. And he, unhappy man! knowing this, finds his mouth closed, having nothing to say in his own defence, nothing to plead in extenuation of his guilt. He can only stand in silence and await, with trembling, the judgment of the Court.

If this is indeed our case, and the case of all, what is to be done? From whence can we look for help? So far as our own resources are concerned, there is none—prison and punishment stare us in the face. It is at this juncture, when

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things are blackest, that Paul introduces the gospel—the glad tidings of free grace for guilty men. He shows us that God has set Jesus forth, a propitiation—or, rather, a mercy-seat—through faith in His blood. He is the Mediator. A just God on the one hand, and a guilty sinner on the other, find a meeting-place in Christ Jesus, whose blood has been shed at Calvary. And if I—the sinner—seeing in Jesus a sure refuge for the guilty, rest alone on His all-sufficient sacrifice, then not only am I justified from all things, but God Himself is my Justifier (Rom. iii. 26). Glorious truth! making the heart shout in its joy and gladness.

In this great and grand scheme of redemption “deeds of law” have no place, as our text (Rom. iii. 28) declares. For what are deeds or works of law? I answer, *Works done with a view to gain the favour of God.* “Dead works” they are called in Hebrews ix. 14. Such works are utterly opposed to grace, and it is to grace—the free, undeserved favour of God, for such is the meaning of grace—that we owe our deliverance from judgment incurred by our sins. One verse will place this beyond dispute. I quote it now:—

**“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work”** (Rom. xi. 6).

These contrary principles are thus shown to be mutually destructive.

Along with the thought that "works of law" are necessary to our salvation goes the idea that only by such works the favour of God can be *retained*. In that case our justification is only conditional, and we are justified, or, rather, shall be *if* we do this and that. Such doctrine—of which there is much in quarters where it is least suspected—Paul denounces as fatal, and against it the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians is directed. It is another gospel, which is not another; and he who preaches it, be he an angel from heaven, Paul says, "*Let him be accursed*" (Gal. i. 9). Strong language! Yes, indeed, but it shows the seriousness of the business. Let us take care and not treat it with levity. We shall be fools if we do.

But what about the words of James ii. 24? They seem to tell a different story. Not at all. There is no disagreement, not a hair's-breadth.

For what class of persons is it against whom the apostle is arguing? Persons whose religion consisted of words and nothing else. They boasted of having faith, but gave no evidence of it in their lives. What was the worth of that? A religion of words only is a religion of straw, worthless, deceiving those who possess it, and enriching no one. And to what does the apostle liken it? To one who sees a brother or sister naked or destitute of daily food, and who, instead of giving bread for the body, blankets

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for the bed, garments for the back, and coals to kindle a fire on the hearth, sends the ill-clad, starving soul away with a sackful of good wishes and nothing more! But will "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled"—battered words as they are—fill an empty stomach, clothe a naked back, and warm a man shivering with cold? Alone, there is no substance in them. "Even so, faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone." But faith, divinely given faith, is *never* alone. It is a living, active principle, always accompanied by good works, in which there is fruit for God. Such is the apostle's argument.

And he strengthens it by citing as examples Abraham and Rahab—two names that find a place among the honoured witnesses of the power of faith in Hebrews xi. But what lay behind Abraham's act and Rahab's? Faith, without which the deeds would never have been performed. Faith, I say, ever ready to show itself in suited conduct. Faith, full of life and energy—the antithesis of a corpse from which the spirit has fled, dead, motionless, and going to corruption (James ii. 26).

Does all this collide with Paul's teaching in Romans iii.? Impossible. Both wrote their epistles by inspiration of God, but in the passages under examination two different lines of truth are dealt with. Paul speaks of our justification *before God*, and argues that if the guilty and

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ungodly are to be justified, it must be on the principle of faith "without the deeds of the law." He shows that it flows from the grace of God, and meritoriously through the blood of Jesus. James, confronting the word-mongers, insists that justifying faith is a vital thing, not a matter of mere words, and that evidence of its genuineness must be given *before men* if men are to believe it. Thus is faith made perfect. God can read the heart, I cannot. If "a man *say* he hath faith," and wishes to be believed, he must give us evidence of it. Without this we decline to credit it as having any existence at all.

## MEET FOR THE INHERITANCE. NOT FIT FOR THE KINGDOM.

I WOULD place together two verses of Scripture, each of which is representative of a great line of truth, and which, in order that the mind may be correctly balanced on the facts of the perfect security of the believer on the one hand, and of the moral fitness of the disciple on the other, must be clearly contrasted. The contrast does not involve any contradiction.

1. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12).
2. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"—(Luke ix. 62).

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The first statement, viz. meetness for the inheritance, is absolute and unconditional; the second, viz. fitness for the kingdom, is strictly conditional. To look back from the plough demonstrates unfitness. The first is the fruit of God's pure and boundless grace. We render thanks to the Father for this stupendous blessing. The second, being wholly in the line of responsibility—holding the plough of service—is contingent on faithfulness on our part.

We must distinguish most carefully, therefore, between grace and responsibility, between relationship and service, between that which the Father has accomplished for us and that which we, in our place as servants, whatever the service be, should render to the Lord. Unless souls are established in grace, they cannot rightly appreciate the matter of response to the will of God. There must be confusion of thought. There is nothing so poorly apprehended as grace. We may possibly speak and sing very much about it, and may, sincerely enough, own that, but for the grace of God, our case were hopeless; yet to admit that grace is the sole and only ground of our faith and hope is, when fully tested, seldom the experience. There generally lurks in the heart a feeling that grace must be complemented by the fulfilment of responsibility. But this feeling discloses that very misapprehension of grace to which we refer, and indicates that the soul is not really delivered from law. It is

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unwittingly, perhaps, forming a kind of amalgamation between two irreconcilable principles. Fire and water agree as readily as grace and law! They refuse all coalition, and must be maintained as essentially separate. The principle of law is, that I make myself fit for God's holy presence; that of grace, that He does it for me. The first is an impossibility, no matter under what system tried; the second is of God and actual.

But it may be said, no one supposes that we are justified by the deeds of the law! Well, that is doubtless true enough in theory, for we very properly boast of justification by faith; but the *principle of law* is part of our very nature, and is well-nigh ineradicable. It is natural to us to do something, or feel something, or be something different from what we are, in order that we should please God. Quite natural, and most common all the world over, and witnessed to by every system of religion that was ever invented, but it is foreign to Christianity.

If there is one truth more insisted on than another in the New Testament, it is the absolutely and irretrievably lost condition of man; that he is not only guilty, but sinful, having no strength, nor indeed, the will to turn to God.

Hence the new birth is the *sine quâ non*, the grand necessity of entering the kingdom of God. Why a new birth—a new start—a something wholly fresh and *de novo*, if by any means the old could be made somehow to suffice?

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Ponder this foundation fact.

Further, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). He is "created anew in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 10), facts which set aside for ever the idea of improvement in the man of the first creation. And why new creation, if renovation of the old would do? New birth (not re-birth, as sometimes stated) and new creation place the seal of final condemnation on the creation that has preceded.

God begins anew. His purpose and grace in Christ Jesus are the origin of our calling and salvation, and this is expressly stated to be not according to our works (2 Tim. i. 9).

Hence everything is certain. Salvation is wholly of God, we having but committed the vile sins that gave it its occasion. "Vile sins?" Yes, and as sin is known in its exceeding sinfulness it is abhorred and repented of, so that the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and the grace of God become infinitely precious.

Grace, then, makes the believer meet for the inheritance, and grace alone. There can be no question of failure on God's part, nor need there be any fear on ours. It is not that "I shall reach heaven if I hold fast"; the word "*if*," meaning a condition to fulfil certain responsibilities, has no place in this line.

The inheritance is on the ground of grace. It is according to His purpose and grace in Christ

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Jesus, whilst fitness for the kingdom is the moral condition which takes its character from the relation in which grace has already set the true believer.

Are there, then, no responsibilities? Most assuredly there are, but they apply to the Christian as viewed on the ground of his profession, whether as a servant or a pilgrim.

It will thus be seen that grace and glory on the one hand and responsibility and reward on the other go together. They are co-relative. The commands, warnings, and exhortations of the word attach to the line of responsibility. And how valuable they are! Who that knows himself but feels the need of every direction, instruction, or warning that Scripture gives? He knows that he runs a race; he is consciously weak and easily turned aside, prone to look back and spoil his furrow, and possibly lose the prize on the coming day. This is all deeply serious, but he has no question as to the inheritance. That is settled. It is founded on grace. Saved to-day, he has no fear of being lost to-morrow; but, if saved now, he owns that the calling is holy, and he therefore seeks grace so that he should be as fit for the kingdom as he is made meet for the inheritance.

Thank God for His infinite grace. J. W. S.

## PREVAILING PRAYER.

“And King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.”

1 KINGS x. 13.

THE Queen of Sheba came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She had heard his fame in her own land and desired to see him of whom she had heard so much. So she set forth on a tedious journey, with her mind full of questions and problems hard to solve.

What a picture of a soul first coming to Christ! How many are the difficulties that then arise—difficulties relating to the question of sin, the holiness of God, the power of Satan, the judgment of God, and eternity that looms before us all—these trouble and perplex souls when first awakened, and all the wisdom of men fails to give peace, or solve the problems that demand solution. But when the gospel message, speaking of Jesus, falls upon the ear and reaches the heart, it arouses a desire to see and know the One of whom the gospel tells. And faith makes the journey, believing Him to be as good as His word, when He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

The Queen of Sheba had not been long in the

presence of King Solomon before all her hard questions were answered. And so it is with the one who comes to Jesus. For King Solomon is a figure of Him, raised from the dead, and in the glory. Let us bear that in mind. He is in the glory a real living Man, on the right hand of God, and in Him we shall find the solution of every question. He took the sinner's place upon the cross, and settled in His death, for those who trust in Him, every question that could arise between the soul and God. The fact of His resurrection and exaltation proves that these questions are settled, and now believing in God, who raised Him from the dead, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Queen of Sheba's difficulties were removed she could then look round on the glory of Solomon. And she was overwhelmed by his greatness, his glory, and his wisdom. There was beauty in everything she saw, and her heart was filled with praise. She speaks of the happiness of those who stood before Solomon, and praises God, who had delighted in him, and made him supreme in Israel. Now is not this what takes place in the soul that really turns to the Lord Jesus Christ? When delivered from doubts, and difficulties, and perplexities, it is free to be occupied with Christ, and to see how great are the glories that shine in His face. He is the effulgence of the glory of God, and the express image

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of His person, and all true greatness and moral excellency are seen in Him. As the heart is thus occupied, two thoughts possess it: first, the happiness of those who are brought to Him to be His companions for ever, and then the delight of God in setting Him upon the throne. And God has done this, not only because He loves His Son, but because He loves His people. Wondrous fact!

Then the Queen of Sheba began to make her requests, and we can see why they were more than granted. Her whole vision was filled with the greatness of Solomon, and being about to return to her own land, she says, so to speak, "I am going back to my people, who know you not. Give me those things which will exalt you before them, for I want them to know something of your greatness, and your wisdom, and your glory." And could Solomon deny such a request as that? We think not. And so it will be with us if our hearts are filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not be praying for something for ourselves so much, or that which will make us great in the eyes of others; but we shall earnestly desire to have that which will exalt the name of Christ. In this way we shall ask in the name of Christ, and He Himself tells us that whatsoever we ask in His name believing, we shall receive. And again: "In that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself

loveth you, because ye have loved Me." Receiving answers to our requests from the Father, we shall be able to go forth to men, to lift up and exalt Christ in the power and energy of the Spirit and the grace which God gives.

"So the Queen of Sheba turned, and went to her own country." This seems to answer very much to what is said in the Acts of the Apostles, that "they which were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." They went about speaking of Jesus, and this surely is the happy privilege of all who know Christ for themselves. They turned into this world of darkness and death to shine as lights and hold forth the word of life; to proclaim the blessed saving name of Jesus, and thus to enlighten others as to the grace, the wisdom, the love, and power which are found in Him to meet all their desperate need. Oh, may God grant that we may know what it is to pray prevailingly, and the result must be a devoted life and fruitful service. But if we are to pray and prevail, Christ alone in His glory and love must fill our souls. Then all we ask for and seek will be for the exaltation of His name, and we shall receive all our desires, yea, exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

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J. T. M.

## HOW TO OVERCOME THE FLESH.

**W**HAT a troublesome thing the flesh is! We all have to learn this to our deep sorrow, and often to our shame. The flesh is that evil principle within that controlled us in our unconverted state. When we first knew our sins forgiven we thought it would be all smooth sailing afterward. We expected no trouble from such a hidden source. In fact, we thought the flesh would be rooted out of us, and that the Holy Spirit in us would have His own way.

Singular to say, it is when we are consciously forgiven and receive the Spirit of God that the flesh troubles us the most, at least we begin to feel its workings most. This looks strange, though quite true, and it is verified by experience. To those newly converted it is often most perplexing to find sinful thoughts springing up in the mind, and that too at times and in places when least expected.

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal. v. 17). All its desires invariably tend to hinder the work of the Spirit in us. If the flesh were not in the believer there would be no lusting against the Spirit. The Spirit would hold undisputed sway. Our thoughts, entirely controlled by His power, would not wander after foolish and sinful things as they often do.

It is well to know that though the flesh is still

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in us we are not debtors to it. There is no need that we should be brought under its power. Besides, we are not regarded as being in the flesh before God. "*Ye are not in the flesh*, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. viii. 9). God views us in Christ, and thus apart from the flesh. Speaking of our past state, Paul said: "*When we were in the flesh*" (Rom. vii. 5).

The great difficulty with most is in either not seeing or accepting in faith what God has done with the flesh in the death of Christ, and thus regarding ourselves as believers in Christ apart from it. In the flood God said, "*The end of all flesh* is come before Me" (Gen. vi. 13). All were either covered in the ark or drowned in the deluge. So in Christ's sacrificial death the end of what man is *morally* has come to an end in the judgment of God. He no longer expects good from the flesh. He tried it, and proved its total incapability to be good or do good. Hence He ended it. So now it is said, "*Our old man is crucified* with Him." Paul said, "*I am*" (have been) "*crucified* with Christ." If so, that is an end of what we are and what Paul was in the flesh. Though Paul lived, he lived in the power of a totally new life. It was not the former Paul that lived, but Christ that lived in him (Gal. ii. 20).

It is because souls do not enter into this side

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of the truth that they try to improve the flesh or crush it in themselves by legal effort. The law gives no power to keep the flesh under. The law only provokes it. "The commandment" (law) "came, *sin revived*, and I died" (Rom. vii. 9). The law surely brings death on the man who puts himself under it. Nothing can improve the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It remains unchangeably the same. It is a mass of evil, only evil, and always evil.

Though the believer is not under law, having died to it in the death of Christ, *the law is not set aside so far as its moral obligations are concerned*. If we walk in the Spirit the righteousness (just requirements) of the law are fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. viii. 4). The result of walking in the Spirit is love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love is the great power of Christianity. "Love is of God." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

The way to overcome the flesh in our every-day experience is to turn to the Lord when it begins to assert itself. He will surely help us against it. By so doing we mortify it. Nothing is so mortifying as not to be recognised, especially when you want recognition. The flesh is always wanting it. When we turn to the Lord we are in communion with His mind against the flesh. The Spirit helps us also, because He is always

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against the flesh. The Spirit is our only power, therefore it is of all importance to yield to Him, and not to grieve Him. The world around appeals to the flesh, and hence it is of the utmost necessity to keep apart from what would either provoke or gratify it. The Spirit occupies us with Christ and heavenly things, and thus, in the power of what is superior, we are carried above it.

All this involves deep heart-exercise in God's presence, and real prayer in the sense of our own utter weakness and entire dependence on Him. But it is well to be exercised. Exercise promotes spiritual growth. We grow in the knowledge of what the flesh is in all its badness and subtle character, and also in the knowledge of divine grace.

Thus we are saved from being puffed up with pride, which is so abhorrent to God and so ensnaring and ruinous to us. If we yield to the flesh we sow to it, and thus acquire a bad conscience. We grieve the Holy Spirit, and get out of communion with God. We lose spiritual power unless we at once turn to God in the confession of what we may have allowed. When we do so our communion is restored, and the Spirit is free to do His proper work, which is to glorify Christ by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us.

P. W.

## NOTES ON MALACHI.

THE prophecy of Malachi is a closing appeal of God to His wayward people, in which He points out many things that grieve Him. But before touching on these His message is, "*I have loved you*" (chap. i. 2). It is a tender, affecting message without qualification, and wholly irrespective of their ways. All His future pleadings are to be looked at in the light of this first gracious declaration.

In *Haggai's* prophecy the controversy with the people is because they are building their own houses, and attending to their own business, and leaving the Lord's house waste. Here it is different. Religious services are being carried on. There is a "table of the Lord," but Jehovah declares it to be polluted. There was a form of sacrifice, but they were bringing the lame and the sick, the worthless of their flock, as an offering.

Now this "table of the Lord," though, of course, not the same as that in Corinthians x., has many points in common. And if God was jealous over His altar of old, how much more so over the table at which the Lord presides. What constitutes the lame and the sick at the Lord's table? Weakness resulting from unjudged

evil is the answer, and a divided attention. Here is a question for each of us individually—How often do we grieve His heart by bringing the lame and the sick?

And what is the Lord's answer to such conduct? He says, "I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand." Solemn rebuke after His tender message, "I have loved you."

Let us now turn to verse 14, "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King." A male in Scripture typifies vigour, strength, and what was most valued. From this we see that the Lord will have no reserves, no keeping back of anything, however precious. He must have our best, our all.

Chapter ii. This is a special appeal to the priests, to the tribe of Levi as chosen out and brought into a very near place to God. It is a chapter, therefore, from which we can get much teaching for ourselves, for we are made kings and priests to God and His Father. God expects the priests to keep knowledge (see Ps. xvii. 4), and to be a channel of blessing to others, whereas by departing out of the way they cause many to stumble at the law (Mark ix. 42). From verse 11 we see the state of things consequent on the failure of the priest and people. Marriage ties

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are no longer held sacred, and evil is rampant. God reiterates His sad declaration "that He regardeth not the offering any more," or receiveth it with good-will at their hand.

Chapter iii. is primarily prophetic. Verse 1 refers to John the Baptist, and then to the Lord's future coming to deliver the godly remnant. Verse 2 deals with their suffering in the great tribulation. How precious it will be to them then, when going through that awful persecution (Rev. xii. 17; xiii. 17; Matt. xxiv. 21-24), to read that God is sitting as a refiner of silver tempering the heat. And what is His object in thus occupying Himself about them? It is that He may be able, in suitability to Himself, to accept an offering from them (see *vv.* 7-12). God's longing to bless, and on the other hand man's thought about God's dealings (*vv.* 13-15).

In verses 16, 17 we get God's appreciation of the remembrance of His feeble people. He bows down to hear if He is spoken well of among His own. How often, if He stoops to listen to our conversation, is His heart cheered by hearing Himself spoken well of? When it is, He thinks it worth recording. The Lord utters the tenderest words of affection about such. "They shall be Mine." How simple, yet how deep!

What is the use of jewels? They are not for gain, but for personal adornment. And so God will

use the poor feeble trophies of His grace, after they have gone through the refining process, as jewels for the adornment of Christ through the ages to come. This is grace indeed! A. J. P.

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## TO AN ANXIOUS SOUL.

DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—Your name and address have reached me through a lady, who mentions that you wish you could find the Lord, and are trying hard to do so. When I was a boy, perhaps two or three years younger than you are now, I also tried very hard to find the Lord, and by God's grace I can say *I have found Him*. That is why it comes before me to-day to send you this line. It is a wonderful fact that God loves you and wants to bless you, and His way of blessing is through and in His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. *There is no other way* (Acts iv. 12 and 1 Tim. ii. 3-5).

I understand you accept this fact, and I think you will also admit that if you have not yet found the Lord Jesus, who is the only way of blessing, the hindrance is *not* on God's side, but on your own side. This being so, I will now ask you to look at a photograph of yourself in the Bible. You will find it in Romans vii. 18. It is a great thing to see ourselves in God's light: no doubt that poor publican did when he "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13).

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There is nothing in us naturally but sin, and there is nothing naturally in you, dear young friend, that would enable you to find the Lord. Therefore the sooner you come to the end of your own resources, and *take sides with God against yourself*, by simply trusting in His mercy, the sooner the hindrance to your finding the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour (in whom is sufficient grace to meet all your need) will be removed.

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Ps. xxxiv. 18). “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps. li. 17).

