

THE
Christian's Helper.

"By love serve one another."—Gal v. 13.

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HANNAH'S SONG.

(1 Samuel ii. 1-10.)

“Ask, and ye shall receive,” is a Divine announcement, for prayer unlocks the treasury of God, and brings forth its hidden wonders. Of this Hannah is a marked and beautiful illustration. She had had to endure the sting of persecution, and in consequence sorrow had been uppermost in her soul, but now her joy was full; and having received that for which she had so earnestly prayed, her plaint gives place to an outpouring of praise. In the day of her lack and gloominess she betook herself to her God, and found Him a sure resource and a hearer of prayer. And now, with a heart welling over with gladness, she, guided by the Spirit of God, joyfully pours forth her song of thanksgiving. And in her effusion of praise she speaks of Jehovah's character, power, and grace; of the deposition of all His enemies; and lastly, of the exaltation of His King.

In this the moment of her rejoicing her God formed the centre of her joy, and not the blessing which she had received. *Of that she does not first speak.* “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies.” Weeping had endured for a night, but joy had indeed come in the morning. The evening of adversity had been succeeded by the morn of prosperity, as calm follows the storm. The bitter taunts of the enemy, reminding of barrenness and lack, did

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but precede the blessing of the Lord. Hannah had prayed and waited, and the treasure sought had been obtained, "because," as she says, "I rejoice in Thy salvation." The trial of faith is never valueless, and how happy the issue when patience has had her perfect work. The trial is the prelude to richer joy and deeper blessing. Disappointment at times seizes the hearts of God's saints, but our God is the God of salvation (Ps. lxxviii. 20), and since it is *His salvation* in which we boast, we can remember that all must eventually be radiant with the brightness of it. And how applicable here the words of the Apostle Peter, who, when reminding the saints of the salvation to be revealed, declares, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Pet. i. 6-8). Let the night of sorrow be illumined with this joy; for there is One still in Whom the redeemed soul rejoiceth, though hid from mortal vision. Faith pierces the veil that hides Him, and beholds Him already crowned with honour and glory.

And who was this Jehovah of whom Hannah speaks? He was the Holy One, for she exclaims, "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside Thee." In grace He had come near to her, and so it was peculiarly fitting that she should bear testimony to this. The people among whom Jehovah dwelt had well-nigh forgotten it, yet the heart that had received such a definite proof and pledge of His abundant grace testified to it. He was the Holy One, and there was none beside Him, she emphatically states.

But strength was His also, affording protection to the tried saint. And how sweetly David, when he exults, accords with Hannah when deliverance has been wrought

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for her. She says, "Neither is there any rock like our God;" and he re-echoes, "For who is God save Jehovah? and who is a rock, save our God?" (2 Sam. xxii. 32). Both had been in the furnace of affliction and trial, and emerging triumphantly therefrom as polished shafts, they sing. Fruitful and sanctifying trial often proves to be to the Lord's. His love and grace are made the more real by them, and though they may be far from welcomed, yet it is no mean experience to have *proved* the all-sufficiency of His sustaining grace when dark clouds have hovered threateningly around.

Nor is this all. Hannah would quiet the proud boasts of vain men by the heart-searching truth that "Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." He takes cognisance of the action and perfect knowledge is with Him. Arrogancy would cease were the power of this resting on heart and conscience. Who would, who could, talk exceeding proudly if such a truth was remembered? Solemn and subduing indeed must this word be to those who occupy the place of oppressors; but yet how cheering and elevating it is to all who simply desire to do His will. Evidently such a truth had no terrors for this faithful woman. She shrunk not from the One who weighed actions, but fearlessly proclaims the fact. How does it affect us as we remember that every work, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, is to be brought into judgment? There is no fear in love, and we love Him because He first loved us.