God can be merciful to you, because His eye rests on the precious blood of Christ, which has been shed for sinners. So just have done with yourself and your own efforts and in simple faith turn to the Lord Jesus, and *then you will find He is your Saviour* (Rom. x. 8–10 and John vi. 37).

I would press this on you in all earnestness, and ask you to look up the Scripture references given in your Bible for yourself.

You will thus be able to test the truth of what I have written *by God's Word*. He will give you, through His Holy Spirit, the needed grace to prove these truths in your own soul, and you will thus surely get the desires of your heart.

H. D. A.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

INQUIRER.—John xx. 23.—Must we not take this verse in its proper relation to the verses that immediately precede it? Observe, the risen Lord comes into the midst of His disciples announcing peace—a peace which He had made by the blood of His cross. As He had been sent of the Father, so He would now send them forth as His witnesses to preach “the gospel of peace” to others. That gospel, as we know, carried with it the forgiveness of sins—full, present, and eternal—to everyone that believed. Luke xxiv. 47, Acts ii. 38, x. 43, xiii. 38–9, are four passages which place this beyond denial or even doubt. Did any believe the gospel? Was there “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts xx. 21)? Then these first messengers of the risen Christ could with authority assure all such that their sins were forgiven. But if this testimony of grace should be refused, as in Acts xiii. 45–6, then the sins of the despiser were retained, aggravated indeed by his unbelief. And the apostles tell the same tidings to-day, not by the mouth of successors, but by their inspired writings which form an integral part of Holy Scripture.

And the passage has a further meaning, not contradictory but additional. An example will be found in 2 Corinthians ii. 6–11. Here forgiveness is spoken of in reference to a Christian man who had grievously sinned. The assembly of saints at Corinth had been called upon to put him away from among themselves as a wicked person (1 Cor. v. 13). But he had been

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brought to repentance, and his grief on account of his sin and the dishonour it had brought upon the holy name of the Lord Jesus was overwhelming. Now they are exhorted to forgive him and confirm their love toward him. In putting him away from among themselves his sin had been retained, in receiving him back it had been remitted. This may be called administrative forgiveness—not *eternal*. The latter lies with God alone. He only can forgive eternally. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa. xliii. 25). Blessed be His name, His Word assures us in many a plain and precious passage that this forgiveness is ours—the inalienable portion of all who believe.

W. C. C.—We have always viewed the Lord's Supper, in both its parts, *as one act*, and therefore believe that the one who gives thanks for the Bread should also give thanks for the Cup. No scripture that we can remember deals with the point, but the practice you speak of does not commend itself to us. We should regard it as a departure from godly order and an innovation which has nothing to commend it.

W. G.—We fear from the tenor of your letters that the Holy Scriptures are not to your soul what they are to ours. To us they are the words of the living God and should be received as such by all into whose hand they come. By this we do not mean that everything in those Sacred Writings came from the mouth of God, for indeed they contain the sayings of foolish men and even the bold denials and evil suggestions of the devil himself. No one will be so feeble of understanding as to think that we take these as coming from God,

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though we believe the record of them is given by inspiration of God and is intended for our learning or admonition as the case may be. In that sense they *do* form a part of His Word, inasmuch as the Bible as a whole, from Genesis to Revelation, contains what He would have us to know. All the record is inspired, all comes from Him, and the entire volume is God's Book, or what most Christians would prefer to call it—God's Word.

Your letter tells us that Scripture is not Christ. We do not deny it, and yet the Scriptures are full of Christ. "They are they which testify of Me" the Saviour Himself said. And you will remember that when He joined Himself to the two going to Emmaus "He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." When challenged, too, by the Jews with the question, "Who art thou?" He answered, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John viii. 25). I quote from the New Translation of J. N. D. His words, then, were the expression of Himself, so that in the Scriptures we have what Mr. Darby calls "*a written Christ.*" The italics are not ours. That it is possible to read Scripture and miss the One of whom it speaks is, alas! true enough. But we trust you had not weighed your words when you said that "souls were diverted from Christ" in being directed to the Scriptures which speak of Him. Can it be wrong to turn a soul, greatly distressed because it lacks assurance of forgiveness and acceptance with God, can it be wrong, I ask again, to turn that anxious one to those Holy Scriptures which present Christ as the Object of faith and where we find words on which we may rest with the utmost confidence? Apart from

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that blessed Book, what do any of us know of Christ, of His finished work, His glorious resurrection and ascension into glory? Absolutely nothing.

We know that it has been said by some that the letter of Scripture is only "paper and printer's ink." In one sense this is so. But so is a Bank of England note. Had they possession of one for a thousand pounds, it would be in their eyes, I judge, something more than paper and printer's ink!

Deeply do we regret your saying that neither "the literal words of Christ nor the literal words of Scripture" bring peace to any soul. Had your experience been wider you would have known differently. Tens of thousands have been set free from soul-distress by receiving the literal words of Scripture into the heart, and mixing them with faith. And they cling to that word, for it is the word of One whom they know and believe. His words to them are spirit and life—they eat them, to use the striking saying of Jeremiah xv. 16, and they become the joy and rejoicing of their heart.

And you further tell us that "the Spirit is witness" and that there is no need of Scripture to give anyone assurance. We entirely agree with you that the Holy Spirit is a witness. In Hebrews x. 15 this is distinctly stated. But please observe that the witness of the Spirit which the apostle here adduces is the witness of the Scriptures. Although the hand of Jeremiah penned the words quoted in verses 16, 17, they were in the most absolute sense the words of the Holy Spirit. They were written by His inspiration, and are, therefore His witness to the fact that when the new covenant is made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, their sins and iniquities God

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will remember no more. Blessed assurance indeed ! And the apostle is anxiously showing these Hebrew believers that the blessings of the new covenant are theirs now, confirming his teaching by the witness of the Holy Spirit given long ago. But this entirely destroys your theory that Scripture is not needed to give assurance, for Scripture is here used *for that very purpose !*

That it is the Holy Spirit's office to illumine our understanding and to apply the imperishable words of Scripture to our hearts we gladly acknowledge. He is here for that specific purpose. But we believe it prejudicial in the extreme to make little of Scripture under plea of making much of the Spirit. To honour the Scriptures is to honour the Holy Ghost who wrote them. And if souls are persuaded to seek assurance of their forgiveness and acceptance with God on something wrought *in them* rather than in the sure witness of God in His Holy Word, the result is not hard to foresee. It will either inflate them with self-complacency, or plunge them in darkness, doubt, and despair.

J. D.—Acts xxvii.—No doubt this chapter may be used in the way you suggest. The Church as an organisation has become a wreck and is broken to pieces, like the ship in which Paul sailed. Yet, as by the gracious providence of God all on board that ship escaped safe to land, so every true believer will get safe to heaven at last. Viewing the Church *as the Body of Christ*, the figure of the wreck does not apply ; that remains intact. It is the Church in its external form that has been shattered. But all this was foretold in Acts xx. 29, 30.

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**TRANSFORMED BY BEHOLDING.**

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

**F**AR up against the deep blue sky, lightly passing on the summer breeze, was a pure white fleecy cloud—a thing so utterly unsoiled it seemed to belong to heaven much more than to earth.

The great sea lay and looked at it, and whispered to itself: “They say that thing of beauty was once down here where I am”—and the sea sighed within itself. “How fair a thing it is, how peaceful, right up there amongst the stars, in the very bosom of God!”

And then the sea grew vexed. “It is nonsense. How could I ever get up there—heavy and clumsy as I am? And if I got there, how could I stay there? Besides——” and the sea was silent; it thought of the fierce passions that slept within it, the cruel storms; and it shuddered as it thought of the dreadful things that dwelt in its depths—of the wrecked ships, and the dead men. Then it sighed again, “Not for me, indeed. I could never be like that!”

And yet the sea could not rest. Still it looked and wondered and longed. Then it roused itself and said, “I will try.” And it gathered its strength, and it borrowed the force of the wind.

I saw it as it rose up on the strength of its purpose, arched in its pride, on in its desperate

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resoluteness, till it hurled itself against the rocks, and leapt high up a quivering column of spray, and it seemed to snatch at the height. Then it fell—baffled, beaten, and as a hundred rivulets of foam it hastened to hide itself in the depths, as it hissed, “I knew it was not for me.”

Reader, has my parable any meaning for you? Is it not the story of longings, and strugglings, and failure? Come, then, and it shall teach us the secret of success. At last the great sea lay quite still in the silvery light of the morning, and it looked up at the sun, “Canst thou not help me?” it cried. “The moon draws me hither and thither across the earth, but it cannot uplift and transform me. Canst thou?” “Yes,” said the sun; “indeed I can, if thou wilt let me.” And the sun sent down a noiseless ray that shone upon it, and warmed it, and loosened it, and uplifted it. And lo! the sea knew not how nor cared to know, but it cried, “I am there.”

And there it was, a pure white fleecy cloud against the heaven's blue. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. With eye and heart, and hope and longing fixed upon Jesus Christ our Lord, He Himself bendeth over us, He shineth upon us, He looseth, He uplifteth. How, it is not for us to know or care, but this we do know—We are transformed by beholding.                      SELECTED.

## BE NOT AFRAID.

LET not Satan persuade you that you are too great a sinner to find forgiveness; for God says that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). If you think you are even the chiefest of sinners, still be not afraid; only believe. The apostle Paul said, by the Spirit of God, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom *I am* chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). You cannot believe your sins to be too great if you only believe that Christ was so great as to be able to bear them. And take care that in magnifying your sins, you do not lessen the love or power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, rather magnify that love that forgave so much, and this will be your blessing, for to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. And if a poor sinner supposes that his pardon is merely given in dependence on future obedience, then he never can be obedient, because he must walk in such slavish fear that he cannot render the obedience of love, for there can be no service to God but by the sweet constraint of love. The more, then, that God's unceasing, unchangeable love is seen, and shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us, the more constrained will the heart be in its happy service. The heart, when God's love is believed, and therefore received,

must return an answer of love, for we love Him because He first loved us.

And how much service are God's dear children called on to render, when thus saved independent of any service? They are called to a life of service in everything they do, and in everything they say; and this is their happy liberty. When of the world, they considered it freedom to live for the world, but bondage to live for Christ; so now they consider it liberty to live for Christ, but bondage to live for the world. When the apostle Paul entreats believers to live thus, he says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren"—not by the terrors of God's wrath, for from these they were already delivered, but —"*by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. xii. 1, 2). To live as a Christian, is to have the love of Christ constraining us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. v. 15). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). And inasmuch as we are not our own, but bought with a price, we are to glorify God in our body (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

ANON.

## THE GREAT DELIVERER.

**T**HROUGH this wan world, where sin and death are  
stalking

On to dry places lower than the grave,  
Oh, it is well there is a Healer walking  
In majesty of mercy—strong to save !

He doth not hide Himself ; who'er would borrow  
Virtue, may draw it from His willing heart.  
He took our sickness—carried all our sorrow—  
And bore our sin with its avenging smart.

Oh that there were a pressing and a thronging  
Into the presence of a Saviour-God !  
Oh that earth's sorest need and sickest longing  
Might find its one true balm—His precious blood !

The balm that was distilled for all the ages  
'Neath three hours' darkness, on the bitter tree ;  
The balm that every burning pang assuages  
Of fevered hearts to its relief that flee.

O sick in head and heart ! say not, despairing,  
"There is no hope—my wounds are deep and wide" ;  
Yea, so were those of thy Deliverer, bearing  
Thy stroke for thee, in hands, and feet, and side.

Oh, there is balm in Gilead ! there is healing !  
Jesus of Nazareth is passing by !  
Thy woes to His compassion are appealing !  
The Son of David pauses at thy cry.

His pure, deep eye is bent on thee in kindness ;  
His holy hand outstretched to ease thine ill :  
Draw nigh, though with the faltering step of blindness :  
Cry, "If thou wilt"—and hear Him say, "I will."

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Wouldst thou be healed of innermost diseases?—

Then touch His garment's hem, thou timorous soul!  
One trusting touch will thrill the heart of Jesus,  
And He shall feel that He has made thee whole.

All-pitying Christ! Thy heart with love is glowing,  
Drawn, sympathetic, to the souls that bleed;  
Thy mercy towards our misery is glowing;  
No charm for Thee, Lord, like the sinner's need.

A. R. COUSIN.

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**MANY CALLED, FEW CHOSEN.**

**W**HAT did the Lord mean by saying, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14)?

Did He mean that a special worthiness on the part of some of those called gave them the favoured place?

Well, the statement beginning with the word "for" throws the mind back on what preceded. There we find the servants of the king going forth into the highways, and gathering all, both bad and good, who became guests at the wedding feast. Having taken their places at the table, the king surveys his guests; and, finding one not having a wedding garment, he rebukes and casts him into outer darkness, "for," he says, "many are called, but few chosen." That is, the man who had not the wedding garment, though called to the feast, was not chosen as a guest. He was cast into outer darkness. He had heard

## MANY CALLED, FEW CHOSEN. 203

and accepted, outwardly, the invitation, but had not availed himself of the garment provided by the bridegroom for the use of the guests, and was therefore rejected.

The fault and the blame were his own—because the garment was free, and to refuse the garment was to insult the host. The man, therefore, proved his moral unworthiness of the place he had daringly taken. He lacked the one qualification for that place. Mere outward, nominal assent is not sufficient; there must also be the acceptance of the offered garment; and this makes the choice valid. The refusal of the garment renders the call nugatory. Hence, when viewed from the side of human responsibility, it is fair to answer the question in the affirmative, that the Lord looks for a special worthiness on the part of those who receive the favoured place—that worthiness, of course, being their acceptance of the garment.

How significant this fact in this day of widespread profession! General assent is given to the call. Bad and good have outwardly heard it, and have assumed the Christian profession; but, even of these, few have accepted the wedding garment—the title to the feast—few are morally fit, pardoned, justified, having Christ for their righteousness. For such there can be but outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Reader, have you the wedding garment? J. W. S.

## CHRIST'S BODY—THE CHURCH.

**D**URING the eighteen centuries the Church of God has been on earth many misconceptions have arisen as to its character. The idea of the Church in many minds is that of a material building, or a national institution, or of a company holding certain doctrines, and the divine idea is almost lost amid the variety of human opinions.

This has arisen from the fact that the Church has departed from her original calling. Instead of remaining separate from the world, she has become allied with the world. Instead of being a faithful witness against it, she has become the friend of it. Her proper calling is heavenly, her place on earth that of a stranger, but to neither of these has she been true. In fact, looked at from an outward point of view, instead of being a divine institution she has become a worldly one.

Is there then, it may be asked, no true Church at all? The answer to that is, "yes" and "no." For the Church can be regarded from two standpoints, human and divine. Looking at the Church from the divine side we can say "yes," the true Church is just as much a reality to-day as ever. Looking at it in connection with what it has become through human unfaithfulness and indifference, we are compelled to answer "no," the true Church cannot be seen to-day at all. As a matter of fact, the true Church is composed only

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of true believers, sealed with the Holy Ghost; as an equal matter of fact, these have no visible unity, but are scattered amongst the different divisions of Christendom. What, then, is to be done? The answer is that, as individuals, we must seek to be faithful to the true idea of the Church of God. And it is in order that we may have some true idea that these lines are written.

In the New Testament the Church is spoken of under at least four different figures—a “house,” a “body,” a “temple,” and a “city.” We propose to consider only one of these at the present time, viz. that of a body.

It is under this figure the Church is perhaps most often referred to. Probably because it is better adapted to set forth different aspects of the truth connected with the Church than any other.

Before going further it may be necessary to remind the reader that whether the Church is spoken of as a “house,” or “body,” or “temple,” or “city,” these are only figures, and all refer to the one Church. A “house” conveys one idea, that of a dwelling—the abode of someone; “temple” sets forth another—that of a place set apart for a holy use; whereas a “city” is usually the seat of administration. It is not otherwise when the term “body” is used.

What we have to do, then, is to try to understand what underlies the expression “the Church

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which is His body." Let us try to think what our bodies are to us, and then what the Church must be to Christ if it is His body.

It is clear that the human body, employed here as a figure to set forth truths of all importance in regard to the Church of God, may be looked at in a double aspect. First, the various members in relation to the head; secondly, the various members in relation to one another.

First, the various members in relation to the head. Christ is the only Head of the Church. There is no earthly head. To have one in heaven and one on earth would be a monstrosity. Just as the human body has only one head, so has the Church only one head. This gives us a direct link with Christ, and if this were only apprehended it would sweep away many human elements that intervene between Christ and the members of His body.

How did Christ come to be the Head? To find an answer to this question let us turn to Paul's epistle to the Ephesians (i. 19-23). There we find that God raised Christ from the dead "and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the ful-

## CHRIST'S BODY—THE CHURCH. 207

ness of Him that filleth all in all." In this way Christ became Head.

Now what is the force of Christ being Head? It means that the Church is made subject to Him. Thus we read further on in the same epistle (chap. v.) that the wife is to submit to her husband—and the reason is given. "For the husband is the *head* of the wife." "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Thus we see that one thing involved in Christ being made Head is that the Church is subject to Him. Individually, therefore, and as belonging to the Church which is Christ's body, we must take a place of subjection to Him. Then in a human body we know the head directs every movement. The different members obey the head, and are subservient to the head. It is not otherwise with Christ and the Church.

Further, the head nourishes the body. If it requires a certain amount of work done, or service of any kind, it furnishes strength for that purpose. So with Christ, He is the Head, "from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." And just as the human body could not carry out its functions, or be maintained in vigour without receiving from the head, no more can Christ's body without receiving from Him. Therefore the all-important thing is to know Christ,

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and to understand our relationship to Him as members of His body. Thus it says we are to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." There could be no growth in the human body except as the head imparts the power, and where the head is defective the whole body becomes defective. Thank God there is not the smallest defect in the Great Head of the Church.

The important thing is, in the language already quoted, to "grow up into Him in all things." In order that we may do so the apostle gives us a wonderful presentation in the preceding verses of the One who is our Head. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These were given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," and show His care and love for His members. But great as the gifts are, we have something greater. The gifts are given not to occupy us with themselves, but with the One who gave them, the One who has ascended. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might

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fill all things" (Eph. iv. 9). He is so great that He had to descend, as it were, to make room for Himself. The descent was only to show how high He could ascend and to leave no space unfilled. He fills everything. Have we any conception of the greatness of belonging to such a Person, and of being members of His body? Yet, alas! we may get occupied with one of the gifts, whereas the gifts are only given to make Christ more wonderful and to make Him more clearly seen. Thus to the Corinthians who were boasting in men Paul could say, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, . . . all are yours; and ye are Christ's."

And is it not wonderful, if we contemplate the greatness of Christ, that He should regard us as part of Himself? The wildest dreams of philosophy never came up to this divine reality. The humblest believer is looked upon by Christ as part of Himself. This is the next truth we would touch upon.

In considering the relationship of the members to the Head, we see that they are so closely linked with Christ that it would be impossible to be closer. In Ephesians v. 28 we read: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." This accounts for the extraordinary language used by

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Christ regarding His own when addressing Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" Saul had never lifted his hand directly against the Lord personally; all his malice was directed against His followers, and yet Christ felt it as if done directly against Himself. Those Christians so bitterly persecuted by Saul were members of Christ's body!

Think then, my reader, how dear you are to Christ. Is not every member of your body dear to you and treated with the most tender consideration? In the same way every member of Christ's body is dear to Him. In speaking of the Church, people so often think of belonging to some human organisation, but the truth is the Church is inseparable from Christ. We should ever think of ourselves as part of Him.

But now let us come to the second point. We have dwelt upon relationship to Christ as members of His body, we have now to say a little as to our relationship to one another. For we have to remember that the body is not one member but many. If you turn to Romans xii. 4, 5, it reads: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Christians are here said to be "one body *in Christ*." It is important to bear in mind that it is *in Christ* we are one body. In Adam we had no link whatever, but *in Christ*

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we stand in a new relationship to one another. It is outside our Adam status altogether. And so we have to take account of ourselves in two ways—what we are in connection with our life in the flesh, and what we are as in Christ. In the flesh a person may be an Englishman or a Swede; he may be a master or a servant; he may be of noble birth or humble origin; in Christ all these distinctions have no place, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. So that if we are to understand what it is to be the body of Christ, we must understand first of all what it means to be "in Christ."