Holiness, strength, knowledge belong to Him. Grace, likewise, in its plenitude flows from Him; for the weak, the hungry, the barren, are not beneath His notice. And contrasts are drawn, too, that the truth might be grasped

more simply. First, then, the mighty found trusting in their arms find them perfectly useless. The God that delights not in the legs of a man—that is, in his strength—finding no pleasure therein (Ps. cxlvii. 10), rent their bows asunder; for the strength of the creature is as a brittle straw. In pride and vanity great ones erect strongholds, and therein exalt themselves against Jehovah; but the flood of judgment shall sweep all away. Trust in man must therefore be but vanity, and can secure no immunity from wrath and judgment. Great would be the lesson learnt if all His saints, knowing that “vain is the help of man,” had ceased from man. It is, no doubt, nice to have some human prop that looks so safe and fair, yet who appreciates the bitter experience of proving that confidence placed in him is misplaced entirely. But it is according to the Word, that to sow after the flesh is to reap what comes from the flesh. Doubtless it is natural to array one's self on the side of might, so natural to turn away from weakness; still He, Jehovah the Lord, surely breaks the bows of the mighty men, and girds poor stumbling ones with strength. He makes the weak to stand.

And further, “They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased” (ver. 5). Another contrast this, and as we read it we are reminded of the words of the Perfect Teacher, uttered long after Hannah had passed away, “Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled.” “Woe unto ye that are full! for ye shall hunger” (Luke vi. 21, 25). That is it. The heyday of human prosperity is succeeded by the night of woe; affluence gives place to poverty; abundance is followed by labour for food; all speaking loudly of the failure of man's resources in the time of adversity. But on the

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other hand, the hungry are filled from His granary Who never fails, though He may test and try, but all for profit. Blessing had come, perfect in its fulness though it tarried; and the soul is satisfied with the goodness of the Lord. Waiting upon Him can bring naught but good; for God vindicates the godly, and notes every heavenward aspiration of the redeemed soul.

And in the bestowal of grace, or in government, Jehovah is sovereign. This is here celebrated as she says. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low and lifteth up." Who, that has received grace for grace, will not testify to the blessed reality of this? How often has He brought low that He *might* in sovereign mercy, lift up? Naomi, the pleasant one, would in the extremity of her trial be called Mara, bitter; yet how fully did she prove ere her path closed that "He bringeth low, and lifteth up." (Ruth iv. 14-16). And amongst those that love His name the experience is universal, though the measure for each differs. But where shall the limit of His grace be set that reaches to the poor and the beggar? for Hannah exclaims, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill," in all magnifying the glory of His name. Verily His ways and thoughts are infinitely above those of man's! And for what purpose does He thus uplift? Let each adoringly read. "*To set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.*" From the dust and dunghill up to the throne—what an exchange! Vast is the grace shown, and glorious the destiny of those who are the recipients of it. And who can challenge His right to do this? Who deny Him this joy? "The pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, and

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He hath set the world upon them." So He acts within His own right, excludes boasting, and secures all the glory. How much *we* ought to be able to read in all this. Grace has wrought for us in this stupendous way, bringing us consciously into association with Christ, and quickening our affection with the truth that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him" (Colossians iii. 4). The remembrance of our lowly origin will keep us humble now, and add lustre to the exaltation by-and-by.

And until the throne is occupied security is assured to each; for "He will keep the feet of His saints," triumphing over all the machinations of the enemy. The snare might be set or the pit dug for the innocent, but Jehovah never slumbering or sleeping, preserves. How the heart should delight to respond to every guidance of His, resting in His perfect holiness and grace, and Mary-like, choosing the good part. Ah! He keeps the feet, and *He can do so*, for "By strength shall no man prevail;" but He permits the heart to be free that its awakened love might be willingly rendered to Him. May His love hold our hearts captive.

And again, He who exalts the beggar, deposes the high and haughty. There is grace; here is judgment. "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces." The mention of this immediately precedes the introduction of Jehovah's King the anointed One, clothed with majesty, invested with power, and crowned with exaltation. "He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His anointed." Hannah's words carry us on in thought beyond the bright days of David and Solomon, on past the life of humiliation of Nathanael's King of Israel, on to His

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appearing in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, when with glad acclaim He will be welcomed with joy by those that long for Him, but with mourning by His enemies.

“Hosanna to the King of kings!
The great Incarnate Word!
Ten thousand songs and glories wait
The coming of our Lord.”

Hannah's heart is unburdened. She commenced with the thought of Jehovah's salvation, she closed with the consummation of it. Grace paves the path that leads to glory; and presently, in unison with her whose voice has long been hushed in death, we shall extol the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah's King, as the One alone worthy to reign.

H. F.

LETTER ON FEET-WASHING.

MY DEAR A.,—

The subject of feet-washing has been much on my mind lately, and one and another have been speaking to me about it. It is, to my mind, intimately connected with the Lord's command in chapters xiii. and xv. of St. John's Gospel, to love one another. Undoubtedly that lovely scene in John xiii. may be taken in two senses, as literal and figurative. It is a wonderful scene. That blessed One

had come from God, and was going back to Him. *Knowing* it, how expressive that is! Knowing His real dignity He stoops to that lowly service; the most lowly service, surely. And He says, "Do you know what I have done? Well, if I, your Lord and Master, have done this for you, you ought to do the same for one another." Are we ready to do any service, however lowly, for one of His own? It is not a matter of option whether we will or no. He says, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." And, "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." But there is a figurative meaning to this scene the Lord shows, for He says, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." Then, "Ye are clean, but not all," again shows it was figurative cleansing He was speaking of. We know that water is typical of the Word of God; Psalm cxix. 9 and Eph. v. 26 are sufficient to show that, I think. Well, they all, except Judas, had received the Word, and were clean, as He said to them after Judas had left (John xv. 3), "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." But just as one who had had his bath in the morning, in that hot climate where they wore sandals only, got his feet soiled and needed to have them washed, so we who are "clean every whit" get defiled as we go about day by day. And the Lord has set Himself apart now for that service of love to us, and when we get defiled by sin He brings the Word to bear upon our consciences by the Spirit, which leads us to confess the failure and get restored to communion. He is the Advocate with the Father. But it was not so much His work for us I was thinking of as our work for one another. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." How little of this there is amongst us! Why is it?

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Someone said a while ago, "It is lowly work and we are not low enough for it." That is true enough, but is not lack of love the chief cause of our failure? Do you notice that this chapter begins with "*Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.*" Then He says farther on, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* Love was the spring of His gracious action. Oh, that there was more of it in exercise amongst us! Then when we saw something wrong in another, instead of talking about it to others, and finding fault, we should first go in real grief to the Lord about it, and then to the brother or sister concerned and point out the wrong from the Word. "Oh," you say, "perhaps they would not like it." Well, perhaps not, and that would need much grace on our part to have patience, and real love would bear to be thought unkind even, knowing that in the end all would come right. But I think we love ourselves best, and like to spare ourselves suffering. One said the other day that he thought the towel had a typical meaning; that feet washed and not wiped would be very uncomfortable, and that if we brought the Word to bear on another's conscience we should leave him comfortable after it. I think that is a good suggestion. I suppose the thought would imply there should be no trace of defilement left. The Lord leaves no trace of defilement we know. Well, it is very difficult work, of that there is no doubt, and there are not many of us up to it. We want more of His love, and to be more lowly, always learning of Him. But I do feel that we are rather careless as to His commandments about loving one another. Again and again He presses that, and the Apostle John, in his first Epistle,

enforces the same thing. Intelligence is very necessary, but I think we shall learn by and by that the Lord values *love* far more. We need to study 1 Corinthians xiii. a little more than we do. May we seek to cultivate more of that love.

Yours in Christ,

R.

THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

VERY touching and beautiful is the allusion which Paul makes to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in his second Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. viii. 9). He gives them the credit of knowing what is the sweetest theme for meditation, even the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Do we desire largeness of heart for ourselves, or to have our hearts filled with thanksgiving and praise? What can we dwell upon that is more calculated to produce true largeness of heart and to awaken a song of praise than this precious grace of His?