The next point brought before us is in Romans xii., that just as all the members of the human body have not the same office, so is it with Christ's body, the Church. In the human body the hand performs one office and the foot another, and yet both are equally part of the body. This has to be kept clearly before us in thinking of the different members of the body of Christ. *Each one has some important part to fulfil. A part which that one must do or it will remain undone.* We must remember this has its application to every local assembly of Christians, as well as to the body of Christ as a whole. This is a most important truth, and we would like to press it home upon every Christian. You are a member of the body of Christ, then remember you have some office to

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fulfil *as surely* as every member of your own body has. Do you not know how seriously your own body would be affected were some member to fail in its duty? It is not otherwise, though perhaps not so readily perceived, in the body of Christ. Each has his, or her, part to perform, and if neglected all are more or less affected. Would not this thought, if it took hold of us, stir us up to be more regular in our attendance at the week-night meetings? This is only one example of the way the thing works. How often the prayer-meeting is attended by only a small proportion of the entire number of Christians meeting in a certain place. After making due allowance for those who are kept away by *lawful* causes, there remains a good number who might be there if they would. Whatever other office you may have as a member of the "one body," your office is at least to attend the meetings. And the low state of the meetings, the coldness, the lack of power, the want of interest in the Lord's work are due to this cause more than perhaps to any other. If a person has not sufficient heart to attend the meetings he certainly cannot have much heart for aught else.

There is another reason, too, why every member should fulfil its own proper function and which comes up in the same passage. We are "every one members one of another." Not one member in our body exists simply for itself. Every one

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contributes in some way or other to the well-being of the whole. Have we realised this in regard to a much more important body than our own, viz. the body of Christ? You can contribute to the welfare of the body of Christ. And our attendance at the meetings is to be regulated not merely by the thought of how it will affect ourselves, but how it will affect others. In all these things I must think of myself, not as an individual simply, but as a member of a body. Your attendance at a meeting will not only benefit yourself but others. How you may cheer them by your very presence! And if by coming you get help, as well as give it, this too means that the whole body is benefited by the blessing you have received. Let us write this largely before our eyes, "EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER," and begin to live for others.

In 1 Corinthians xii. 14 the apostle Paul impresses upon us the truth that "the body is not one member, but many." The members differ, and perform different work, but each and all belong to the same body. We do not despise the foot because its shape and office differ from the hand. We consider each member necessary in its place. We must do the same in regard to the body of Christ. Here again we often fail. We are prone to make everything of one member, or perhaps two, and consider the others as almost unnecessary. If we have broken down anywhere in our

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conception of the Church it has been as the body of Christ. Let us in future try to remember two things—first, that every member has some office; and secondly that every member, however insignificant or out of sight, is necessary.

Then again, if it is true that “the body is not one member, but many,” it is equally true that though “many members” there is “yet but one body.” All belong to the one body, and therefore “the members should have the same care one for another.” What a wonderful organisation would be on the earth if only the truth of the one body were apprehended and all the members acted accordingly! “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” And the apostle adds, addressing the Corinthian assembly, “now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

But we must bring our remarks to a close. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Have we realised what it means to have been separated from all former associations according to the flesh (we do not refer to natural relationships, but associations of men) to be introduced by the Spirit into a new association, where Christ is everything to us, and we everything to Him and to one another? An association so intimate and vital that only the figure of the human body can

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adequately represent it. And as we can understand and appreciate the wonderful relationship existing between the various members of our own natural body, whether to the head or to each other, so may we learn to understand and appreciate the way in which, by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit, every believer stands related to Christ and to every other Christian, and also the wonderful place the "body of Christ" occupies as being "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

R. E.

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"IF our souls go on with God, sweet as is the assurance that we, washed in the blood of Christ, belong to God, yet the uppermost thought will, in the long run, be Himself. We shall come back to His person. We shall in our praises weave with it what He has done, suffered, and won for us; but the first of all thoughts in heaven is, not what we have gained, however true, but what He has been for us and what He is to us; yea, what He is in Himself."

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"MUCH has been said to mystify simple souls as to what eternal life is, but if I were to ask some dear, simple old saint, 'What do you understand by eternal life?' the answer would probably be, '*To live for ever with Jesus!*' And so it is; although there is more involved in it, still it is that."

T. H. R.

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## THE HOUSE AND TEMPLE OF GOD.

*(Being an answer to a correspondent.)*

AS to the house of God, and temple of God, the two thoughts are closely allied as applied to the Church's relationship with God, though with a divine fitness in the use of them. When it was a question of the material building in the Old Testament it would readily be seen that the house and temple of God were one and the same: and that this was the use of Scripture such passages as 1 Kings vi. 3, 2 Chronicles iv. 22, Psalm lxxv. 4 ("tabernacle" and "sanctuary" being also identified in Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 28, temple and house by the Lord in Matt. xxi. 12, 13) prove.

When we turn from the material temple in Jerusalem to the far more intimate way in which God has taken up His dwelling-place among His people now in the Church, the same terms are used, as also "God's building," and "habitation of God," for this aspect of its wonderful relationship. For there is also its relationship to Christ, as His body, which is not before us. At Pentecost the Church became the "habitation of God through the Spirit."

But it is important to see that as such it is presented to us in two ways. *First*, according to the mind of God as the fruit of a wholly divine work, with no intermingling of human responsibility. This is found in Matthew xvi. 18,

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where Christ is the builder, and no power of Satan can prevail against it, with which may be compared 1 Peter ii., Ephesians ii. 21, Hebrews iii. 6, and Revelation xxi. 3. *Secondly*, as an existing fact on earth in connection with which His servants have their part with the, alas! inevitable result of failure (see 1 Cor. iii. 9-17, Eph. ii. 22, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 1 Peter iv. 17). Even in apostolic times a Simon Magus, who had "no part nor lot in the matter," could be introduced; and we learn from 1 Corinthians iii. how the door could be opened wider and wider to take in a vast mass of profession, with so little reality, as now. Paul had laid the foundation, but the labourers are warned of their responsibility. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Wood, hay, and stubble might be built upon the foundation as well as gold, silver, and precious stones. The fire in which the day will be revealed should try every man's work of what sort it is; and in result we see that there are three classes of workmen at the building—those who, being true men themselves, build nothing but work that will abide, and who will have their reward (*v.* 14); those who, though personally saved, have all their work burned up and suffer loss of reward; and finally, those who, being only professors, defile the work at every touch and are destroyed with their work.

Now it is significant that just at this point,

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where failure in the character of the work is contemplated (v. 15), the building is characterised as the temple (compare vv. 9 and 16). "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Serious as it would be to corrupt God's *building*, the heinous nature of the corruption would be shown out in that—in a sense in which no other house but God's ever was—it was His *temple* or sanctuary. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the *temple of God is holy*, which temple ye are."

With the same force and fitness we see the temple of God introduced in 2 Corinthians vi. 14, when the apostle is seeking to bring home to the saints the separation that becomes them from unbelievers. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath the believer with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the *temple of God* with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will *dwell* in them," etc., to verse 18. It is as His temple that the full character of such false association would be discovered. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the *unclean thing*."

Even where not the Church, but the individual

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believer is in question in 1 Corinthians vi. 15-20, the solemn power of the application of "*the temple of the Holy Ghost*" (not merely His dwelling-place) to the body in the *connection of the apostle's thoughts* will be felt.

That which is ever associated with the thought of temple is plainly expressed in Ephesians ii. 21, where we find "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy temple* in the Lord." The work, being wholly God's, from the point of view of the verse, will result in that perfection of holiness suited to Him, whose temple it is, in the eternal glory.

Possibly, it may be asked why, then, when in Revelation xxi. 1-8 we come to the eternal state—a new heaven and new earth where the Church is seen still in its double relationship to Christ as His bride, and to God as His tabernacle—it should be called the tabernacle of God rather than the temple. Perhaps it lies in the force of the word by which He expresses His use of it as His dwelling-place—"and He shall tabernacle with them" (see New Translation); confirmed as this is in its significance by the same word, in the original, being used in John i. 14 to express the way He came amongst men as the Word become flesh—"and tabernacled among us"; when the opened eye of faith beheld "His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a Father." It is thus God has been revealed, and will be for ever known, if "unto Him be glory *in*

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*the Church in Christ Jesus* unto all generations of the age of ages" (Eph. iii. 21).

It may be noted, lastly, that when in Revelation xxi. 9 to xxii. 5 we have the millennial display of the glory of Christ in the Church, in the symbol of the holy city Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, John saw "no temple therein," for the beautiful reason that "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." His presence made the whole city a sanctuary. J. A. T.

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M. J.—Eph. iv. 2.—If by the term "prophets" you mean men to whom it is given to foretell things to come, we believe that office has long since ceased. The canon of Scripture being complete, everything that God would have us know is revealed in that blessed Book, and the need of such foretelling no longer exists. But prophets in another and perhaps subordinate sense still remain, for "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. xiv. 3). This may hardly be a definition of a prophet, but it shows that the end prophetic ministry has in view is not the prediction of events. "Brethren, covet to prophesy," says the apostle in verse 39, for the edification of the saints is a deeply important matter. Ephesians iv. 11 names the various gifts given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Apostles, as living men, have passed away, but not their teaching. That abides in the New Testament Scriptures.

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C. A. T.—We shrink from speaking of unsaved preachers as men *sent of God* to proclaim His gospel. In our view it is a scandal that there should be such. At the same time we could not say that God's Word is *never* blessed to souls when spoken by unconverted lips. God is sovereign in the exercise of His grace, and, if He so please, can make His Word work for good, even though it come from the mouth of one who knows Him not.

LEISURE.—Much leisure is not an unmixed good for a Christian young man unless it be devoted to some useful purpose. It often happens that he is drawn by means of things harmless in themselves into associations that are harmful in the extreme. Thus the river, the cricket field, the tennis court, the golf links, have been the beginning of many a spiritual downfall. Our safeguard against these subtle snares lies in the full and hearty recognition that we are not our own. We belong to Another, even to Him who has bought us with a price, and our body has been taken possession of by the Holy Spirit, so that it may be devoted to purposes that will bring glory to God. All this is simply stated in 1 Corinthians vi. 19, 20, and happy is it when with seriousness and purpose of heart such a position is distinctly and definitely accepted by any Christian young man. Then, in addition to the care of his own soul's prosperity—furthered by private prayer and prayerful meditation on the Holy Scriptures—he will think of the spiritual needs of others to whom all of us are under obligation. The gospel which we have received and by which we are saved is a world-wide message, and we

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are the Master's messengers. We owe it to Him that we should diligently seek to make His gospel known, and we owe it to them to whom the life-giving message is sent that so far as in us lies it shall not fail to reach their ear. This may be by personal testimony, or by the distribution of good, clear, earnest, ringing gospel literature. A young friend of ours makes it a rule to send every week through the post two booklets to every address in his locality where death has taken place, and of which mention is made in the obituary columns of the local paper. This is one way leisure moments may be used, and there are a score of others that will suggest themselves if we are ready to serve and are not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. There is plenty to be done by any who have hours to spare, and who can tell how rich and great the harvest? If you have not read it, we heartily commend a suggestive little pamphlet on *Service*, to be had of "H. M.," *Charnwood, Sutton, Surrey*. A few stamps will secure you a few copies for your own use and for distribution. It is well worth sending for.

A. P.—The simple belief of Bible facts, apart from personal faith in a living Saviour in glory, will not do much for anyone. The devils believe and tremble. But when the individual becomes sensible of deep needs which find their answer only in Christ, and the heart turns to Him in confidence, then the result is forgiveness, salvation, and peace. We cannot, then, too simply and implicitly believe God's holy Word. It becomes to us the Word of One whom we know

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and trust, and His words are to us spirit and life. All this widely differs from mere intellectual assent to Scripture facts. Such belief may be found on every hand where Christ Himself is not known and trusted.

A. S. B.—An answer to your first question will be found in a paper called *The House and Temple of God*, on page 216. In reply to your second, "*resurrection life*," strictly speaking, is not a scriptural term. Possibly it refers to our spiritually apprehending what it is to be "risen with Christ," as set forth in Colossians ii., iii. But the phrase itself is not found in Scripture, and therefore it is unsafe to compare it with one that is.

A. F.—We are entirely in accord with your judgment of the doctrine you name. Carried to its legitimate conclusions, it lands you in numberless absurdities, to which, needless to say, Scripture gives no countenance.

F.—The baptism of the Holy Spirit has special reference to what took place at Pentecost, when all believers were "baptised into one body," according to 1 Corinthians xii. 13. The individual believer receives the gift of the Spirit, as numerous passages of Scripture declare, but we know nothing to warrant his looking for a further baptism. Still, we are assured, there is much to learn in respect of the results of the indwelling of the Spirit, even where the teaching of Scripture is clearly seen. We are greatly in danger of being content with the doctrine without looking for the results of the Spirit's indwelling, such, for

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example, as are described in John iv. 14 and vii. 37, 38.

B. R. W.—2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.—“The dying of the Lord Jesus” was not only to make atonement for our sins, but also to end that life in which the will of man—always antagonistic to God—reigned supreme. “Our old man is crucified with Him” (Rom. vi. 6). Paul always sought to bear that great truth in mind, always to allow it full force over him, in order that the life of Jesus might be continually manifest in his body. Once, the body was the instrument for his own will to display itself, but “the dying of Jesus” brought all that to an end, and the apostle endeavoured practically to answer to it. In this God helped him in allowing death—actual death of the body—to stare him everywhere in the face in carrying out his service for his Master. “In deaths oft,” as he himself says elsewhere. As to your other query, we can only say that God’s Word is to rule us *at all times*. To plead that times have changed, and therefore His Word may be ignored as unsuited to the day in which we live, is fatal. If we may do this in one thing, why not in a thousand? That God blesses His gospel when preached by women we do not deny. But that is no warrant for believing it to be of divine appointment. God suffered Deborah to judge in Israel, and used her too, but it was a sign of great weakness, and a reproach and dishonour to the men (Judges iv.).

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## NOW AND HEREAFTER.

“What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—JOHN xiii. 7.

THESE words of our Lord, as we all know, refer to His washing the feet of His disciples. Behind that lowly act a hidden meaning lay which should be made quite plain to them one day. So when the work of redemption was accomplished, and Christ had taken His seat on high, and the Holy Spirit had come down, many a mystery was made clear, and many a thing told out that could not be told before.

But we are going to deal with these words in other connections now. Many a dear child of God is walking in a rough and rugged road, and passing through circumstances hard to understand. He sees no reason why he should be dealt with thus. With anxious heart he looks up and asks, “Lord, why is it thus with me?” And the answer is, “What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.” With this he must be satisfied, and wait with patience the clearing of the clouds.

For example, the little home at Bethany, where Jesus was always welcome, had been thrown into great sorrow (John xi.). Lazarus was sick. Now “Lazarus” means “*God my helper*.” To whom, therefore, should they turn in their distress but to Him who had come so near to them in grace?

Short was the message which the sisters sent. "*Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.*" And there was every reason to believe that the Lord would hasten to their relief. For Jesus loved Lazarus, and if earthly love delights to do its best, what would not the love of Jesus do? So everything encouraged them to look for an early deliverance. Yet it did not come! Their expectations were not fulfilled. The sisters' message was received, but after the swift feet of the messenger had departed Jesus abode "two days" in the same place where He was. This delay must have sorely tried their hearts, nor could they divine a reason for it. And all the while Lazarus grew worse, and grim death knocked loudly at the door. In vain they looked for Jesus. He did not come, and their flickering hopes were finally extinguished when their brother breathed his last. Nevertheless, though they knew it not, His hand was all the time upon the helm, steering the ship aright. In the whirlwind and in the storm He has His way, and the clouds from which they shrank were but the sure sign that He was near, for they were "the dust of His feet" (Nahum i. 3).

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" are words which might have been well addressed to the dear friends at Bethany in their most anxious hours. Their confidence in the love of Jesus was possibly un-

shaken, but this long and fatal delay was most perplexing. Could they, did they believe that all things were working together for good? that every detail was under the control of One who never erred and whose love for them was deeper than the sea? We cannot tell. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died" are words which seem to come from hearts not quite submissive and at rest. But when the "*hereafter*" came, and the purpose of God in this sickness was fulfilled, and Lazarus was given back to his sisters, and the glory of God and of Him who was the Resurrection and the Life was seen in cloudless and broadened vision, then how gladly would they have owned that God's way was perfect, and that blessed is the man whose hope in Him is steadfast!

"Satisfied the way He taketh  
Must be always best."

And we may look at Paul, too, after he had been caught up into paradise, where he heard unspeakable words and received visions and revelations of the Lord (2 Cor. xii.). Such high privilege exposed him to a subtle snare which at the time he did not see, but which the Lord knew, and from which He would save His faithful servant at all costs. For this "a thorn in the flesh" was needful. There have been many conjectures as to what the thorn was, but they are only conjectures at their best, and therefore of

no value. God has not told us, so it is not necessary that we should know. But it was something hard to bear—as men speak—and which Paul earnestly prayed might be taken away. “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” is a saying which applies to such a case as his. Think of that dear saint and devoted servant of Christ! Think of him as he bows his knees to the Lord and asks in fervent prayer that this distressing infirmity might depart from him! But no answer came, though he may have long and patiently waited for it. Again he prays, and again no answer. For the third time he prays, then the silence is broken, the tarrying time is over, the suspense is ended, and the answer comes. But there is no taking away of the thorn—*that* is left to rankle, to be felt always, and always to be endured with pain and patience. The answer to Paul’s cry came in a form which was better than the removal of the distressing thing: “*And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*”

Shall we, then, think it strange if the Lord’s way with us is at times after the same order, though the pattern of it may be different? Have we prayed for deliverance, and as yet no hand has been stretched out to deliver? It is the tarrying time, the “two days” of the Bethany story. Alas! with many of us these

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testing times show that our faith is but a slender plank that will bear but little strain. Let none of us think that the Lord has forgotten us. A mother may forget her child, but He will not forget us. Our names are ever before Him, graven on the palms of those hands once pierced for us at Calvary. The present moment may be the "*now*" when we know not, to-morrow may be the "*hereafter*" when we shall fully know our Master's end and aim.

And if, as in Paul's case, the answer to our oft-repeated cry comes not in the way of deliverance, if instead of removing the trying thing He speaks to our hearts in tender, gracious power, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee," shall we not bow submissively to His perfect will, assured that His choice is wiser and better than ours? May we not even go further, as Paul did when he said, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"? It is a great thing to say, for *glorying* in our infirmities goes far beyond bearing them with patience and submission. But His grace enables His weak and suffering saints thus to speak when He is fully trusted and His will accepted in perfect acquiescence. We rest then as one rests on a bed of down, and we gladly leave ourselves in His hands as we hear Him say, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

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## GOD'S WAYS OF GRACE AND SALVATION.

Read **Exodus** xii. 50, 51 ; xiii. 1, 2, 20, 21 ; xiv. 13-16, 22-31.

**G**OD has been pleased to set forth in the history of His earthly people Israel His ways of grace and salvation. They began their history as a redeemed people when the blood had been sprinkled on the "side-posts and on the upper door-posts" of their houses in Egypt. That was their beginning (**Exod.** xii. 2). At the burning bush God had revealed Himself to Moses as having come down to deliver, and in **Exodus** vi. He announces His threefold purpose: First, to bring them out of bondage; second, to take them as a people to Himself; third, to bring them into their God-given inheritance. The God of Abraham takes a new name in connection with this—the name of "Jehovah," the One who was, who is, and who is to come—and with that name He associates the redemption and salvation of His people. It is a pledge of both.

It is as Jehovah that God undertakes to fulfil His purpose—to bring them out of the house of bondage, to free them from the slavery of Egypt and to lead them on to God's house and land. But how can God effectuate this? How bring it to pass in respect of a guilty and sinful people? This is the question that arises. For God could not come near as a Deliverer or take

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them into intimate relationship with Himself while guilty before Him. Their guilt must be met, and this is done by the *blood of the lamb* sprinkled outside every house in which the children of Israel were. It was sprinkled there for the eye of God, who alone could appreciate all that the sprinkled blood set forth, as typifying the precious blood of Christ, to be shed in New Testament times. But though not for the eye of the children of Israel, yet it was to them a token that God, seeing the blood, would pass over them as Judge. These were the two aspects of the blood—on God's side it met all His holy and righteous claims in judgment with respect to their guilt and sins; on the other it was the token to them of God's satisfaction as Judge, and that He could and did righteously "pass over" them. They thus start on their new history and path as a justified people—a justification which could never be called in question. It was once for all.

True, Satan thought he could call it in question at the end of their wilderness path in the plains of Moab (Num. xxiii., xxiv.). But Balaam, through whom Satan proposed to get the people cursed, is made to see them in the "vision of the Almighty," and they are seen a justified people. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. . . . God brought them out of Egypt. . . . Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there

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any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" The vision of the Almighty began in Exodus xii., when the people were under the blood, and this, followed by God's redemption out of Egypt, was the complete answer to Satan's effort to set aside their justification, and to bring a curse upon them. "In the vision of the Almighty" they were a justified people, and their place before Him was the fruit of "what God had wrought." Whatever need there was for God's chastening hand to be upon them with respect to their ways between Exodus xii. and Numbers xxiii., their justification was intact, and Satan's effort to bring in the curse was defeated. "When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he sought not, as at other times, for enchantments." . . . "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him," and he is made to exclaim: "He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Previously to this Balaam had said, "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (xxiii. 20). Such are God's ways of saving grace to a blood-sheltered people.

But while the beginning for Israel was the blood-sprinkled door-posts, God on His side begins at Exodus iii., the burning bush. He there

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announces Himself a Saviour-God. We begin at Romans iii. with faith in the blood. God sets forth the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and the soul having faith in His blood, is introduced into the path of salvation. It is also spoken of in Romans v., thus: "being now justified by" (or through) "His blood."

The sprinkled blood in Egypt had not for its object the bettering of the condition of the people in Egypt. They were not sheltered that they might enjoy Egypt better, and stay there. As another has observed, "justification is in view of another world"—for us it is heaven; for them Canaan; so we read at the end of Exodus xii.: "It came to pass the selfsame day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." God did not suffer the people to settle down in Egypt nor stay there a single night. It was on "the selfsame day" that their redemption began. They ate the passover in travelling habit—girded loins, staff in hand. That was not settling down in ease in Egypt! God had said to Moses, in chapter vi. 6: "I will bring you out." A justified people, sheltered from the judgment of God against them in respect of their guilt, could not remain in Egypt, nor be of it. They must come out of it as a place, and from the bondage of Pharaoh as a master.

For us Egypt is the world of which we once

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formed a part, and of which Satan is god and prince. Pharaoh typically represents Satan. If we have to do with God, if we are His people and set by His grace in blessed relationship with Himself, we must be "out" in heart and spirit, out of—separate from—this world. "He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4).

Then the people in the person of the first-born are set apart for—sanctified to—God to be His people (Exod. xiii.). That introduces to God's guidance and care in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. They "take their journey." So we, as justified and set apart for God, are brought into the path of faith. He has "called us unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 12), and responding to that call, we start on our journey with our backs on this Egypt-world, from which we are morally separated; and God comes down to be with us. We say, like Rebecca in Genesis xxiv., "I will go," and God says, "I will go with you." Guidance and His care in the way are pledged to us. "He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exod. xiii. 22).

Under this guidance they are led to between "Migdol" and "the sea." They did not get there by chance; they were guided there. The question now raised is not that of justification

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before God, but of salvation from the power and rule of Pharaoh. They come into a great strait—the sea in front, Pharaoh behind. What can they do? They cry out, and they are instructed to “stand still and see.” What? “The salvation of God.” God has got a way of deliverance, and they stand still to see it. But it is the seeing of “faith.” Then they “go forward” on Jehovah’s direction, and God opens a path through the sea—the waters of which overthrew and destroyed Pharaoh and his host.

Surely all this speaks to us of Christ’s death as deliverance from this present evil world and from Satan’s power. We read 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”: “destroy,” or annul—bring to naught.

The children of Israel never saw Pharaoh any more, nor did they ever get again under bondage to him; nor did any return to Egypt from the wilderness path. God could never allow such a thing, since He had said in Exodus vi. He would bring them *out* from under the burdens of the Egyptians and rid them of their bondage. So we are delivered once for all from the bondage of Satan and his power—“the power of death.” We are free, we never see Satan *as Pharaoh* any more. Christ has vanquished Satan—his power

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in death is annulled. We may have to meet him in our wilderness path *as Amalek*, for in the wilderness it was Amalek and the seductions of the Moabites, not Pharaoh, that Israel had to meet. In our wilderness path, having the flesh in us, Satan can touch that—he can address temptations to that. The weak and the hindermost are exposed to his attacks; our safety lies in pursuing the path of faith in spiritual courage, and so going on.

Israel started, as we do, with faith in the blood—in Romans iii. we come to the propitiatory or mercy-seat—the blood of Jesus set forth by God for faith. Then, at the Red Sea, it is said that they “believed in the Lord and His servant Moses.”

*We* reach the point which this prefigures at the end of Romans iv. and beginning of Romans v. “We believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead”—that is our Exodus xiv. Faith in the blood is the start, as we have said, but we now come to faith in God as Saviour. It is in the path of God's salvation we find deliverance, and are enabled triumphantly—victoriously—to go through the wilderness (Rom. v. 1-5).

Israel disappears in the Red Sea. It was their burial under the eye of God. “All our fathers were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Baptism prefigures “death.” For us it is

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the truth set forth in Romans vi. and Colossians ii. 12. We, as in the flesh—our old state as in Adam — under God's eye disappear. Christ's death for us is our Red Sea — our burial-place of the old man. It is where God buried it, and we are in the faith of that—it is realised in our souls. We have been planted together in the likeness of His death "that the body of sin might be annulled, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi.). We are God's freed men. "Christ has made us free."

Now, in the light and faith of what God has effected in Christ, and in accord therewith in the spirit of our minds as taught by the Holy Spirit, we are in the path of salvation, and have begun its "joy." Exodus xiv. introduces to the song of xv. God is known as "Saviour." It is "God's salvation" we realise, and God as Saviour is the object of our faith, and we sing—we are in the "joy of faith."

There was no singing in Egypt. It was the serious question there of our guilt in the sight of a holy God. It was a question of God's holy judgment and how we could escape it and be sheltered—and how the Judge could righteously pass over us. The blood of the lamb effectuates this, but through the Red Sea and the wilderness it is faith in God as Saviour, and we can "joy" or "boast" in God as such. He has "become our salvation." Salvation should characterise the

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wilderness path. God is known as Saviour there, or we should never get through. Christ died to free us from the judgment of God with respect to our guilt. He lives to save—"much more shall we be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). "He is able also to save them to the uttermost [right through] that come unto God by Him, seeing"—not that He died for them—but that "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). Of course He first died for them, or He could not "live" for them. His death has purchased them and freed them from the oppressor; His life is the pledge of salvation.

We are associated with a risen Christ, the One who has annulled death and him that had the power of it. We believe on "Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." The truth of our baptism is that our life and history as of Adam, has been brought judicially to a close under the eye of God. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him" and we are in life—we live through Him to God. "Risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (Col. ii. 12). It is not in what we have done—it is not some attainment of ours—it is faith in God's operation—God's working—this is liberty. It enables us to joy in God, and to travel the wilderness path in salvation and the joy of it.

F. S. C.

## YOU MUST PRAY.

**H**ERE it is, I say it with sorrow, here it is that men fall short so miserably. Few indeed are to be found who pray ; many who go down on their knees, and say a form, perhaps—but few who pray : few who cry unto God—few who call upon the Lord—few who seek as if they wanted to find—few who knock as if they hungered and thirsted—few who wrestle—few who strive with God earnestly for an answer—few who give Him no rest—few who continue in prayer—few who watch unto prayer—few who pray always without ceasing, and faint not. Yes: few pray! It is just one of the things assumed as a matter of course, but seldom practised; a thing which is everybody's business, but in fact hardly anybody performs.

Reader, believe me, if your soul is to prosper, you must pray. God has no dumb children. If you are to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must pray: it is vain to look for strength in the hour of trial if it has not been sought for. You may be thrown with those who never do it—you may have to sleep in the same room with someone who never asks anything of God—still, mark my words, *you must pray*.

I can quite believe you find great difficulties about it—difficulties about opportunities and places. I dare not lay down too positive rules on such points as these. I leave them to your own

conscience. You must be guided by circumstances. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed on a mountain; Isaac prayed in the fields; Hezekiah turned his face to the wall as he lay upon his bed; Daniel prayed by a river side; Peter, the apostle, on the housetop. I have heard of men praying in stables and hay-lofts. All that I contend for is this—you must know what it is to “enter into your closet” (Matt. vi. 6). There must be stated times when you must speak with God face to face—you must every day have your seasons for prayer. *You must pray.*

Without this, all advice and counsel is useless. This is that piece of spiritual armour which Paul names last in his catalogue, in Ephesians vi., but it is in truth first in value and importance. This is that meat which you must daily eat, if you would travel safely through the wilderness of this life. It is only in the strength of this that you will get onward towards the mount of God. I have heard it said that the needle grinders of Sheffield sometimes wear a magnetic mouthpiece at their work, which catches all the fine dust that flies around them, prevents it entering their lungs, and so saves their lives. Prayer is the mouthpiece you must wear continually, or else you will never work on uninjured by the unhealthy atmosphere of this world. *You must pray.*

Be sure no time is so well spent as that which a man spends upon his knees. Make time for this, whatever your employment may be. Think

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of David, king of Israel; what does he say? "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. lv. 17). Think of Daniel. He had all the business of a kingdom on his hands—yet he prayed three times a day. See there the secret of his safety with wicked Babylon. Think of Solomon. He begins his reign with prayer for help and assistance, and hence his wonderful prosperity. Think of Nehemiah. He could find time to pray to the God of heaven even when standing in the presence of his master, Artaxerxes. Think of the example these godly men have left you, and go and do likewise. *You must pray.—Selected.*

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## THE LAST MESSAGE.

[THE following lines were penned by the writer a few days before he departed to be with Christ. How great the grace, how full and plenteous the redemption, that enables the Christian to sing thus in his dying hours!—ED.]

**D**RAW down the blinds, one more departed,  
 Taken away to his heavenly rest;  
 No more dependent on earthly blessings,  
 Sweetly at peace on his Saviour's breast.

Nothing but Christ he has taken with him,  
 No one but Christ has cleared the way,  
 Resting alone on His grand atonement,  
 Ready for glory! Eternity's day.

Praise to the Father for His gift so precious,  
 Glory to God for His boundless love,  
 Millions and millions of tongues will proclaim it,  
 Through countless ages in rapture above.

May 28, 1904.

S. G. GRANTHAM-HILL.

## LET US GO ON.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—. . . .

To-day I had Psalm viii. for my daily portion, and connected it with Hebrews ii. The Son of Man is set over everything—that is the first part of the divine purpose; then, secondly everything is to be subjected to Him. We live in transition times when only the first part is accomplished. WE SEE . . . says the writer in Hebrews ii., but he also says, WE SEE NOT. We see Jesus exalted to *His* position, but we see not yet things or people in *theirs*. The latter will be brought to pass partly by grace in which God delights, and partly by judgment in which He does not delight. We read of the acceptable YEAR of the Lord, but of the DAY of vengeance of our God. He lingers over His work of mercy, loath to cease it, and hastens over His vengeance, loath to execute it, yet swift in the execution because “a short work will the Lord make on the earth.” As three hundred and sixty-five days are to one, so is mercy’s period to the time of judgment and vengeance.

Everywhere we see the vortex whirling more rapidly. In naval and military circles they hardly know how to keep pace with modern requirements. In politics and political economy, what upheavals and what hopelessly intricate problems! In inventions, what daring! What abolition of

physical exertion in favour of labour-saving apparatus, so as to crowd into men's lives all the influence and all the gain possible! In religion, what welcome to every mad speculation of the human mind, and what rejoicing over every seeming blemish in the true and blemishless Word of God! What scheming, too, to bring modern Ritualism into line with the Jesuits! And, alas! with those who have light and truth, what relapse into indifference; what shrugging of the shoulders as we practically say, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Yet all this is so exactly marked out in the believer's chart, that for a believer to be ignorant of it is wonderful. We have a straight course to steer, though there be difficulties and discouragements. The sight of any of the Lord's people who allow business to hinder their living unto God is very melancholy. Others, who show appalling indifference when communion or service or meditation is in question, are as keen-witted as lawyers and as busy as postmen when some matter of ill-savour arises. These are a pain to the eyes and a grief to the heart. Yet we are most helped and most helpful when going straight ahead. To have the eye single is probably the best way to avoid motes or beams, and being then full of light, we shed a ray or two upon every point we reach and every case we touch. To a cold, worldly Christian there is

no rebuke so telling as the quiet, steady, devoted, holy life of one utterly given up to Christ; to a backslider, no appeal so powerful as the sight of a happy saint—happy in service, happy in the Lord—reminding him of the joy that was formerly his, and that may yet be his again, thank God! Even with a sinner, sermons are not always the most successful means of leading him to the feet of Jesus: a father's living, a friend's faithful discipleship unto Christ, the alteration in character of a former associate in sin, now converted to God, are all means greatly used in blessing.

So it seems to me, let us go on with what we know of God. The main moral lines are laid down in Romans vi.—dead in regard of sin, alive in regard of God. The compass points to holiness and the will of God, with God's blessed dwelling-place as the port for which we are bound. Sin and our own will characterised our former state, the state we have left; but as surely as heaven and God are ahead, so surely is sin departed from and left behind in the purpose of our hearts.

Then in Hebrews xi. we have a more detailed spread of the chart, *pointing out, not so much all the rocks and the shoals, as the channel where the deep water lies*. If we see a rock or perceive a danger, let us by all means make a note of it for future use; or if we tumble across some dangerous old derelict, let us indicate its position for any that may follow us. But to spend our

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days examining all the bad things we hear about is to lose time and heart: all the bad things that would hinder a man who wants to go straight ahead are more than plainly marked in the good Word of God. There is a way out, I believe, from the most intricate difficulty ever to be met with on earth (except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost), but we ordinary Christians need no more trouble ourselves about *every* difficulty than a captain bound from Liverpool to Rio about the sandbanks on the Upper Congo.

Finally, we have in Ephesians i. the indication of how it is all going to work out. Delivered from our past, we are brought into the current of the will of God, which—as to ourselves—results in our being holy and without blame before Him in love; and—as to Christ—in His being at the very centre of all, in the dispensation of the fulness of times—everything in subjection to Him, who is Head over all to the Church, which is His body. There it is we see God's counsel of Psalm viii. fulfilled in the Son of Man, and the Lord's name excellent in all the earth.

We ought not, then, to lose heart, if we see not yet all things put under Him. The great point is, are we under Him in actual faith and realisation in our lives? And herein I speak to myself as much as to you.

W. H. W.

Inkongo, West Central Africa.

## HEART RESPONSE TO CHRIST.

JOHN i. 14 ; REVELATION i. 5, 6 ; xxii. 16, 17, 20.

THESE passages possess one feature in common: in each the Spirit pauses, if I may so say, in the communication of the truth, to make room for the response of our hearts. And it is the expression of how the Lord looks for the answer of our affections to the truth presented to us. Thus, even in the midst of that most wonderful unfolding of the glory of the person of the Lord in John i., when the apostle comes to the "Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us," there is a parenthesis. Before the Spirit resumes and speaks of Him as "full of grace and truth," room is made for the testimony of those who by the opened eye of faith beheld His glory, "the glory as of an only begotten with a Father," and saw in Him the one cherished object of the Father's delight—sonship now first fully revealed. Oh, how infinite the grace that has opened our eyes thus to behold Him! What, then, is the answer of our hearts to such a One?

It might seem as if we were on lower ground in Revelation i. But it is because of the different character of the book, and of the way God and Christ are revealed in it. It is Jehovah first, rather than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One *who is*, connected with all He *was* and *will be* for ever—an added point of very great

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moment to our souls. Then the seven Spirits which are before His throne, not the one Spirit as we know Him in relation to the one body. The throne is preparing for the direct government of the earth, and the Spirit is presented in sevenfold perfection connected with the administration of the throne. And when we come to the Lord Jesus, He is not seen in the deeper glory in which we know Him while hid from the eyes of men, but as "the faithful witness," looking back to His path on earth; the first begotten from the dead, in resurrection; and then—passing over all the present epoch of grace—to what He will be as "Prince of the kings of the earth" in coming millennial glory. But whatever the glory in which He is presented, what touches our hearts and strikes the chord of praise, for which again the Spirit makes room, is that He "loveth us" (for the verb is in the present tense—it is ever a present love). It is this that makes Him personally dear to us—proved in what He has done for us as having "washed us from our sins in His own blood," and in what He has made us as "kings and priests unto God and His Father."

True, this does not rise to the height of "My Father and your Father, My God and your God," as John xx. has made the full character of our association with Him known to us. But it flows from it. For it is involved in that wonderful revelation from the mouth of the open sepulchre,

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that if He has brought us into all He has entered into as man arisen from the dead before His Father and His God, there never will be a position which He takes that He will not have us associated with Him in it. Now the highest position that He takes in Revelation is as Priest upon His throne; hence we are made kings and priests to God and His Father. And note that if this is not as intimate as having His Father for our Father, and sharing the very place He has in His Father's love, it is His richest place in the book, as nearest to God in power looking downwards for the kingdom, and in approach to Him upwards. Anyhow, it is His place we take and share. No wonder our hearts are full; and He makes room for the expression of it—our praise is sweet to Him—"to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Nor does He close the book without giving one more opportunity for the expression of affection from hearts that He has won for Himself. In chapter xxii. He addresses the Church personally from verse 16. He is the root as well as the offspring of David—so secure the accomplishment of promise to Israel in the earthly blessing of the kingdom, which has been largely the subject of the book. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" for this, as in the last promise of the Old Testament. But it is not this that awakens the Church's response: He adds, in the closing words of the New, "and

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the bright and morning star." As such He has to do with those who belong to Him before the rising of the sun. The first rays of the rising sun, and the morning star is then no more seen: the star belongs to the watchers through the night. And now the answer is immediate. It is thus we know Him through the night of His absence. The Spirit dwelling in us gives the consciousness of the relationship of the Bride before the day of our espousals in glory according to chapter xix., and forms the Church's heart according to that relationship. So that her one desire is to see His face. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." He is the first object of her heart, when known as the Bridegroom, in the power of the Spirit. And when He has thus His normal place His interests in His absence will be her interests. Accordingly this verse gives us the whole circle of the Church's affections. There are those who have, like us, heard His voice but are not yet resting in accomplished redemption so as to possess the Spirit, and be of the Bride—we want them to be at peace, and to be able to join us in the cry that bids Him come; then, outside of those in whom He has thus wrought in quickening power, there are the many that have drunk deep at earth's springs, but only to find a thirst that even becomes more intense—the heart of Christ goes out to them, and the Church's heart carries down to them the invitation, "Let him that is

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athirst come; whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The Lord answers to the affections He has awakened. "Surely I come quickly," that once more He may hear from our hearts, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come."

May He give us exercise of heart before Him as to how far He has the response of affections from us that He so prizes. Till He come may our attitude be that of watching for Him, in full out-going of heart to Him in answer to all the fulness of the out-going of His love to us, and as set for His interests in the scene of His rejection.

J. A. T.

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A BROTHER.—Kindly remit three halfpenny stamps to our publisher and ask him to send you *Simple Testimony* for October, 1901. Read our answer to "D.B.," in which we have examined the objections you raise and vindicated the right of Holy Scripture to be called the Word of God. If you are not then convinced, we fear further argument would be useless.

One word more. Suppose you receive an important letter from an intimate friend in which he not only communicates to you his thoughts and intentions, but deems it wise for your good to acquaint you with the sinister sayings and doings of some others whom he names. Would not that letter *in its entirety* be the word or letter of your friend, and would you not be justified in speaking of it as such? If some casual acquaintance, with airs of

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superior wisdom, assures you that you have no business to describe it thus—that no “intelligent” person would do so, seeing it reports sayings and doings that were not your friend’s at all, would you not pity his poverty of intellect and look upon him as scarcely out of his babyhood? Act on the same principle when “*the oracles of God*” are in question, and you will then be in perfect agreement with ourselves.

R. P. and S. B. CREWE.—Matthew xxvii. 5; Acts i. 18.—We presume your inquiry relates to the tragic end of Judas, which in these passages is differently described. Does not the *seeming* discrepancy lie here—Matthew states the fact and Luke, in the Acts, some things connected with it? Thus, a person falls from a scaffold and his neck is broken. Speaking of the sad event, one says the unfortunate man fell and broke his neck, another that he fell, and in the fall his body was so mangled that death must have been instantaneous. Both accounts are true, and when put together fully show the circumstances under which death took place. Is it not so in these two accounts of the dark end of Judas the traitor?