The four Gospels teem with illustrations of it. To a very few we will now turn. There are just two recorded by the Evangelist Luke in chapter xxiii. of his Gospel. Let us look at verse 32: "And there were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified

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Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." *There they crucified Him!* Think of the wickedness, the heartless cruelty, the devilry of it all. But what of Him? Then, yes, just then, when they had vented out all their wicked spite in nailing Him to a cross between two malefactors, at that particular moment Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He had the ear of His Father, and craved forgiveness for His enemies, excusing them on the ground of ignorance. We marvel at the grace He then and there exhibited.

Next we will look at verse 39: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." From Matthew, chapter xxvii. 44, we learn that "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Not even their great bodily sufferings could quench their animosity against the Holy Sufferer. They, together, voice the taunts of the chief priests and scribes, and yet, when one stops and rebukes his fellow, owning the justice of their condemnation, but saying, "This Man hath done nothing amiss," cries, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," what is the answer? "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The kingdom in power was, no doubt, what the thief had referred to, but that would await the completion of this present period of grace, during which sinners are being called out and saved to form a body of which Christ is the Head, and to become the Bride of the Lamb by and by. But the dying malefactor should not wait to be remembered until then, but should be in Paradise that very day with Him. These are two striking instances of the "grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ." We will now notice two more, after He rose again from the dead.

Surely we are all familiar with the story of Peter's avowal of love for the Lord, and of his determination to go with Him to prison and to death, if need be. Never would he deny Christ—but he did deny Him. He even cursed and swore, saying, "I know not the Man." And they all forsook Him and fled. Poor Peter! But what of Jesus? He was condemned and put to death. But God raised Him from the dead; and the first man to whom the Lord manifested Himself was Peter (Luke xxiv. 34). "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Paul also tells the Corinthians, in chapter xv. of his first Epistle, that he appeared to Cephas. What passed at that interview is not disclosed, but the grace which sought an interview with poor, fallen Peter, endears the Lord to us as we dwell upon it. That all was settled as between the disciple and His Master we can take for granted; and Peter's subsequent conduct proved that there was no restraint upon his spirit when in the Lord's company. This is strikingly apparent in the next incident, which we will now turn to.

On the shore of the sea of Galilee (John xxi.) some One is standing, evidencing an interest in a few poor fishermen. He asked the question, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered Him, "No." "Cast the net," said He, "on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." And so they did. Till then they had toiled all night, but had caught nothing. "It is the Lord," said John; and Peter girt his fisher's coat upon him, for he was naked, and cast himself into the sea, all eager to reach his beloved Lord and Master. His companions followed in a little boat, dragging

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the net full of fishes. Peter's ardour we admire, but how much more the grace that singled out—the coward? no, we will not call him that. Should we have been better in the same circumstances? Perhaps even worse. Whatever he had done the Lord had forgiven, and the sense of such grace made Peter plunge into the sea, and leave the fish and all to reach the Lord. A fire had been kindled, and fish and bread laid thereon, evidencing the gracious care of the risen Lord. “Come and dine,” He says.

And when they had dined—or better, broken their fast—Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Lovest thou Me more than these?” Thrice was this question asked, and Peter, grieved at being asked the third time, answers, “Lord, *Thou knowest all things*. Thou knowest that I love Thee.” At first we might not think these questions were evidence of special grace to Peter, but they were. Three times had Peter denied his Lord; three times did the Lord put His question; and so satisfied was He with the answer, that to Peter He gives the work of caring for those dearest to Him on earth, thus silencing for ever any misgiving which might arise in the minds of the other disciples. Peter appealed to the Lord's knowledge, “*Thou knowest all things*. *Thou knowest that I love Thee*.” He saith unto him, “Feed My sheep.”

Grace sought Peter alone on the resurrection day to put everything right as between him and his Lord and Master, and now grace purposely questions in the hearing of His fellow disciples, shewing plainly enough that the Lord knew full well of Peter's fall, and yet He had the fullest confidence in His servant. Hence, no one could say a word after that. He, who knew all things, was satisfied, and proved it by the work He gave Peter to do.