L.—The exercises of a soul troubled about its sins and not at peace with God are very varied, but the answer to them all is found in Christ, to whom the eye of the anxious one should be directed. He has died, is now risen and in glory, and relief from the pressing burden of my sin and guilt is in Him, not in me. There is no need to anxiously inquire, “Did Jesus die for me?” and

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for the soul to force itself to believe that He did. The very inquiry supposes there is room for doubt, of which—blessed be God!—there is none. He died for sinners, for the ungodly, and seeing that I am that, then I know He died for me. But, after all, the greatest question is, What is the death of Jesus in the sight of God? It is a death of such amazing worth that in virtue of it God can, will, does freely clear from every charge of sin every sinful man that believes in Him. Romans iii. 26 plainly says so. It seems to us of the prime importance that we should understand God's thoughts of the Blood of Jesus, and that He acts towards us according to His value of it and not ours. If a man says, "But I don't feel it," I answer, You are slipping away from the ground of faith on to that of your own feelings—self instead of Christ. And if the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit given unto him and thus inwardly enjoyed, yet the proof of that love is not within him, but wholly outside, so that he is not led to scrutinise his own feelings, experiences, or what he is in himself. This is simply, beautifully stated in Romans v. 6-8. Christ died for me when I was a sinner, ungodly, having no strength at all. Heaven's best gift was given for the worst thing on earth—and I know it, not by looking at myself, so hateful, but at Christ. Blessed it is thus to have self displaced by Christ, who took our place on the cross, that we, believing in Him, might have His place of perfect acceptance as risen and in glory. We are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6), and "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17.)

## THE BIBLE, AND HOW TO READ IT.

### A CONVERSATION.

*Young Believer:* Good evening, Mr. ———; I am on my way to a gospel meeting. Will you come along with me?

*Higher Critic:* Gospel meeting! *You* going to a gospel meeting? I hardly thought that sort of thing was in your line. I was under the impression that you generally spent your evenings at the billiard-table.

*Y. B.:* Until quite recently that was so. But I am glad to tell you that I have been converted, and am now a Christian. I have got something better than billiards.

*H. C.:* Well, I am glad to hear it. But where is this "gospel meeting" for which you are bound?

*Y. B.:* In the large tent, which I dare say you have noticed in the field near the market.

*H. C.:* Oh! that is where you are going, is it? I have heard of those people. Why, they are a most ignorant and antiquated set. They hold the same theories about the Bible that were current fifty years ago. Notwithstanding the march of modern science and the results of higher criticism, they cling to their old-fashioned ideas like limpets to the rocks.

*Y. B.:* Whatever do you mean? I have been

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at many of their meetings and never heard anything that struck me as either foolish or false. The Scriptures are clearly explained, Christ is preached, and the way of salvation unfolded. They certainly know their Bible well, and base everything they say upon its words.

*H. C.:* That is just what I mean. Regular Bibliolaters, I call them. Worshippers of the Bible! Fancy, intelligent men in the twentieth century pinning their faith to a collection of Jewish semi-mythical stories and poems!

*Y. B.:* I must say I do not like to hear you talk like that. Whatever the Bible may be to others, it has been to me the means of salvation. Through its teaching I have learned that I was a sinner indeed, guilty before God, and helpless to save myself. It has shown me that the work of Jesus was sufficient to secure my pardon, and that in trusting Him I should be safe. The Bible says of such that they "are justified from all things." That is how I know that *I* am justified. I rest upon God's own word.

*H. C.:* Oh, but you cannot speak of the Bible as "God's own word." Professor Delitzsch has clearly shown that Assyrian mythology and Babylonian lore are the sources from which much of it is derived. Besides, there are so many absurdities in it, which stamp it as the product of a superstitious age before the ethics of religion had reached their present stage of development.

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*Y. B.:* I am not sufficiently familiar with the subject to be able to meet your statements. But I shrink instinctively from what you say. I should be sorry to have my faith in God's word undermined.

*H. C.:* Well, of course, I don't want to interfere with your faith. Indeed, if it be any comfort to you, I admit that the word of God is *in* the Bible.

*Y. B.:* If that be so, how am I to discover it? Which part is the word of God and which is not? The criticism that says to-day that Genesis is no part of the word of God may to-morrow declare the same of John's Gospel. But I see my friend Evangelist coming towards us—the preacher from the tent, you know. Perhaps he will be able to throw some light upon the subject.

*Evangelist:* Good evening, gentlemen.

*Y. B.:* Good evening, sir. If you could spare a few minutes I should like to ask you a question or two. This gentleman has been telling me that the Bible is not the word of God.

*E.:* Indeed! If it is not God's word, whose word is it, if you please?

*H. C.:* Well, in part of it you have the words of Satan recorded. You would not call *that* the word of God, would you? \*

\* We recently heard a letter read from a *professing Christian* in which this argument was actually employed!

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*E.*: To carry your argument to its logical conclusion, you must believe that the Bible is partly the word of God and partly the word of Satan. So this Book, which has survived centuries of opposition, which has been translated into hundreds of languages, which has had more influence on the history of the human race than any other book, which has been the means of leading untold millions into the paths of righteousness and peace, is partly God's word and partly Satan's—the joint handiwork of God and the devil!

*H. C.*: I did not mean that.

*E.*: Then why use an argument which means nothing if it does not mean that? If the Prime Minister makes a speech in which he quotes the saying of a political opponent, does that make it any the less true that the speech is the Prime Minister's? And if God, for purposes of His own, is pleased to quote the words of Satan and of wicked and foolish men in His Book, does that fact in any wise vitiate the claim of that Book to be *God's Book*, or *God's Word*?

*Y. B.*: What about these discoveries of Professor Delitzsch?

*E.*: Did this gentleman refer to them?

*Y. B.*: Yes; he adduced them in proof of the Bible, in part, having a heathen origin.

*E.*: All I can say is, that if the gentleman had read a quarter of what others, equally learned, have written with regard to the Professor's so-

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called discoveries, he would be ashamed ever to mention them again.

*H. C.:* Well, for my part, I don't see the reason for all this fuss about the Bible. For me, the revelation of God in nature is sufficient. Of course, I am willing to profit by the ethical teaching of the Bible, just as I am ready to profit by similar teaching in Aristotle, in Shakespeare, or in any other book. But I am a twentieth-century man. No antiquated cult for me. God will not condemn us for not pinning our faith to a certain book, so I cannot see that it matters much how we regard the Bible. I wish you both good evening.

*E.:* I am sorry for the poor dupes of the much-vaunted Higher Criticism. How little they know of real joy and power! Depend upon it, depreciation of the Scriptures goes hand in hand with depreciation of *Christ*.

*Y. B.:* While we walk towards the tent, I should be glad if you would give me a few hints as to the best way of studying the Bible. I have not much time that I can call my own, and I want to make the most of what I have.

*E.:* The great thing is to read your Bible in such a way that it is a real pleasure to you, and not a mere task or duty. The only way you can do this is through personal acquaintance with Christ. A young lady once had a certain book given to her. She read it with some interest, and then

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laid it aside and very nearly forgot all about it. Subsequently she became acquainted with the author of it, and the acquaintance ripened into something deeper, and ultimately they were engaged to be married. Then she took down the book again, and read it with tenfold interest. In the same way, when our souls get to know and love Christ, the Bible ceases to be a mere history, or book of precepts. It becomes a personal message to our hearts from the One we love.

This is the secret of what is called *devotional* reading of the Bible. A lady was once asked by a friend to explain what was meant by "devotional reading." She replied, "Yesterday morning I received a letter from one to whom I have given my heart and devoted my life. I freely confess to you that I have read that letter five times, not because I did not understand it at the first reading, nor because I expected to commend myself to the author by frequent reading of his epistle. It was not with me a question of duty, but simply one of pleasure. I read it because I am devoted to the one who wrote it. To read the Bible with the same motive is to read it devotionally."

*Y. B.:* I think, by God's grace, I can say I love Christ. I have good reason to love and adore Him. And my reading of the Word is no task to me. It is a delight. I can quite understand

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what that lady said to her friend. But my ignorance of Scripture is great. I want to understand it and be well versed in it.

*E.:* Have patience. With careful and continued study, by the help of the Holy Spirit, that will come. But you will have to plod away at it, and not read in a haphazard kind of way. Have you ever sat in your garden watching the insects sucking the sweet sap of the flowers? There is the gay-winged butterfly, dancing with graceful activity from flower to flower, never stopping long, but darting down here and there to sip a drop of nectar. Another worker in the same field is the brown-vested bee. He does not flutter or hover as the butterfly, but flies straight forward in a determined way, alighting everywhere to find the honey that he wants. If the flower-cup be deep, he goes to the bottom of it; if its dragon-mouth be shut, he thrusts its lips asunder. His rival of the gaudy wing has no patience for such dull details.

But what is the end? When October comes, the one dies with the flowers; the other is warm in his hive amid the fragrant stores which he gathered in summer.

Now if your soul is to thrive, you must study the Scriptures like the bee, and not like the butterfly. Your reading must be persevering and not desultory.

*Y. B.:* Is there any system of Bible study that you would specially recommend?

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*E.*: As long as you have some system, it does not matter very particularly what plan you adopt. A well-known preacher tells a story of his early life that may help you. "At that time," he says, "I did not know my Bible as I should, the effect of which was seen both in my own spiritual life and in the character of my preaching. My heart was greatly burdened in prayer about it for more than a year, when God answered me through the lips of a Christian, who described the blessing he had got through reading the Epistle to the Ephesians. I asked him how he had read it. 'One afternoon,' he said, 'I lay down under a tree and read it through. Then I read it again, in the same way, and again and again, as many as twelve or fifteen times; and when I arose to go into the house I was not only in possession of Ephesians, but Ephesians was in possession of me. I at once began the application of this simple principle, beginning at Genesis. I kept at each book till it was mastered before I began work on the next. I cannot tell the effect on me—strengthening my faith in the infallibility of the Bible and deepening my spiritual life.'

*You* may not, perhaps, be led to study in quite the same way, but it is important to have some definite method of study.

*Y. B.*: One difficulty with me is that I cannot grasp the meaning of much that I read. Others find help where I find none.

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*E.*: You need the help and teaching of the Holy Spirit in order that what you read may profit you. The ancient Greeks used to send messages from one army to another by means of a roll of parchment, twisted spirally round a staff, and then written on. It was perfectly unintelligible when it fell into the hands of a man that had not a corresponding staff on which to twist it. So with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is given to you to maintain you in correspondence with the One from whom the Word comes. By His divine aid alone can you understand and interpret the divine message.

But if we were more simple, and believed that *God means just what He says*, we should find less difficulty in this respect.

“There are some who believe the Bible,  
 And some who believe a part,  
 Some who trust with a reservation,  
 And some with all their heart ;  
 But I know that its every promise  
 Is firm and true always ;  
 It is tried as the precious silver,  
 And it means just what it says.

“It is strange we trust each other,  
 And keep our doubts for the Lord.  
 We take the word of mortals,  
 And yet distrust His Word ;  
 But oh, what a light and glory  
 Would shine o’er all our days,  
 If we always would remember  
 God means just what He says !”

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*Y. B.:* Would you advise me to use commentaries and similar books, as aids to the study of the Scriptures?

*E.:* Rightly used, you may get much help from the writings of the Lord's servants. But you must let nothing *take the place of* the Bible. The reading of other books, however good, will not nourish your soul like the Word itself.

A strange plant grows in Australia, called the nardoo, bearing seeds which the natives sometimes eat. For the moment these seeds seem to satisfy hunger, and produce a pleasant feeling, but there is no real nourishment in them. A party of explorers, crossing the central desert of Australia, found themselves without food. Burke, the leader, said, "Here is the plant which the natives use. We need not fear starvation." So day after day they fed on the nardoo seeds. At first they felt satisfied. Presently their strength began to fail and they felt as weak as a baby. Unable to walk, starving for want of nutriment, their flesh wasted from their bones, and, powerless to proceed further, they lay down, most of them to die.

All substitutes for the Bible are like nardoo seeds. Nothing can feed and nourish the soul like the pure Word itself. May we be more earnest and diligent students thereof! And may God help us to increasingly value the priceless treasure that we have in the Holy Scriptures, His own blessed Word!

H. P. B.

## WHAT GRACE DOES.

“**H**E raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory” (1 Sam. ii. 8).

Such a stroke of grace is charming. And what but grace could act after such a fashion?

The extremes are enormous! We have the dust and the dunghill placed in vivid contrast to the throne; and we find that the poor and the beggar are transposed from the one to the other, from a point of veritable degradation to one of exceeding dignity and honour. Yet this is how grace deigns to act. The prospect would dazzle and bewilder; it would baffle and surpass conception were the height to be reached by personal effort, or be the result of merit and desert. A poor man might perchance become opulent, but he dare hardly dream of entering princely estate; and a beggar might expect his petition to be even handsomely granted, but never presume to contemplate the inheritance of a throne.

And yet it is just here that the hand of grace, in its total unexpectedness, stretches itself forth, and proves how the throne of glory becomes the seat of the poor and the beggar.

Observe only that it is the poor and the beggar, and such alone, who are thus ennobled. Indeed,

the conditions are incumbent. Grace has no voice for any but the poor and the beggar. She seeks for those who know themselves to be spiritually destitute. She has nothing for the proud.

The Law of Moses may captivate those who deem themselves meritorious, but it will demonstrate to them, like a mirror, their guilt; but Grace, though she may teach lessons of godliness to her children, yet goes in quest of the lost. She seeks the poor and the beggar.

Has my reader placed himself there? Alas that pride should hinder so many from taking that place and fulfilling that condition!

And yet none shall reach the throne but those whom Grace finds in the dust. To go into the dust is repentance, and repentance is at once the pre-requisite and the stepping-stone to blessing. Happy the soul that is thus in the dust!

Then, how does Grace exalt the beggar to the throne? Is it effected by power alone? Nay! it would never do to open the prison door by force, and let the prisoner escape. Justice would cry aloud!

Grace may not act till justice is satisfied.

But how can God's justice be satisfied? That is a grand question, and should be raised in every thoughtful mind.

The answer is given perfectly in Romans iii. There we see the poor and the beggar—we see

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“the whole world guilty before God”—exposed to His judgments, “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Their case is hopeless! The Law! It only gives the knowledge of sin. By its deeds shall no man living be justified.

All true! but we also see God’s righteousness. We see how God can be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

How can an act so extraordinary be accomplished? Where can we find anything sufficient to meet the claims of the throne of God, or expiate the sins of men?

We find it in the blood of Christ. There God has both provided and found the satisfaction that His throne demanded. We read: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.”

Connect three words of this passage: “God” . . . “Blood” . . . “Propitiation,” for in them we have, first, the blessed source, then the ground, and then the result. What a provision!

So much for God’s side.

On ours there is faith in Jesus. God “justifies him who believeth in Jesus,” and He is just in doing it. On this ground of righteousness, Grace can now act freely and justly in the way she loves; she has a free and unimpeded hand. The keen sword of Justice is sheathed. Every claim is met. Grace can stoop down to the very dung-hill and freely pluck thence the poor and the

beggar, nor arrest her benefactions toward them until she place them, all fit and worthy, on the throne of glory and amid princes.

Was not this all true of the "dying thief"—who passed away to be with his Lord in paradise on the very day when he paid the penalty of his misdeeds before man—on the ground and by the merit of the expiation wrought for man by the sinless Redeemer at his side? To Him he turned in faith and was there and then taken on high.

Wonderful redemption indeed!

But has Grace no voice or power to-day? Does she not enrich myriads of such? She does; and wherefore such mercy? It is "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7).

Here we may pause and adore. Such a wealth of grace! Such an eternal display of kindness to the poor and the beggar—the dead in sins! Such a stroke of grace that should place children of wrath in heavenly heights in association with Christ Himself for ever.

Ah! It is worth while, a thousand times over, to go for such a result deep down into the dust of repentance, and to own poverty and beggarhood to the very full, so that grace may raise, even thence, to the throne of glory.

Dear reader, what do you know of the grace of God?

J. W. S.

## THE TWO WEATHERCOCKS.

ON a certain moor with which we are familiar there are two weathercocks—though in this case they are foxes, which may account for the strange phenomenon we are about to relate. The other day it was noticeable that their heads were in different directions. We were surprised and puzzled. Could the wind, one thought, be blowing from opposite quarters so close at hand? This, however, was not the case. And yet there was the fact that one fox had his head precisely where the other had his tail. Here was a dilemma. Which were we to believe?

Are there not many religious people—nay, people of all sorts—in a somewhat similar dilemma to-day? They want to be right, yet the very people who should indicate which is the right path to tread are, like the weathercocks, pointing in opposite directions.

Let us explain what we mean. In a weekly religious journal recently there was an announcement that a lady—a Roman Catholic—had been converted. She decided to leave the communion to which she belonged, and had sent her rosary and crucifix to the evangelist through whom the blessing had come to her. In the very same paper appeared an announcement of the opposite character. A certain clergyman in the east of London had left Protestantism and joined the

Church of Rome, taking half of his congregation with him. Surely this answers to the two weathercocks of which we have spoken. The lady virtually says it is the right thing to leave popery; the clergyman and his adherents virtually say the opposite.

Such instances are happening every day with variation of detail. One teacher says this, another says that; one person appears to act quite conscientiously in going in one direction, another equally conscientious takes quite a different course, until simple-minded people are perplexed, if not distracted.

Is there no way of getting help and of knowing pretty nearly who is right? Amid the babel of voices can we not distinguish the voice of truth?

Let us begin by making up our mind on two points. First, that there is truth and there is right; and secondly, the true and the right are worth finding. Having done that, let us return to the weathercocks. They could not both be right. Was there any means of deciding which was wrong? Some people would have settled the question by just transposing the letters, and thus both foxes would have pointed to the west, though one had his head where the other had his tail. Such think one belief is as good as another, even though they spring from opposite sources, and there is no agreement. It is only necessary, say they, to be in earnest. As far

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as we could tell, one fox was just as much in earnest in pointing eastward as the other in pointing westward, but, for all that, we were not going to believe that both were equally right. How, then, was the point to be decided? Two things helped us. We had the wind, and were conscious of the direction from whence it came, and we happened to know our bearings. Therefore, we knew, as certainly as it is possible to know anything, that the wind was blowing west, and not east. And yet our judgment made no difference to the refractory fox; there he remained with his nose to the east, but we were not inclined to alter our opinion for all that. And another thing needs to be borne in mind. It was not the fox that determined the direction of the wind, but the wind should have determined the direction of the fox, had there not been something amiss. Even so it is not any man, or collection of men, who can determine what is truth, or of themselves can point us in the right direction. No doubt men have been used, and are still, to convey the truth, but the truth itself is outside and independent of them, just as the wind is outside and independent of the weathercock.

Exactly as the wind and the knowledge of our bearings enabled us to decide between these two foxes, so we have both a standard and a guide as to truth which can never fail us. The one is the Bible, the other is the Holy Spirit. The

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latter is not enough. Just as it is not enough if I want to know from whence the wind comes to feel that it blows. We need to know our bearings as well. This is the information the Bible gives us. The One who said the "Spirit should guide us into all truth" also said, "Thy Word is truth."

When teachers and religious leaders and Churches and sects differ, what is to be done? To the Word and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them. People are an easy prey to all sorts of theories and fancies just because they do not know their Bibles. They have no idea of the compass of truth, and cannot tell which is north, south, east, or west. And it is to be feared the Bible is less read than ever. Yet no book so well repays attention. No book has such treasures to lay at our feet. From its pages we get a true idea of God, of man, and of sin. And as it is the *only* book, amidst the tens of thousands that have been written, which can give us true ideas on these subjects, so it is the only book in all the world that can give us a true account of the past, present, and future. One of its chief glories, and one which marks it off from every other, is that it unveils the future. This stamps it at once as divinely inspired, and makes it of unrivalled interest. For these reasons it should be our constant companion, and also, because it

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will be our unerring guide amid all that is so conflicting.

The Bible is scarcely as much read, perhaps, as it used to be, even by those who prize it most. We are all prone to accept truth second hand, rather than dig for it ourselves. But what losers we are! As well be content with a sunrise in the Bernese Oberland pictured on canvas, instead of seeing it for oneself, as be content with what another has dug from the Word. The artist might faithfully portray the effects of light and shade, but his work would after all only be a faint reflection of the glories he had seen for himself. And so may the servant of the Lord seek to convey the light in which his own soul has been bathed as he has sat entranced in the presence of divine glories; but the effect upon his hearers cannot be quite the same as upon him. Like the twelve spies, he may bring back a report of the land and even a sample of its fruit, but the grapes of Eshcol were not Eshcol itself. If any have grown slack in reading the Scriptures, let them begin with fresh zeal.

“Turn the Bible o’er and o’er,  
Read its pages more and more ;  
All the mind can e’er receive,  
Or the loving heart believe,  
In its pages can be found.  
Turn the Bible round and round ;  
O, my soul, thou hungry bird,  
Taste the honey of the Word.”

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Those who read the Word of God for themselves in dependence upon the Holy Spirit will not be dependent upon disagreeing weathercocks. As we ponder the Word and feel the breath of the Spirit sweeping over it, we shall not fail to hear the voice of truth, and as we hear that voice, we shall detect the voice of the stranger. We are persuaded that a knowledge of the Bible alone can keep people from the encroachments of Rome and the assaults of infidelity. Both superstition and rationalism are making tremendous strides to-day, and people everywhere are only safe as they are buttressed by the truth. Where this is not the case, even those who profess Christianity will have no power to stand. But where we feel the divine breathings of the Spirit, once given at Pentecost, and have a knowledge of our bearings from the Bible, it will not be difficult to discern which weathercock points in the right direction.

R. E.

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**ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

QUESTION BOX.—Ps. v. 5, xi. 5.—Your question, “*Does God love the wicked?*” is one that we hardly feel justified in answering with a direct yes or no. Either would require some guard or explanation. If we say *yes*, you confront us with those verses from the Psalms; if we say *no*, then we are brought face to face with John iii. 16 and kindred passages, which

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declare in various terms God's love towards perishing men. But this apparent difficulty vanishes away when we look at the subject in a true and scriptural light. Dealing with the psalms first of all, it is of moment to remember that however much we may profit by them, they concern Israel, and not the Church. Now Israel's blessing will be earthly, not heavenly. God will gather them out of the countries where they are now scattered and bring them into their own land again according to His immutable promises made unto their fathers. But ere that day dawns for which those who love Jerusalem are unceasingly to pray (Isa. lxii. 7), the hand of enemies will be heavy upon the Jew, and his final deliverance will be brought about by the overthrow of those that hate him. Hence in many of the psalms we find the hopes and fears of Israel in the last days—days yet to come—when the Spirit of God will produce within them exercises of heart in harmony with the circumstances in which they will then be found. Accordingly, in view of their enemies, they look to Jehovah for deliverance by the removal of these violent and deceitful men. And this constant appeal is based on the holiness of God's character and the righteousness of His government, as the psalms you quote plainly show. How should "the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness" look with complacency on the wicked, the unfaithful, the deceptive workers of iniquity whose hand was stretched out against those whose cause He had espoused? From that point of view it is impossible to say that God loves the wicked. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter iii. 12).

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But when we come to the standpoint of the gospel the matter is seen in another light. "God so loved the world," and the story of Luke xv., alike tell of His gracious disposition towards men. If it is impossible that he should love the wicked with the love of complacency, He does love them with the love of pity and compassion. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter iii. 9). The death of Christ is the undeniable witness of His love to sinners (Rom. v. 8). If one tremblingly asks, *How does God regard me?* we reply, You come back to Him, as the prodigal came, and you shall find in His heart nothing but love—pure and unupbraiding. The robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, and the merriment that has no end—all shall follow the kisses and the welcome home. This and more can be said to the wickedest of men. If any say, *How can this be?* we point to the Cross of Calvary and bid them find an answer there.

The imprecatory expressions found in some of the psalms, and which are often of such a nature as to shock the Christian mind, become better understood when it is seen that they have nothing to do with the Christian. They relate to another day and another order of things. The Christian assuredly does not pray that his enemies might be taken away, however evil they may be. He is told to love them, to bless them that curse him, and to pray for his persecutors, thus following the example of his Lord, who prayed for His murderers, and said, "*Father, forgive them.*" He is to overcome evil with good.

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A. B. P.—In the broadest sense every believer is worthy to partake of the Supper of the Lord, for were it a matter of personal worthiness none could claim that privilege. Our being at the Lord's Supper on earth is as truly a matter of divine grace as our being in heaven by-and-by. We observe what you say as to your inability to concentrate your thoughts on Him, and the poor response His love receives from your heart—all true, I dare say. But it is here the priesthood of Christ comes in. He can strengthen and help you. And after all, the point is this—Are you to wait for a happier, brighter state of soul before you answer to that gracious word, "This do in remembrance of Me," or go forward under a sense, indeed, that you are nothing, and that Christ is and must be everything? The question we shall leave for you to decide. Write again, if needs be. We shall always be glad to hear from you.

W. C.—Heb. xii. 14.—We take the words simply as they stand, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. But be careful not to set them in opposition to that free grace of God which brings salvation unto all (Titus ii. 11). Some do this, and say Christ has done His part, and we must do ours, and our part is to follow after holiness, without which we shall never get to heaven at last. This looks good, but it really divorces holiness from its true spring, makes it meritorious, and detracts from the all-sufficiency of the atonement and the fulness of divine grace. It cannot be too clearly stated that our salvation is "*not of works*" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). But the same grace that saves lays us under an everlasting obligation

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to follow holiness. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter i. 16). If any treat this obligation lightly, they do so at their own peril. Nothing is more shocking than to see a man boasting in the doctrines of grace who, in his daily life, sets the claims of holiness at defiance. It may be doubted whether such a one is a Christian at all. For let us remember that a true Christian is one born of God (John i. 13), and in whom His seed remains (1 John iii. 9). Moreover, His body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Now the instincts of the new life are all in the direction of holiness, and if the Spirit of God is the *Holy* Spirit, we may be sure He leads into holy paths. Some difference of opinion exists as to the force of the words "*see the Lord*," but whether we look upon it as seeing Him in clearness of spiritual vision now or in glory by-and-by, it makes no difference. Holiness is essential to both.

R. B.—We see no reason to doubt the genuineness of your youthful conversion even if you are right in thinking there was no deep conscience work in it, and but shallow conviction of sin. For "sin," says a well-known writer, "is not that crushing thing in early life which it sometimes becomes in later years, when we mourn not so much a calculable number of sinful acts, as a deep pervading sinfulness." If this be true, why should you—in reviewing your earlier years with the thoughts and feelings of ripening manhood—doubt the fact of your ever having been drawn to Christ at all? Many a dear young soul is attracted to Him in the freshness of affection, and learns as years increase the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the

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exceeding greatness of the grace of God that forgives and blots out all. And are you really wise in sitting on the judgment-seat in your present frame of mind, and forcing the experiences of your childhood to undergo a rigorous examination when more serious questions claim your attention and demand an answer? Do you wholly trust Christ *now*? Can you *at this moment* commit yourself to Him as one in yourself wholly lost and undone? Is He your only refuge, your only *present* hope? These are momentous inquiries. What can you say to them?

Unless we are greatly mistaken, your reply will be, "What I need is a deeper conviction of sin in the sight of God, and until I get that I can do nothing." But is this what you ought to say? Does God forbid us to believe the gospel and to embrace the Saviour till our inward experience has reached some imaginary standard? Moreover, how is this experience to be gained? Assuredly not by brooding over our deadness and want of feeling. And if you say, *Must I not repent?* our answer is that looking at your own vileness will never produce true repentance. The gravity of sin, its guilt and just deserts, are not to be apprehended by any process of that kind. Let us rather stand under the shadow of the cross of Christ and mark His tears and groans and cries when forsaken of God. Let us think of that cup which He drank and the stripes which He endured for our sakes. These will show, as nothing else can, what sin is and how grave are those moral offences that could only be put out of God's sight at such immeasurable cost.

And have you had no suspicion that underlying this constant craving for a deeper sense of sin there

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may be a form of self-righteousness? You are not willing to cast yourself upon Christ *just as you are*. Yet it is just as you are that He waits to receive you. The want of feeling, which you deplore, is an evidence of your alarming condition and an urgent reason why you should go straight to Christ without a moment's delay.

Dissatisfied with your state you well may be. And we quite understand your distress that others should regard you as a true Christian knowing nothing of you but what is seen on the surface. We should like to be of some help to you in this important matter, and will gladly try later on. But we believe the first step is to get right with God, and to have it all settled as to whether you are in Christ or not. In this connection be careful to distinguish between the Spirit's work on the conscience and the atoning work of Christ, perfect, complete, and finished. No sorrow for sin, however deep, no repentance, however profound, no tears, however sincerely shed, in short, no exercises of any kind that the Spirit may produce can contribute one jot to the blotting out of your sin before God. Christ has done all, and the instant you believe on Him the worth of that finished work avails for you. Forgiven you then will be, justified from all things (Acts xiii. 38, 39), accepted in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6), complete in Him (Col. ii. 10). Get clear as to this and then let us hear from you again.

J. M.—Matt. xi. 12.—Does not this verse mean that the kingdom of heaven, preached by the Baptist and then by the Lord Himself as being at hand, was only apprehended by earnest souls? The kingdom

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was not established in power and glory as it will be in a coming day, for the testimony of both John Baptist and the Lord was rejected, as Luke vii. 32-4 clearly states. Meanwhile, the kingdom is presented in Matthew xiii. in other forms, but who would lay hold of these in face of difficulties and opposition of men? Only those who were in earnest. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." So we understand it. In reference to your other queries, we do, indeed, believe that the same body laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, was raised, and in that body the Lord Jesus is now glorified in heaven. Who can deny it in the face of an empty sepulchre and the answer the Lord gave to the unbelief of Thomas in John xx. 25? And as to ourselves, when the Saviour comes to receive us unto Himself it is in these selfsame bodies we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. Changed they will be, no doubt, and fitted for the sphere in which our life will then be cast. As to this, the testimony of Scripture is as plain as possible (see Phil. iii. 21).

LIBERTY.—We should regard with very great distrust anyone calling himself a Christian who objected to prayer or praise ever being addressed to the Lord Jesus. So far from there being any scripture for the objection, it is quite the contrary. The scriptural definition of a Christian is that he calls on the name of the Lord Jesus. Stephen did so in the hour of his martyrdom, and Paul besought the Lord thrice for the removal of the thorn in the flesh. At the Lord's Supper, too, it is Himself who is more particularly before the heart, and to exclude all direct praise and

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thanksgiving to the One who loved the Church and gave Himself for it is to us incomprehensible. We should decline with abhorrence any proposal of the kind.

J. J.—Matt. viii. 4.—To infer from the words “*See thou tell no man*” that we are not to speak to anyone of what the Lord has done for our soul is altogether to miss the point of the passage. The man was to go to the priest and show him what had been done, that all the priesthood might know that there was One in their midst who could cleanse the leper. It was “*a testimony to them.*” The mission was urgent, the man was not to linger on the way relating to one and another in the joy of his heart the story of his cleansing. He was to go straight to the religious leaders and bear this powerful testimony to them—he himself being the living witness. Are we to suppose that when his errand was accomplished the man was forbidden to tell others what the Lord had done? For a contradiction of this principle of silence see Mark v. 19, 20 and Romans x. 9. To be always talking about ourselves is certainly not desirable, but it is the privilege and bounden duty of the Christian, on fitting occasions to make known to others what the Lord has done for him, even as Paul did in Acts xxii., xxvi., and the woman of Samaria in John iv. 29. And her simple saying was richly blessed. “Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.” How much better was this than holding her peace! Oh for more of such witnesses!

## GOD'S ARITHMETIC.

**D**URING a series of meetings in the West Indies a friend sent me a note asking if I would give an address on "The Christian's Addition Sum."

I wondered what he meant at first, but I looked up the subject and became interested in it, and in doing so found that the arithmetic of the gospel includes far more than addition. There are principles of subtraction, multiplication, and division to be mastered also.

I wish to call your attention to these four principles. We will begin with

### ADDITION.

Open your Bible at 2 Peter i. 5 and read: "Giving all diligence, *add* to your faith virtue," and so on. Needless to say, those whom the apostle addresses are believers. He writes "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." That was how they began their Christian life, but they were not to be content with that—nor are we.

We are to use all diligence to *add* to our faith, first one thing, then another.

"Add to your faith virtue." That word translated "virtue" really means "courage," and anyone can see how important a thing *courage* is in a world like this, where there is so much opposition

to Christ and His people. It needs courage to take a decided stand for Him in the midst of ungodly workmates.

Perhaps your daily duties bring you into contact with those who never mention the name of God but in swearing. It will need courage on your part to show how utterly distasteful to you such language is. Perhaps some subtle temptation is thrown in your way. You will need courage to pronounce the little word "NO." In a hundred ways the young Christian is made to feel the importance of adding to his faith courage.

Then to courage we have to add *knowledge*. Boldness is to be accompanied by intelligence. "Zeal without knowledge" you may think better than no zeal at all, but zeal *with knowledge* is a great deal better.

To knowledge we have to add temperance or sobriety; to sobriety, patience; to patience, godliness; and so on. We have to keep on adding.

Now I need hardly say that this adding is not to increase our *security*. That depends upon the atoning work of Christ, and nothing that we can do can possibly add anything to it. In its solitary dignity and abiding efficacy, Christ's precious blood stands as the sole foundation of our blessing. We might as well pluck a snail from the ivy and yoke it with the horse to draw the cart, as attempt to put anything of our own alongside the Cross.

Nor does the adding which we are exhorted to do increase our *assurance*. If our salvation depends on the work of Christ, our assurance depends on the words of God. Nothing could give greater certainty to the believer than the words which God has recorded in His book about him. What can be added to "all that believe are justified from all things"? (Acts xiii. 39).

Listen! It says, "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. xxx. 6). Add no feeling, no dream, no experience, to God's word as the ground of your assurance.

The Christian's addition sum, then, has nothing to do with either our safety or our assurance.

What is its object, then? We are not left to our own surmisings for an answer to that question. In verse 8, after the enumeration of the things that are to be added, we read, "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If you are a believer in Christ, you are as safe as His blood can make you, and you may be as sure of getting to heaven as if you were there already, for Jesus lives to keep you, and He has said of His sheep that they shall never perish. But while you remain on earth you do not want to be a barren and unfruitful Christian, do you? Then pay earnest heed to the addition sum of this chapter in 2 Peter.

## SUBTRACTION.

Subtracting, or taking away, is an important lesson for the young arithmetician to master. It is no less important for those who would learn in God's school.

Turn to Isaiah vi. and read verses 6 and 7.

"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is TAKEN AWAY, and thy sin purged."

The altar was the place of sacrifice, where the life of a guiltless victim was taken instead of the life of a guilty sinner. The live coal, taken from the altar and applied to Isaiah's lips, signifies the application to the sinner of the results of the sacrifice.

When the precious blood of Christ is applied to our souls, it is as if God said to us, "Lo, *this* hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away."

Here comes a swindler! What tales of falsehood and craft could be laid at his door! But that man, base and deceitful as he has been, kneels a repentant sinner at the feet of Jesus, and a holy calm falls upon his cleansed and renewed soul as he listens to the sweet words, "Thine iniquity is taken away." Blessed subtraction sum!

And who comes here? A man whose name is Pharisee. His cheeks would flush crimson with anger if you called him a sinner. He is as full of religiousness as an egg is full of meat.

But an arrow from the quiver of truth, sped by the hand of the Spirit of God, pierces his conscience. The scales fall from his eyes. Stripped of his religious pride, he views himself as he really is—vile, corrupt, hell-deserving.

“O Lord,” he cries, “is there cleansing for me? Canst Thou, wilt Thou, receive even me? Then I will trust Thee as only a sinner can. I will believe that Thy blood can make me whole.”

And as the hush of the Saviour's forgiving love falls upon his spirit he hears the echo of the same sweet message, “Thine iniquity is taken away.”

Who is there that would not learn a rule of subtraction so blessed as this? Is there anything that could make you happier than to have these words spoken to *you*—“Thine iniquity is taken away”? There is no reason why they should not be. The Word of Truth plainly declares that “whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

Perhaps, however, you hardly think that *my* remarks apply to *you*. You would acknowledge yourself to be a sinner, but you feel, maybe, that with all your efforts to be good, your resolutions, your prayers, and your religious inclinations, you

have not quite the same need of undergoing the process of subtraction as those whose sins are more glaring and pronounced. You consider that you have not so much to be *taken away* as others have.

Let me assure you, if such thoughts are yours, that instead of your need being less, it is greater. There is *more* of the subtraction work to be done in your case than in the case of those who have no fancied goodness of their own. For before *you* can be right with God not only must your *sins* be taken away, but your *self-righteousness* must be taken away. It is a vast subtraction sum that is necessary in your case!

Let me illustrate what I mean. Two years ago the first reception of ladies ever held in China, in the Western style, was given by Mrs. Conger, wife of the United States ambassador. Thirteen royal princesses were invited, and at the appointed hour they arrived. Much to the dismay of their hostess, however, they came with a retinue of no less than four hundred and sixty-one attendants, all of whom, according to the laws of Chinese hospitality, had to be suitably entertained. Just imagine four hundred and sixty-one uninvited and unexpected guests arriving to dinner at your house!

I don't know how Mrs. Conger managed, but of one thing I am sure, and that is that she would have much preferred that all these attendants should have been dispensed with.

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Now plenty of people seek to attend God's feast of blessing, followed by a numerous retinue of works, vows, resolutions, promises, prayers, ordinances, and so forth. That will not do. *You* are welcome to God's feast, but you must dismiss your attendants. The rule of subtraction must be enforced. All confidence in such things as I have named must be taken away. Both your sins and your self-righteousness must go.

Did you ever hear what the late Prince Albert Victor said upon his dying bed? The story runs that his royal mother took his hand in hers, and, calling him by his pet name, asked what hope he had for the future.

Looking up into her face, the dying prince quietly said—

“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

It looks as if Prince Albert Victor had learned the secret of God's subtraction sum. Prince though he was, he had nothing to cling to but Christ. Empty-handed and helpless, he knew that Christ's cross was the only ground worthy of his confidence.

Can you say the same? All who trust in Jesus like that lose their sins and gain a Saviour. The assuring words are theirs to rest on—“Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Happy the loss and great the gain.

## MULTIPLICATION.

We have considered the rule of *Addition* of which Peter speaks in his Second Epistle. The same apostle refers to a wonderful *Multiplication* sum (see 2 Peter i. 2): "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

Everyone who has believed the glad tidings knows something about grace and peace. Of these two things the gospel has much to say. It tells us of the grace of God that has brought salvation, the grace which has super-abounded over our sin, and by which we are saved and justified. It tells us also of peace, peace with God, which it is the privilege of every believer to enjoy.

But here we read, "Grace and peace be *multiplied* unto you." What does it mean?

To speak of grace first. There are many things for which we need the grace of God besides the salvation of our souls. We have a journey to make before we reach our home in heaven, and we need a provision which only grace can make for every stage of that journey.

Suppose that you are making a voyage from England to Cape Town. It is not enough that you should have a ticket which entitles you to a passage by a certain steamer. It will be two or three weeks before you reach your destination, and you will need food by the way. What you

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require is a ticket to include both passage and meals. And that is similar to what you receive through Christ. You obtain a clear title to heaven, and grace to meet every need of your soul along the way. Grace is thus *multiplied* to you.

There are many circumstances of trial and difficulty in which we find ourselves where only the grace of God can enable us to act uprightly, and conduct ourselves in a manner that shall bring glory to His Name. For this reason the promise that grace shall be multiplied unto us is worth its weight in gold.

For instance, we may live in a house where Christ is not honoured, where we get no sympathy in our endeavours to please Him, and where perhaps we are ridiculed and subjected to a hundred petty persecutions. What need we have in such a case for grace to be multiplied to us, that we may control our tempers and set a watch upon our lips, and manifest the character of Christ!

We have to learn to draw upon the resources of God's infinite and manifold grace. He never stints us. He is called "the God of ALL grace," and He gives it to us, not all in a lump, but as we need it.

I once heard of a wealthy friend who wished to help someone in distress. He decided, however, to send what he intended to give, not in a lump sum, but by instalments. So he put a cer-

tain amount in an envelope with the words, "More to follow." In due course he sent the second instalment with the same words, "More to follow." So with each future instalment. Every sum that the gentleman sent was accompanied by the message, "More to follow."

That is how God multiplies His grace to us. He gives enough for our present need, but there is always *more to follow*. No emergency can possibly arise in which we may not turn to God for a supply of His all-sufficient grace.

Then there is the *Peace* which is multiplied to us. Besides the blissful peace which is the result of seeing that the One who had our sins upon Him at Calvary is in glory without them, there is a peace that we need to keep our hearts amid the turmoil and disturbances of life.

Alas that so many of us should have such small knowledge, experimentally, of this peace, the peace of God!

*Peace with God*, as to our sins and our state, is a thing which is ours through belief of the gospel. It depends on *what God makes known to us* about the death and resurrection of Christ. But the *peace of God*, in the midst of trying circumstances, depends on *what we make known to God*. We read, "Be careful for nothing" (that is, don't be full of care, or careworn), "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

We are thus to be careful for nothing, prayerful in everything, and thankful for anything. In that spirit we are to make known our requests to God. He does not promise that in every case He will grant our requests. He is too loving and too wise to do that. But there is one thing that He does promise, namely, that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 6, 7). That is peace being *multiplied* unto us.

Elsewhere we read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." If our minds are fixed on the things that trouble us, we shall be in a state of continual unrest. But if our minds are stayed on Him, we shall be kept in perfect peace. What a delightful bit of arithmetic! God's wonderful multiplication of peace to our hearts!