Two more examples of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we will now ask attention to. We have had two from the time when He was hanging on the cross, and two after He rose again from the dead, and our last two will be from Him after He had ascended up to heaven. In Acts ix. we find the account of the conversion of a very remarkable man ; one who, many years after, wrote of himself thus : “ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ” (1 Tim. i.), and a little lower down he styles himself the chief of sinners. Let no one dispute this ; for Saul of Tarsus was to all who should come after, a pattern, or sample, of the long-suffering mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who could save His bitterest enemy, whose grace was equal to that, gives proof that none need despair of finding mercy if they seek it. But Saul of Tarsus did not seek the Lord. The Lord sought him. No human instrument was used in the first place. The Lord revealed Himself in His glory to this bitter enemy. The manner of Saul’s conversion was peculiar. We never read of another such.

For His enemies on the cross Jesus prayed, and the thief who confessed Him as Lord and King went to Paradise to be with Christ. To Simon Peter the risen Lord, as we have seen, manifested such tender grace and care. But what can we say to this ? To come back from heaven, as it were, without one expressed desire, no repentance, nothing but bitter and determined hatred, and come to convert and to save ; do we not wonder at this grace ? Yet, this is not all. To Ananias the Lord had said, “ He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” To this man was the Gospel entrusted—“ A dispensation of the Gospel was committed to my trust.”

Let us hear what he wrote to Timothy. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." The Lord knew Peter, and He knew Saul of Tarsus. "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."

He first saved, and then made that notorious man His ambassador in a very special way, showing to him an abundance of grace, and supplying to him the faith which would enable him to surmount all obstacles, and go steadfastly on, even to death. Love, too, He would grant, so that the toil of unparalleled labours should not be counted drudgery, but all the heart of the servant would be in it. Saul saved by grace, would be sustained by grace. He would have faith and love so ministered to him, that he would be able to say, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, *and the fellowship of His sufferings*, being made conformable unto His death." Happy Paul! Would that we, too, knew thy Lord as thou didst. Well, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is ours.

E. R. W.

TRUTH AT SECOND-HAND.

"THE people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Judges ii. 7). Joshua was a man that lived in the holy presence of God. He was a man whose soul was completely taken possession

of for God, and therefore it was a simple thing for him to take possession of what was his. Let God capture my soul, and I will want to capture everything for Him.

Joshua represents, as we have been seeing, not only the energy of the Spirit of God making Christ our Leader, but the man of faith, too, who takes hold for God in living faith. It is a mercy when God has such persons to hold fast His saints in allegiance. But we have no Joshuas now. We were seeing that Joshua had no successors. Look at the time of the Apostles. Paul and the other Apostles held the saints together, and the Church was prevented from open and public failure by the Apostolic power that was in their midst.

But the Apostles all died and left no successors. The second generation of any movement is a time of failure. Israel under Joshua and the elders were faithful, outwardly at least, and living in the fear of God. But a second generation came in—people who had not seen the works of the Lord, who had got the truths from the elders at second-hand. They had not come right down to them from God, but they had learned them in an indirect way, and, I might add, in an intellectual way, rather than in their hearts.

How easy it is for the second generation of any movement to have truth in the head, but not in the heart. You have all these truths on your bookshelves. You can buy them for a few pennies—precious truths as to Gilgal, and those other things of which we have been speaking. But it is one thing to pay for a thing out of your pocket, and another thing to pay for it out of your soul. It is one thing to get it into your head, and another to get it into your heart. And it was one thing for Joshua and the elders,

men of living personal faith, to take hold of things, and quite another for the generation that followed them to do the same thing. Ah, brethren, there was a time when the Spirit of God sounded the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." With what power it took hold of souls, and brought them out to meet the Bridegroom. How near was the glory! how dear the Lord! and how small the world!