Mother, when little Jenny and Harry and Susie are round you, one pulling one way and one the other; when things in the house need looking after, and the baby starts to cry, and a visitor arrives to pay a call—do you know what it is to have the peace of God in your heart *then*?

My brother, when you and your wife, with stricken hearts, stand by the bedside of your darling child, expecting that every minute will be its last; when the doctor's skill can do no more, and you realise that your only resource is God—tell me, do you at such a moment experience the blessedness of this multiplication sum?

Who would not be a Christian to have this peace at such a time? Those who remain in their sins are not only losers for eternity, they are infinite losers even in this life, for they miss the multiplied grace and peace which Christians have.

## DIVISION.

"There was a *division* among the people because of Him (John vii. 43).

What was true in the first century is true in the twentieth. Christ is still the line of division among the people.

In the world to-day various lines of cleavage are recognised between different classes of society.

*Wealth*, for instance, is a great dividing line. The question—"How much money has he got?" pretty well decides a man's position in society to-day. The rich and the poor seem to be separated from each other by a barrier that is increasingly difficult to cross.

*Nationality* is another line of division. Frenchmen are distinguishable by language, by habits, by general appearance, from Englishmen; Englishmen from Germans; Germans from Americans.

*Colour* is also a line of cleavage. There are white men, black men, red men, yellow men, and so on. There are "divisions among the people" on account of a hundred things.

But the only line of division of which *God* takes any account is *Christ*! The question with Him is not—Is a man rich or poor? Is he high-

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born or low-bred? Is he English, American, or Chinese? but—How does he treat My beloved Son? Does he believe in Him or not? Has he bowed to Him as his Lord, or is he still a Christ-rejecter?

Yes, *Christ* is the great line of division between danger and safety, between sin and salvation, between the blackness of darkness for ever and the glory and bliss of heaven.

On which side of the dividing line do you stand, reader?

Just lately there has been considerable agitation in America over the boundary line between the States of Colorado and Wyoming. When the first survey was made, it was found impossible for the surveyors to cross the wild mountains of the Medicine Bow Range. They had to make a detour, and in taking up the line further west they made an error of three miles. Two thriving towns and rich grazing land assessed at nearly a million dollars are involved, and the inhabitants of the disputed district are naturally anxious to have the matter settled once for all.

Would that *you* were as anxious as they to be sure as to which side of the line *you* are on. In your case it is not a question of land, or towns, or money, but a never-dying soul. Your eternal destiny hangs upon your position with regard to the dividing line—your attitude with respect to Christ! See to it that you get on the right side of the line.

When I was in Costa Rica I was interested in learning something of the mahogany industry. The cutters saw the noble trees into logs, and mark them with the initials of their owners. The logs are then flung into the river to find their own way down stream. Near the river's mouth a long chain is stretched from bank to bank. When the logs arrive at this point, known locally as "the boom," they are caught by the chain, and claimed by their owners according to the marks upon them.

In the same way we are all floating down the stream of life. Mingling and jostling together, onward we go, never stopping—always journeying. And each one of us is marked with the mark of his owner. Those who are Satan's are branded as his by their sins, their lusts, their hardness of heart. Those who are Christ's are sealed with the Holy Spirit. By-and-by, God only knows how soon, the separating day will come. We sing sometimes—

"Tis not far off, the hour  
When Christ will claim His own."

He will take us to His home in glory. Those who are not His, not washed in His blood, will also go to their own place. Where shall *you* be then? It depends on how you treat Christ now; on which side of the dividing line you get *now*.

H. P. B.

## TWILIGHT CHRISTIANS.

**T**WILIGHT Christians are of very doubtful reality; you cannot tell whether they are children of the day or children of the night. But wait awhile! If it be the morning twilight it will be like the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day; but if it be the evening twilight, it will grow darker and darker unto the gloomy night, for the profession of faith will be denied by the practice of iniquity. How often do we see what we think are hopeful conversions fade away like the evening light, and the promise of their bright beginnings turn to spiritual darkness! God calls things by their right names. Some go so far as to tell us we are not to judge people by saying that we believe them to be Christians, and of others that they are no Christian at all. What would they say if a person, when he had paid their garden a visit, were so polite as to call the weeds in it beautiful flowers, and the thorns apple trees? No; "By their fruits ye shall know them." We must not call the twilight daylight.

Having divided the light from the darkness, "God *called* the light day, and the darkness He *called* night." We must call sin, *sin*. Some term it indiscretion, others weakness. God declares it to be what it is. Beware of the mixing up of black and white into the fashionable neutral tint Christianity—that neither-one-thing-nor-the-

other religion which the world calls the charitable spirit.

The Christian should be known by his white garments; too many go about garbed in grey.

*Extracted.*

## AFTER MANY DAYS.

ECCLESIASTES xi. 1.

GO forth and labour! Hath not our God said,  
 "Upon the waters cast the precious bread,  
 And thou shalt find it after many days"?  
 Not for applause of men, but for His praise.  
 Why, we ourselves now reap what has been sown  
 By others, gone to rest, by us unknown,  
 But known to God. And we, what should *we* say  
 Were He to ask, "Where hast *thou* gleaned to-day?"  
 An empty hand to show! What might have been  
 Had we but laboured on, unheard, unseen!  
 But we lack patience, feebly trust our God,  
 Remember not the path by Jesus trod,  
 Remember not the way that pathway led,  
 Forget that side, those hands, those feet, that head;  
 Forget so soon! The weariness, the pain,  
 For us! Oh, let us ne'er forget the gain  
 That sprang from loss—from trust in God alone—  
 That path of shame led upward to the throne.

He watches all; yet knows we could not bear  
 To see the full result of love and prayer.  
 'Tis He that calls to labour, and we know  
 The One that bid us "come" now bids us "go."  
 Go forth! Upon the waters cast thy bread,  
 And rest in hope, because our God has said,  
 "Trust on; acknowledge Me in all thy ways":  
 Not yet, My child, but "after many days."

E. P. E.

## APPRECIATION OF CHRIST AND ITS RESULTS.

“He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. . . . If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”—JOHN xiv. 21, 23.

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—1 JOHN ii. 15.

THESE scriptures indicate to us five blessed results which flow from the heart's attachment to and appreciation of the person of Christ.

(1) “*He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father.*” The thing most precious in God's estimation is a Spirit-given appreciation of His beloved Son. He delights to find one who shares His thoughts about Christ. Only such enter into the secret of His purposes concerning Him. Our appreciation of the Son is the measure of the Father's appreciation of us. “The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me” (John xvi. 27). The heart that is devoted to Christ enjoys a continual feast of divine love. Communion with God is a communion of love. Christ is God's supreme object, and just so far as He is ours are we in communion with Him. God looks at Christ, and I look at Him, and thus we are brought together by being occupied with a common object. A self-occupied

soul is not in proper Christian communion. The knowledge and enjoyment of the Father's love is peculiar to Christianity, for only in that circle of heavenly blessing is the believer privileged to know himself in the relationship of a child, the favour of a son, and the conscious dignity of an heir of God, through Christ. The Father's heart could not be revealed while man was in a state of probation, whether in innocence or under law.

Further, no mere man could adequately express what was in the heart of God. He only, who knew all its depths, could make them known. If we would be in the realised enjoyment of the Father's love and in the full consciousness of His approbation, we must be occupied with the One in whom His *love* is expressed.

(2) "*I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.*" We must be attached to Christ if we are to enjoy and appreciate His great love to us. If we do not love a person his feelings toward us are not a matter of great importance. Also where there is little affection there is little desire for a closer acquaintance. Christ can only reveal Himself where there is a heart ready and eager to take in the revelation. We naturally open our hearts only to those who appreciate us, and of whose friendship and confidence we are assured. "He satisfieth the longing soul"; and what joy He finds in doing it! How glad He must be to find a heart longing to know Himself better—

how delighted to manifest Himself to such—to unfold the matchless glories, the deep perfections, the *hidden* beauties of His blessed Person to the enraptured vision. Love to Him and knowledge of Him walk side by side. They increase together. The more we know Him the greater will be our appreciation of His loveliness, the deeper our sense of His preciousness.

(3) “*If a man love Me, he will keep My words.*” If Christ is precious, His words are treasured. What is the real root and cause of all the widespread setting aside of the authority of Scripture in the professing Church to-day? The secret lies in the Lord’s word to Ephesus, “Thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. ii. 4). When the *heart* departs from Him, self soon rears its head, the mind of the flesh begins to assert itself, and the feet cease to tread the way of His will. Unless He has His rightful place in the heart, His words will not command unqualified obedience. If we have a great sense of the dignity and glory of the Messenger, the message He bears will be invested with great importance. Those who discerned Him as the Sent One of the Father received His words (John xvii. 8). If we think highly of Christ we shall prize the Scriptures which the Spirit uses to reveal Him.

(4) “*We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.*” Not only are our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost, but our hearts become

the habitation of the Father and the Son, the dwelling-place of Divine Persons. "That Christ may *dwell* in your hearts by faith" was the burden of Paul's prayer for the Ephesian saints. If we cleave to Him with full purpose of heart we shall always enjoy the blessedness of His company. We may pay a visit to a house where we are not appreciated, but we would not like to *dwell* there. The Lord went into Simon the Pharisee's house, but He was not at home there, because Simon's heart did not really desire Him. He does not wish to be a guest in our hearts, but an honoured inmate. A guest is required to conform to the ways of the household he visits, but if Christ *dwells* in our hearts He is acknowledged as Head, and must control the whole life. When He has won our hearts He holds the key to the citadel of our being. If He abides in us there can be no discord. All contrary elements must go. The heart in which He thus dwells appreciates His love and enjoys the sweet intimacy of divine friendships. Supremely satisfied with Him, we are content to do without the world. The love of the Father and the Son is found a boundless, an all-sustaining, and *eternal portion*.

(5) "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" It does not say the Father ceases to love His child, but that love is not a present living reality in the soul. The Father's heart can only be *enjoyed* in the place of separa-

## AND ITS RESULTS.

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tion. When the prodigal was seated at the father's table feasting with him on the fatted calf, he was totally separated from the far country. All the traces of his sojourn there were completely removed. People will never get clear of the world until their hearts are wrapped up in a worthier object. Then it ceases to be a giving up, and becomes a casting away of that which is seen to be empty, worthless, and unsatisfying. If our hearts have an exalted estimate of the attractiveness of Christ, things "under the sun" lose their charm.

"All around in noonday splendour,  
Earthly scenes lie fair and bright ;  
But our eyes no longer see them  
For the glory of that light."

We can only keep ourselves unspotted from the world as we keep ourselves in the love of God. Just in proportion as we appreciate Christ we cease to appreciate the world. Our practical detachment from it is measured by our attachment to Him. Attraction and detraction go together. The power that draws us *to* Him draws us *from* all that is unlike Him.

"Oh, brothers, was it sorrow,  
Though thousand worlds were lost ?  
Our eyes have looked on Jesus,  
And thus we count the cost."

J. W.

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A. J.—John iii. 36.—We receive every part of this verse exactly as it stands, and cleave to the closing clause as firmly as to the rest. If we hold, as we surely do, that he who believes on the Son has everlasting life, we also hold that he who is not subject to the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abides* on him. The solemn force of the latter clause is not to be enfeebled nor a doubt cast on its present and universal application.

Your difficulty, if we mistake not, lies in your inability to see how love and wrath can be in the same heart at the same time. If God loves sinners, you cannot understand how His wrath *abides* on any. This arises from your not distinguishing between God's gracious disposition towards all men—even the worst of them—and what He necessarily is, as the great moral Governor in the holiness of His nature and the righteousness of His ways. For all are under responsibility to Him, and "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 12). Now while it is true that God loves sinners, that He so loved them as to give His only begotten Son for their sakes, yet it is also true that "God is a righteous Judge, and God is angry every day" (Ps. vii. 11). You may say, How can that be if God is love? Is it possible to love and yet be angry? Certainly. When the heartless religionists of the synagogue watched the Lord to see whether He would show mercy on the Sabbath day, it is said that "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark iii. 5). Was such anger incon-

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sistent with His gracious love towards all? May not a father be justly angry with his children and yet love them intensely? Again, when the blessed Lord was bearing our sins on the cross, were not the vials of God's righteous wrath poured out upon Him? Yet He was never dearer to the Father's heart than then. So, beyond doubt, love and righteous wrath may exist at the same moment in the same person.

Coming now to the word *abides*, concerning which you particularly inquire, the form of the verb marks it as a present thing, "The wrath of God *abides* on him." But there is no real difficulty as to that. For what is the condition of all men by nature? Are they not spoken of, yea, the very best of them, as "children of wrath, even as others"? (Eph. ii. 3). Are they not this in virtue of their relation to Adam? Thank God, there is deliverance from this state of wrath in which all the children of Adam are, as also from the wrath incurred by their own individual sins. It is found in Christ, in Him who is the only begotten Son of God. The soul in receiving Him passes out of death into life, out of that state to which wrath applies into the cloudless sunshine of God's favour, and his trespasses are forgiven. But so long as Christ is not believed in "to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16), so long does the wrath of God *abide* on him who thus acts. He remains a child of wrath, aggravating his own guilt by not submitting to the Son. The Father loves the Son; into His hands all things have been committed, in Him there is life and peace for all, and He is the only Ark of refuge. But if men do not believe on Him, they continue to be "children of wrath," and though God be love, that fact does not

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alter their state as children of fallen Adam in the least.

Nor do we believe that "God's attitude of grace towards all," to quote your phrase, should hinder us from pointing out to men the sorrowful condition in which they are, and what must ultimately befall them if God's grace be despised. It is no real love to their souls to hide from them their true state and not to warn them of their sins and of their insane and inexcusable neglect of God's great salvation. You may tell me that such testimony is not the gospel. I know it. But were the first messengers of Christ charged to preach nothing but what can be strictly called the gospel? Were they not commanded "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be *the Judge* of quick and dead"? (Acts x. 42). That undoubtedly was a part of their commission. Is, then, the evangelist of the twentieth century not to follow their steps? Is *he* never to portray before the eyes of men that just but solemn tribunal at which Christ Himself shall sit, and which the Holy Ghost describes in majestic and awe-inspiring terms in Revelation xx. 11-15? Is he always to present to careless sinners "God's present attitude," and never to whisper a word of what His future attitude will be when grace gives place to judgment? Let those do so who care to do so. To their own Master they stand or fall. For our own part we are persuaded that it should be preached—not harshly, but solemnly, tenderly, with deep feeling and with tears. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. v. 11). Blessed be God, we can also tell them of the Saviour's glorious words,

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so plain, so simple, and so sure : " 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 judgment* ; but is passed from death unto life " (John v. 24). If such words are disregarded and such grace despised, then the despiser, abiding in his unbelief, *abides* a child of wrath. He adds sin to sin, and treasures up for himself wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. ii. 5).

C. E.—Romans x. 9.—This confession with the mouth of Jesus as Lord is the outward evidence of the faith of the heart which none but God can see. It is the soul standing boldly forth in its confession before men that the One whom the world cast out and crucified is Lord, and that everything belongs in right to Him. And assuredly this confession accompanies the earliest dawn of faith. We behold it in the cry of the penitent malefactor, and particularly so in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. But if our glad acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord begins there, it is to be maintained all our earthly days. It should be the joy of the Christian's heart to proclaim Christ as universal Lord, to whom every knee should bow, and to own Him now as his Lord, to be honoured, loved, obeyed at all times and under all circumstances. Philippians iii. 8 shows how unreservedly Paul did this. What unalloyed happiness would be ours continually if we did the same !

L.—We are entirely of your opinion that very much good might be done by circulating among our

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fellow-Christians such helpful books as *Letters to Believers*, *Unsearchable Riches*, *The True Grace of God*, *The Believer Established*, and many others of a similar sort. Not a few of our readers take extra copies of this magazine and place them in the hands of others to whom it is likely to be useful. We should rejoice were many more to follow their example. And how great is the need! Dark are the days in which we live. The perilous times of 2 Timothy iii. are upon us, and from pulpit, platform, and press the foundations of the Faith are being shamelessly assailed. Even where things have not yet gone so far, the dear sheep of Christ are often led into doubtful pastures. Thank God, this is not the case everywhere. But unless we are living in a little enclosure of our own, over whose walls we never cast a glance, we must see where things are rapidly drifting. Oh to be up and doing! seeking to feed the flock of God by every possible means, and putting forth our most earnest endeavours to make known His saving gospel. Alas! how many priceless opportunities have slipped through our fingers!—they are gone beyond recall. What shall we say when they confront us at our Master's judgment seat? May our gracious Lord forgive our indifference and stir us up to holy zeal in His blessed service!

K. B.—We sincerely feel for you in the deep distress of soul through which you are passing, and out of which you find no exit. But you are indeed mistaken in looking on Lazarus, dead, buried, and gone to corruption, as a picture of yourself. If he be a picture of anybody, it is of one dead in sins, in

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whose soul there is not a single throb of divine life. Assuredly that is not your case.

Do you clearly see that *faith* is the first and necessary step to our realising any divine truth, and that it would be perfect folly to seek to realise what we were not sure was already absolutely true of us? We scarcely think you do. Imagine a village maiden trying to realise herself Queen of England! and if after a while she began to realise it and to give herself grand airs, would it not provoke our pity and prove her fit for Bedlam? But when Princess Victoria, in her girlhood, was woke up from her sleep in the early hours of the morning by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain, and learnt that she was Queen, she might then have justly endeavoured to realise the high honour that had come upon her with all its tremendous responsibilities. But then she *was* Queen. So with us. We can only realise what is already true, and *faith*, we repeat, is the first and indispensable step. Do you ask what we mean by faith? We reply, *The soul's sincere belief that a thing is true because God says it.* That is faith, and to that point the Holy Ghost would ever lead you. Here let me give you a word of counsel. Whenever you come across some gracious word of the Lord, look at it steadily, and say, "*Oh, how true that is!*" It must, of course, be true if He says it. Let us put this plan into practice at once. Suppose we begin with Ephesians ii. 4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together,

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and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now look steadfastly on those words; mark the *haths*, and say from your heart, "*Oh, how true that is!*" What is true? That God, for His great love where-with He loved us, when we were dead in sins, *hath* quickened us together with Christ, and *hath* raised us up together, and so on. Why, that is the very thing you have been asking God to do with such agonising cries morning, noon, and night! If you answer, But if that be so, how is it that I have not realised it? Because you have been putting the cart before the horse. Instead of believing and then seeking to realise, you have pursued exactly the opposite course. Now act differently. Thank God for such abounding grace; thank Him that He has done all this; *never doubt it*, but keeping your eye on the text, say constantly, "*Oh, how true that is!*" and then ask Him to help you to understand, to realise, and to enjoy what His grace has done for you, and which you would no more doubt than you would call Him a liar. Finally, never think of trying to love Christ. "Trying to love" is an ill-assorted phrase. We can hardly think of a wife *trying* to love her husband, or a mother her children. It is unnatural, and, moreover, what a state would such words betray! All of us no doubt wish to love the Lord more than we do, but if we love Him at all it is because He first loved us. Should the littleness of our love lead us to doubt the greatness of His? Let us forget ourselves, with all our wretched littlenesses, and think of Him. Then, as we grow in the knowledge of Himself, our love will grow without our thinking a bit about it, and self will be displaced by Christ.

## “EVEN SO, COME”;

### OR, THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

**T**HERE are millions in the world to-day who believe in Christ's first coming. The fact that there was such a person as Jesus—the Jesus of the gospels—is admitted even by those who will not allow His claim to be the Son of God, or give credence to all that is said concerning Him. Even the effort of rationalists to disprove much that is recorded in the gospels has only brought into greater prominence the fact that the One they speak of actually lived and died in the country, and at the time, they specify. So that no intelligent person now disputes the authenticity of the prophet of Nazareth; everybody accepts as proved beyond all dispute that He once lived on earth.

Multitudes, of course, believe far more than this. They believe in His miraculous birth, His divinity, His works of mercy beyond all mere human power to perform, His death, not merely as a martyr, but as a substitute for their sins, and His resurrection on the third day and subsequent ascension to heaven.

Yet although all this is believed, it is astonishing how little the *second* coming of our Lord is before the minds of believers. Having done so much for them, we might have thought that His

return would have been that for which they longed and waited, especially as before going away it became one of the most prominent topics of His conversation, and He left it as the distinctive hope of His people. It was that for which they were to wait and watch.

Not many years passed, however, before this hope grew dim, becoming at last well-nigh obliterated. And this state of things continued for centuries. But God has been pleased once again to revive it. The subject has been brought to the front and discussed in many a printed page and on many a platform. So that there are few earnest Christians now but what accept the fact, and many have learned to distinguish between the rapture and the appearing, and understand a great deal as to the events that will transpire between the two.