Think what blessings the Spirit of God has revealed. A glorious Christ at God's right hand, a heavenly Church, and all the precious truths that flow from and are connected with it. It is one thing for us to talk about these precious truths, but it is quite a different thing to have them brought home, revealed to us by the Holy Ghost. The elders have gone; the first generation of this movement have passed away, and we are risen in the room of our fathers, and I ask you, and I ask myself: Has it been something handed down to us from faithful men, or have we had to do with God about these things? Is it between us and God? Have we been alone with Him about them? Or have we learned them because this or that one has held and taught them. Beloved brethren, leaders are God-given. We can bless God for them; but we cannot follow leaders save as they follow Christ. We must follow a living Christ in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Lot, who was not a man of faith at all, might follow Abraham wherever he went. Abraham, to whom the Lord of glory appeared, when he dwelt in Mesopotamia, followed that beckoning hand of glory, out from his home, his country, his kindred—everything. Why did Lot follow? Because he had his eye on Abraham. Abraham went because he had his eye on God. Lot went because he had

his eye on man. Now, why are we here in this outside place? Why are we professing to bear reproach for the name of Christ? Have we followed the beckoning hand of Divine glory? or have we followed near and dear ones? Have we followed those whom we have loved and honoured in the flesh merely? Or have we followed Christ? Have we listened to the guidance of the Spirit of God, or to the guidance of men of faith? Men of faith can lead, but they do not lead in reality, except as the eye is fixed upon Christ.

Abraham goes into the Land, and Lot along with him. Abraham, in an evil hour, when he is tried, goes down into Egypt. And where does Lot go? Down into Egypt with him. That is where the flesh takes him. You follow a man of faith, and instead of following his faith you follow him. If he goes right, you will go outwardly right, but when he goes into Egypt, you will go, too. And then he comes back from Egypt by the restoring hand of God; but I do not read that God's hand was upon Lot in getting back. I do not read that God had to deal with Lot. In fact, I do not read that Lot had sinned so grievously as Abraham did in Egypt. He was simply a figure who followed Abraham here and there, till at last the time comes when he cannot follow him any longer, when he has got to choose for himself, just as every one of us has got to choose for himself, and Lot chose for himself. Where? oh, where, brethren, did he go?

What will the flesh take as its choice? The fertile plains of Sodom that are under the judging hand of God. If our faith is not a living faith, if it is a faith that we have by tradition in any sense at all, it is going to be tested sooner or later, and we have got to face the question—Where will

Extract from a Letter.

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we walk? Will it be in the path of ease? Will it be in the path that appeals to nature and natural affections? Or will it be in the lonely path of separation unto God, more and more, even as Abraham walked separately with Him? That is the lesson that we can write across this second section. The people served God as long as they had a man of faith to lead them, but when the time of testing came, it showed what was in their hearts, and they departed. May God make it fresh in our souls. May He keep us from dealing with truth at second-hand. May He make it a living reality to us.

LECTURES ON JUDGES.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

I FIND the constant tendency even of work for the Lord, and an active mind, ever is to take us out of the presence of God, and nature is instantly up: I do not mean evil in the common sense, but what is not of God, and the condition of my soul when God is there. There is a will and a right the heart claims (not wilfully), instead of adoring reciprocity and lowliness, with confidence and trust of heart. For God present puts us in our place, and Himself in His place in our hearts; and what confidence that gives, and how self is gone in joy! Our great affair is to keep in His presence; and the diligent soul shall be made fat. He that seeks, finds. May the Lord give you and myself to labour on

undistractedly. It is not, through grace, in vain in the Lord. He does not give me as (I am thankful to say) you, present encouragement—I have no doubt my fault, and His wisdom—but I am content to be anything in His hand, and thankful to be anything. A servant is to serve where he is set, and I have been a good deal (and content to be it, though my heart might desire more direct work sometimes) a “ hewer of wood ” and “ drawer of water ” to the saints, but thankful to be allowed to be anything. The Lord be abundantly with you.

Affectionately yours in Christ, &c.,

J. N. D.

(1873.)

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears ” (Acts xx. 19). “ Your labour is not in vain in the Lord ” (1 Cor. xv. 58). “ And where I am, there shall also My servant be ” (John xii. 26).

FRAGMENT.

“What a difference it makes which side the Jordan one lives ! How different the climate, fruit, prospects, &c. When once the Jordan is crossed, then, too, 'tis the Lord's battles, and not one's own.”

CHILDREN OF GOD.

(John i. 10-13.)

PROBABLY most—may we not say all?—earnest Christians will acknowledge that their apprehension of the Lord's rejection when on earth is very feeble. Of course, no creature can fully measure what it must have been to Him, for no creature had, or has the place on high, which was, is, and ever will be His, as the only begotten Son of God. In heaven, the object surely of angelic worship, and all the, to us, countless number of the heavenly host ready at any moment to do His bidding, He was here as a Man amongst men, and meeting throughout His path in service rejection at the hands of human creatures.

He came to serve. He was here to minister. He was able, too, and willing to help creatures of the human race, as none of them would have presupposed, yet rejection was His lot, and rejection in a scene where His power in creation had been displayed, and where everything around in nature, that man could see, owed its existence and its constant sustainment to His hand and watchful care. A few words in the Gospel of John tell us of His rejection in language simple, yet really full. The depth of meaning in them who can fathom? "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own (lit: His own things), and they that were His own received Him not" (John i. 10-11). We have quoted the *Revised Version*, which gives the sense of the eleventh verse more clearly.

On earth then, in the world, every tree, every shrub, every flower owed its existence to His creative and formative power. Every fountain, too, every spring, every river owed its place on this globe to the fiat of His will. The rocks, the mountains, the valleys, the sea shore were all planned by Him. Not a pebble on the strand of the sea of Galilee, not a weed washed up from the deep by the waves of the great sea, but owed their existence to Him. Every animal, too, from the largest to the smallest, and those too minute for the ordinary eyesight of mortals to discern, were all the result of His handiwork, and all were kept in life by Him, who upholdeth all things by the word of His power (Heb. i. 3). No man else, who has ever walked upon earth, had a place in this world like to His. It was His, made by Him, belongs to Him, and will yet be openly possessed by Him. He was walking abroad in His own creation.

Shall we confine our thoughts to this scene? In Colossians i. 15-17 we have a wider scope, as we learn of His relation to *all* created things. The first-born of all creation (R.V.) is His title, and His proper position in relation to it. And why He must have that place the sacred Word declares, "For by Him were all things created, in the heavens and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." We speak of the wonders of creation, and talk of its extent; yet none of us have explored in person, or by the eye its limits; nor have we beheld those ranks of the angelic hierarchy, to which the passage just quoted makes reference.

What a place then was His in creation! Men may at times boast of the extent of their possessions. Small however, how small, utterly insignificant is the largest territory

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on earth possessed by any human creature, compared with the extent of this globe even, not to speak of the whole universe, all of which was created by Him. And then to experience rejection when on earth, and rejection at the hands of creatures, who, dwelling in houses of clay, "are crushed before the moth" (Job iv. 19)! What a position! What treatment was His!

Was that treatment the consequence of His being utterly unknown when in humiliation? No. The elements were conscious of His presence, and witnessed, too, His power. Two words from Him in the original, as Mark (iv. 39) gives them, stilled at once the storm, and the tumultuous waves subsided into a great calm. Angels ministered to Him (Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43). Demons knew Him (Mark i. 24; Luke iv. 41). Men alone did not. "The world," as the Evangelist wrote, *i.e.*, men, "knew Him not." As the Holy One of God, and as the Son of God, demons confessed Him. As the divine Person who will torment them they knew Him (Matt. viii. 29); owning, too, that without His permission they could not enter into the herd of swine, and entreating at the same time not to be sent to the abyss, to the bottomless pit, which is their prison-house (Luke viii. 31-32). To Him, when here in humiliation, were these utterances made. Yet "they that were His own received Him not."