But it is not with this aspect that we wish to engage your attention now. This article is not written in order to add anything to the reader's knowledge, but to ask the question, not do we know about the Lord's coming? or even do we believe it? but something more important at the present moment, do we *desire* it?

The apostle Paul in his second epistle to Timothy speaks of *loving* Christ's appearing. It is well to notice where this remark occurs. It is in the *second*, not the first epistle to Timothy. When he wrote his first epistle it might have

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been supposed that everybody calling himself a Christian did love it; when he writes his second he is obliged to take notice of a change, and to leave on record a statement showing the sad declension that had taken place in one of his own immediate followers. “Demas hath forsaken me,” he says, “having loved this present world.” What a contrast to “*loving His appearing*”!

Does everybody calling himself a Christian love Christ’s appearing now? Has not Demas many followers? It behoves us all at the present moment to put to ourselves the solemn and searching question, Do I *love* His appearing? Again, let it be stated, it is not enough to know about it. We may be acquainted with all the facts that will precede and follow the appearing, and yet not love it. If I love it, it will be the one prominent thing before me, and occupy my thoughts continually.

Could the closing days of the year be better engaged than in coming to a right conclusion on this matter?

Think of the importance of the event. All Scripture points on to it. If Peter could say in the house of Cornelius, speaking of Christ, that “to Him give all the prophets witness,” he can also say on a previous occasion (referring to the appearing and the times of restitution of all things), that God had spoken of it “by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world

began." The fact is, the first coming is incomplete without the second. Heaven has received Him in expectation of it. Christ sits at God's right hand expecting until His enemies be made His footstool. Can we love Him and not share this expectation? It is a grand thing to be in sympathy with the mind of heaven, and all heaven waits for the Lord to come that it may witness His joy in having His redeemed with Him, and see Him in His rightful place on earth.

If Simeon could wait so ardently for the first coming, ought not we to share the same expectancy in regard to the second? In the case of that man of God, we see how distinctly the Holy Ghost led him to wait for the consolation of Israel. Would not the Holy Ghost now lead us to definitely expect and *desire* a larger consolation, viz. our own blissful portion in the Father's house, to see the One who has enthralled our hearts, and the world at rest at His feet?

"From whence also we look for the Saviour," says one who loved His appearing—"the Saviour." Is there any other "saviour" for mankind, or for a poor, bleeding, groaning world, than the One we already know as our Saviour? Yes, "the Saviour"—the "Saviour" in the widest sense—we look for Him. And if we know what He has done for us, and will yet do, and what He can do for the world, we can not only look for Him, we can invite Him to come. "The Spirit and the Bride

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say, Come.” If the Holy Spirit is very definitely and distinctly connected with Simeon and his expectation of the Lord, He is also very definitely and distinctly connected with the invitation that now goes forth for Christ to return, as indicated in Revelation xxii. This is the point He would now lead us to. We have long known about the coming; it is now for us to desire it, and if we desire it, we shall say, “Come.” This puts us at once in line with the movement of the Holy Spirit, and a rich blessing to our souls is sure to be the result.

But this is not all. Not only will there be blessing, but what an expectation we may have of a speedy answer! It is the Bride, with the Spirit, says “Come.” May we not expect Christ to respond to an invitation coming from one in such close relationship to Himself? We have a special claim upon His heart. Has He not prepared our place in the Father’s house, and does He not long to see us filling it, and do we not long to be there? He says, “Surely I come quickly,” as if to make us feel how anxious He is to have us. May the response from our hearts then be, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

“O kindle within us a holy *desire*,  
Like that which was found in Thy people of old,  
Who tasted Thy love, and *whose hearts were on fire*  
While they waited in patience Thy face to behold.”

R. E.

## ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

**W**HAT a wonderful announcement came from the lips of the risen Lord when He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father: and to My God, and your God" (John xx. 17).

Why was this communication, so pregnant with meaning, first made to her? It was, no doubt, the reward of her attachment to the Lord and of her intense devotedness to Him. Not only was her heart knit to the Lord because of His delivering grace, but she was firmly attached to Him by what she had subsequently learnt of Himself.

It is to those who are devoted to Him that the Lord communicates His mind.

A person may have great scriptural intelligence and not much heart. Have we not seen many examples of this?—men of learning and rich in Biblical lore, who, when it came to be a simple question of what suited the Lord, seemed altogether at a loss; while another, with slender stores of knowledge, but devoted to Him, easily discerned His mind and the path of His will.

The presence of the risen Saviour in the midst of His disciples was the evidence that peace had been made. "Peace be unto you" were the words with which He saluted them. He had gone into

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death, of which the marks in His hands, feet, and side were the unmistakable signs, and had borne the judgment of sin, and annulled death and him that had the power of death. Everything that rested upon us of an adverse nature, all that stood between God and us, had been for ever cleared away. He came out of the grave and made known to His disciples the full results of His accomplished work.

No wonder their hearts **were** glad. His resurrection filled them with the deepest joy—such joy as they had never known before. But not only has He made peace by abolishing all that stood against us, but He died and rose again that He might bring us into another condition perfectly suitable to God. “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Eph. ii. 15–17).

Apart from the death of Christ we must have remained for ever in the condition of moral death in which we were by nature. The Corn of wheat *must die* or abide alone (John xii. 24). The death of Christ closed up in judgment our old state, and in Christ risen the believer is brought into a new one. We are now viewed as in Christ where

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there is no condemnation, and hence we are in the place of cloudless peace.

It is important to see that not only is all this true, but that we are also associated with Him in His own place as man before God. As previously remarked, that He might not abide alone He went into death, and now in resurrection He is a Man of a new order, though still the same blessed Person. We are of the same order spiritually, and hence He could say, "My brethren." "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 48). "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are all of one*: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11).

Ask the majority of believers, What was the object of Christ's death? and we fear you will find little idea of anything beyond His having died to save us from eternal judgment and secure for us a home in heaven. Present association with Him has no place in their thoughts. How many who are professedly evangelical, and speak of having more light than others, are seeking after a sanctification which is simply an improvement of the flesh which God has set aside in the death of Christ!

How feebly the blessed and soul-emancipating fact is entered into that Christ has not only cleared us from all the judgment that rested upon us as sinners, but that He has brought us into

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His own place before the Father. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Wonderful statement! Marvellous grace! Soon we shall be displayed publicly in the same glory. Then the world shall know that the Father loves us even as He loves the Son (John xvii. 22, 23).

When Abraham sent his faithful servant to seek a bride for Isaac, the one thing that he was most particular about was that she should be of the same kindred (Gen. xxiv. 4). In this way Rebekah typifies the Church. She must be of the same stock to be united to the heavenly Isaac—Christ.

What a joyful moment it must have been in Adam's history when God presented Eve to him. He had been placed head over all creation, but for him there was no helpmeet found until that moment. He wanted one to be a suitable object for his affections. That he might have such a one, God caused him to fall into a deep sleep (typical, I need not say, of Christ in death). From his side Eve was taken and given to him. "Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen. ii. 23).

Eve was not of a different order because she was taken out of Adam. This is most beautiful and perfect. In Ephesians v. Paul brings in the figure as representing Christ and the Church. He says, "We are members of His body, of His

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flesh, and of His bones"; and adds, "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

And, in a day to come, even our bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then shall we receive "our house which is from heaven," as the apostle speaks in 2 Corinthians v., and Christ "shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10).

This will be when the Church is manifested in the same glory with them. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: . . . and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, *and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*" (John xvii.).

What a bright and blessed day awaits us! Soon shall we be in all the joy and delight of the Father's house for ever, and we shall see His glory. "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."

May such grace humble us and fill our hearts with joy unspeakable, may it lead us to be more devoted to Christ in a world where He was and still is rejected.

P. W.

## GRACE MISUNDERSTOOD.

**“How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”—MARK ii. 16.**

**S**TRANGE company indeed! We say amongst men that “like draws to like,” but here we find that rule contradicted. What greater unlikes could be conceived than the sinless Saviour and publicans and sinners? Yet He saw fit to eat and drink with such. But in so doing He condescended in grace: He did not associate Himself with them. A fellowship that resulted from community of thought or feeling, and that would, therefore, have marred all testimony to holiness, was far from His mind.

Grace led Him to stoop, and hence He ate and drank with publicans and sinners.

The Pharisees, forsooth, were scandalised. The very essence of their religion consisted in external separation from sinners. That was the badge of their piety. Their motto was, “Stand by, for I am holier than thou”; their self-complacent language, “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men.” Subtract these two elements from their profession and you leave nothing but a broad phylactery. There was nothing either divine or rational in their religion.

And these were the people who took exception to this grace of the Lord Jesus! They it was

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who felt themselves insulted and ignored by the sympathy He deigned to show the publican and sinner!

But, after all, what was the moral difference between the two classes? Was the distinction so enormous that no connection could be found? the gulf so large that no bridge could span it? Place a Pharisee and a publican side by side, and make a moral examination of the two men; analyse their hearts, search their inmost thoughts, and discover if the contrast is so great.

They are children, both of them, of fallen Adam; the heart of each is "desperately wicked"—the one follows a course of open sin, the other indulges it in the dark; the one is, at any rate, transparent in his folly, the other disguises it by his cloak of deceitful sanctity.

Which is the worse?

The gracious Lord condescended to eat with the sinner. Had He done otherwise He had cut all ground of hope from the Pharisee. A Pharisee is, after all, a sinner, though he may disdain the term, and the grace of Christ is his only hope. Yet he, alas! must say, "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" Better far adore the grace that led Him to do so.

J. W. S.

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## THE SCHOOL OF GOD.

I SAMUEL xvii.

**"He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."**

PSALM cxliv. 1.

THERE is one feature common to all those who have been trained of God for His own service; they have had to do with Him in secret before they have become prominent in the eyes of men. The contrast to this is that restlessness of the flesh which seeks to attract attention before the soul has had this needed discipline. They run without being sent; and have to learn themselves by their own painful failures. God has His secret ways of training for His service.

It was so with David. He had been under God's teaching. He had been preparing for public service in the secret school of Him who looketh not on the outward appearance, and who seeth not as man seeth. Now so it must be with us. There must be a living before the Lord. Unless our souls are exercised before Him, He will not use us as instruments in His service. We may think He will, but it will not be so. God will always have to do in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. The excellent wisdom of our God in this may be seen in the history of many of His most eminent servants. They come forth in the hour of need, prepared for its peculiar exigencies. They are

found calm, wise, and enduring, when all around are perplexed and in fear. All they say and do tells us that they have been prepared for their work. And their preparation for this has been their living in secret before Him who is so infinitely greater than all, even before the living God!

Thus is it here with David. In the desert he had learnt the resources which faith has in God; and now he is to be the champion of God against the champion of the uncircumcised. The lion and the bear he had slain already, unseen by men; now he comes forth to triumph over Goliath, in the sight of the armies of Israel and of the Philistines.

Beloved, mark this: David had had to do with the living God. And I ask whether our failures are not invariably here, that we have not been in secret with the living God! This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we value living with God even more than living before the saints and with the saints? I believe we prefer living before the saints and with the saints, to living before God and with God. We may be comforted when surrounded by the saints, but our strength is in walking in fellowship with the living God, knowing that we are to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

But let us follow David as he passes to the

presence of Saul. What conscious dignity, what entire self-possession, are now seen in David! "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (v. 32). While the whole army of Israel trembles, one stripling stands before the king and says, "Let no man's heart fail him." Yes, there is in faith that self-possession which enables us, not only to feel, but also to minister comfort and confidence, amidst the most trying circumstances. Faith draws from resources untouched by circumstances; and therefore, instead of being overcome of trial, is able, as the apostle says, "to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i. 4).

David had already gone through trial, and had therefore proved the God in whom he trusted. "He knew whom he had believed." He had been in danger before, and had been victorious; therefore is he confident now. There had been dealings between his soul and God in the wilderness: dealings, it would seem, never brought out to public light until this moment (vv. 34-37). Oh, beloved, where is it that the saints learn really to get the victory? I believe, where no eye sees us save God's. The heartily denying of self; the taking up the cross *in secret*; the knowing the way, in the retirement of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and everything

that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; *these are our mightiest achievements*. The closet is the great battlefield of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there, and then shall we be able to stand firm ourselves, and to comfort and build up others also, in the hour of conflict.

“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him.” Saul looks at David and then at Goliath; and speaking *as a man*, Saul was right. But Saul knew not the secret of God which David had learnt. Saul never knew what David was now going to tell. If Eliab had done such exploits, he would not have kept it secret for a day; but David had learned in another school, a school in which he had been taught not to make much of David, but of the living God. David, therefore, so far as the Scriptures inform us, had never boasted of, or even mentioned, his victory; but when the occasion demands it, he can come forward and tell of the Lord's goodness unto him. So with the apostle: “I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago,” etc. For fourteen years no one, it seems, knew he had been up to the third heaven; but when an occasion comes to bring it out for his Master's glory, not for his own glory, then he declares it. A great deal more was going on between the Lord and Paul than anyone else knew. So it was with David. Beloved, be assured that if you would really be strong, it must

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be by secret living before God. I believe that the reason why we are all so weak is that we care so little about this secrecy before God. We are ready and eager to run into some service to be seen of men, but do we esteem unseen communion and discipline before God beyond all? Depend upon it, if there is not the slaying of the lion and the bear in secret, there will be no killing of Goliath in public—no power or wisdom in our public service.

“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (*v.* 37). David knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God, we do not put difficulty by the side of difficulty; for what is difficulty to Him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes as the plain. Too often, beloved, we think that, in little things, less than omnipotence will do; and *then* it is that we fail.

Thus is it here with David. He well knew that he was no match for Goliath. None need tell David that. He felt himself to be less than either Eliab, or Saul, or Goliath thought him to be. Nevertheless, he could go forth in most perfect confidence. He knew that he should be delivered. Out of weakness he was made strong.

“And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord

be with thee." Having said this, Saul clothes David in his own armour. "He put an helmet of brass on his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail." Saul could *say*, "The Lord be with thee," but Saul knew not how to trust in the Lord as David knew. He sought to arm David as Goliath was armed: he brought forth these his own carnal weapons. But these will not suit the soldier of faith. The moment David had got Saul's armour on, he could not move at all. All was constraint; all was effort.

But how often have we clothed ourselves, or allowed ourselves to be clothed, in such encumbrances, without detecting at once, as David did, their unfitness, and casting them from us. Have we not often worn them complacently; yea, gone forth to fight in them? Have we not often acted as though God's work needed help by this or that form of human power; as though what was begun in the Spirit could be made perfect by the flesh? and therefore we have had to learn our folly and unbelief in our discomfiture and loss.

It was not so with David here. He instantly detects that the wrought and polished armour of Saul befits not the soldier of faith. The word of Saul was good, but that word was belied by such arming as this. And I believe that those, with whom God deals much in secret, will be like David here; they will quickly, intuitively, as it were, discern and reject the advances of

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the flesh. They will thus distinguish between the precious and the vile. There will be an acuteness of spiritual *sense* (Phil. i. 9) in such, which is acquired nowhere but in direct communion with God. And hence, when out among the snares and wiles of the foe, if a film pass for a moment over the eye of their faith, and so a false object attract them, its falseness will be *felt*, even when not *seen*. Thus is it here with David. He stands a moment, indeed, to put on the whole armour of Saul; but just when Saul must have thought him armed for the battle, David feels himself fettered and burdened. The world's most skilful aids are faith's surest hindrances.

Remember, therefore, beloved, that he who has much to do with God in secret *cannot use these carnal weapons*. And surely this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the living God into all our service; that we may be thus prepared to detect and to mortify all the pretensions and advances of the flesh. For it is sad indeed, through want of this, to see a saint trying to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armour. Thus the world obtains a place in the church. Its principles and its powers are recognised in the very place where God has written, "Love not the world"; "All that is in the world is not of the Father"; "The friendship of the world is enmity with God."

But David goes not forth unarmed to the fight, though he casts from him the armour of Saul. He took his staff, the five smooth stones in his shepherd's scrip, and his sling; thus armed he drew nigh to the Philistine (*v.* 40). But what simple armour is this! If David overcomes Goliath with this, surely the victory must be the Lord's. This armour was never wrought by art and man's device: the running brook had given these stones their smoothness. But faith is always thus armed. The armour of faith, therefore, is always weak and foolish in the eye of men. God's mightiest victories have been won by instrumentality which man has most despised.

"And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David" (*v.* 41). And disdaining David and his armour, Goliath says, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" Remember this, beloved, that the flesh always thinks itself insulted because our weapons are not such as itself uses. The flesh likes to see sword opposed to sword; helmet against helmet; the flesh loves its own. But David said, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Thus David puts the question on its true basis. It is now a question simply between the Lord of hosts and the Philistine. David puts David quite out of the question, and

brings God Himself in, as the antagonist of Goliath. Thus should it always be with us. What are we? What is the foe? It matters not what we are, or what is the power of the foe; it signifies not however mighty the one or weak the other. Will not God vindicate His own name? David came in the name of the Lord of hosts; and will not God be jealous of His own name? Will He allow the Philistine to triumph over that? Never! Here, then, is the might of faith. Faith always brings in omnipotence. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is ever the word of faith.

And living before God in secret will ever make us act, if I may so speak, on the aggressive. This is remarkable in David. He says (*vv.* 46, 48), "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine." David tarried not, faltered not; but instantly used his simple arms, and smote his foe to the earth. "*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.*"

It was not then that David merely waited to be attacked, but he hasted, and ran to meet the Philistine. The confession of the name of the

Lord proceeds most powerfully from us, when we have learnt in secret the value of that name. Then grace and wisdom are often given, even to act aggressively against evil. But surely we have learnt how much grace, how much of Christ, it really requires to stand in testimony against evil! How do we fail in this for lack of more cultivated communion with God! Mark how calmly and deliberately, though instantly, David took the stone. There was no show of effort; it was done just as though he had been in the wilderness with no eye upon him but God's. And the Lord directed that stone, just as He had enabled him to overcome both the lion and the bear! Thus David prevailed; and thus does faith ever prevail. I believe that at this present moment there is much opportunity for such service of faith; but power for it must be sought by secret living before God. Then whatsoever service our hand finds to do, we shall be enabled to do it in God's strength. If a saint be greatly blessed of the Lord in public, we may be sure God has been dealing with him in secret in a way we had not supposed. But how often, after a Christian has been signally used in service, do we see him failing in some comparatively little matter. Such failure, too, often comes from forgetfulness of that injunction: "Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

J. L. H. (*Abridged.*)

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. D. B.—Perhaps we are a little old-fashioned in our ideas, but we cannot resist the conviction that when a Christian young man begins to smoke it is a sure sign that spirituality has begun to decline. We may be wrong, but such is our belief. Still, if smoking is conducive to your health, if the money spent in its indulgence cannot be better spent, if the habit produces no uneasiness of conscience, above all, if in smoking you are quite sure that you are glorifying God in your body (1 Cor. vi. 20), then no objection can be taken to it. On the other hand if the practice is prejudicial, as medical men constantly declare, if your conscience chides you about it, if the needs of the poor and the pressing claims of the work of the Lord do really offer a better investment for your money and a surer return at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and if there is any reason to think that the glory of God would be rather promoted by your not smoking, then, we say, by all means let the habit be eschewed. Your body is the Lord's: why sin against it? Your conscience, if awake, is a faithful monitor: why disregard it? Your money is a matter of stewardship: why spend it in smoke? And surely there are less doubtful ways of glorifying God than toying with tobacco.

P. A.—At the Supper of the Lord we attach no particular significance either to the breaking of the Bread by the ministering brother or to the pouring of the Wine into the cup, for the emblems are apart before either is done, and they are under our eyes ere any action is taken. This being so, the details of

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which you speak are of but little importance, and to bestow much attention upon them is to miss the larger meaning attached to this solemn but blessed Christian privilege.

J. W.—We are not sure that we quite understand your question, but if we do, then it seems to us rather a strange one. Surely it would be singular had we no means of knowing who are true Christians and who are not. Were this the case no Christian fellowship could possibly exist. Now we know that every believer is born of God and is a partaker of the divine nature. The outward marks of this, according to 1 John iii., are the practice of righteousness and love to the brethren. Wherever these are seen they are the sure signs of a divine work in the soul. If we are born of God, we necessarily and naturally love everyone else that is born of Him, and if thrown together we soon find out that we have things in common that are infinitely precious to both. Here I cannot do better than quote the words of another: "How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond!" No doubt in this day of widespread profession and of so much worldliness and unreality it is more difficult to discern who are the Lord's and who are not, but when brought into contact it soon becomes evident. The traits of the divine nature are unmistakable.