Who, then, was He? Son of God? Yes. Holy One of God? Yes. But more. He was the long-promised Messiah, the King of Israel, under whose shadow and sway that nation was to be blessed. The Jews, then, who ought to have hailed His appearance, were those who did not. Rejection He experienced from the early days of His ministry (John iv. 1-3; Luke iv. 28-29). What did He do upon earth? "He went about doing good, and healing all

that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with Him " (Acts x. 38). Such was the testimony of an eye-witness—even the Apostle Peter. The Lord also comforted mourners. He received and ate with publicans and sinners. He invited every weary and heavy laden one to come to Him for rest. He called to the thirsty to come to Him and drink. He would, too, have gathered Jerusalem's children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not. Her Messiah they refused. His ministry in soul-blessing they rejected.

Then Christ had power, and He showed it ; power over diseases, power over demons, power over all that inthrall'd mortal creatures. Power, too, He wielded over death, restoring dead ones to life. But was it simply power that He exercised ? Power when exercised may astonish, but it does not naturally attract. He, on the contrary, manifested a heart that could sympathise. The desolate widow of Nain, the helpless leper, the afflicted blind, all experienced His power to minister relief ; yet not that only, they were objects likewise of His compassion. He could sympathise as well as help. He did both. So at Bethany, before uttering the word of command to call Lazarus from the tomb, He shed tears. He wept in sympathy with the mourning sisters. Thoughtful, too, was He for that multitude which had been with Him three days, and then had nothing to eat. He fed them, ere he dismissed them, lest any should faint by the way ; " for," said He, " divers of them are come from far " (Mark viii. 3). Compassion and power with Him went hand in hand. We may be compassionate, where we cannot relieve. He did both. If ever, then, there was one upon earth who should have been gladly received by the Jews, it was the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mass of the people rejecting Him, and at length

clamouring for His crucifixion, were there any results of His ministry amongst them? There were results, and the Evangelist who has told us of His rejection, tells us also of His reception. "As many as received Him," he writes, "to them gave He power, or, the right, to become children 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).

Of *children* of God, not of *sons*, John here writes, reminding us of the birth tie. But what favour! And it was something new to learn, that individual saints could be owned as children of God. That revelation, though the fact was true of all Old Testament saints, awaited the coming of the Son of God to make it known. He taught disciples of His Father as their Father, and they felt, they were conscious that it was something new. Receiving the Lord Jesus, what blessing followed! Rejecting Him, what a favour was lost! God's children must indeed be blessed and cared for by their Father. He, who has planted parental love in the heart of the creature, will not fail to manifest His fatherly love towards His children. In temporal matters they can now prove it" (Matt. vi. 25-34). In the future God will display it (Luke xii. 32), when He gives to them the kingdom, and they shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 43).

Will they be strangers there? No. They will all appear in one family likeness, indisputably showing that they have a title, a right to be in the kingdom on high. Now bearing the image of the earthy man, they will bear the image of the Heavenly One (1 Cor. xv. 49). He, the Lord Jesus, will change the body of their humiliation to be fashioned like to His Body of glory (Phil. iii. 21). For when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is

(1 John iii. 2). With family likenesses we are all familiar on earth. A family likeness will be seen on high. Here, with different families, there are diverse types, though all bear the image of the earthy man. There, but one family, all will bear the image of the Heavenly. Climate, race, and circumstances operate on earth to modify family likenesses. There all will in their very bodies bear the image of Christ, and so be like God's Son. He, too, we read, is not ashamed to call them brethren, so He will not refuse to fashion their very bodies to be like His Body of glory. What favour is this in which we shall by and by have part !

Then, if bearing the image of the Heavenly, what is to be our home? The child's home is in his father's house. God's children's home will be in His House—the Father's House—and the Lord has gone to make ready a place in it for us (John xiv. 2). Favour indeed ! And He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. How true that He is not, He will not be, ashamed of His people. He will come for them, and will introduce them into His Father's House, in the presence, may we not believe, of angels and archangels. Those elect, unfallen creatures will witness the entrance of the saints into that home, and all of them bearing the image of the Heavenly. There we shall be surrounded surely with tokens of the Lord's unchanging love. Truly to be children of God, and partakers of the heavenly calling, is blessing indeed.

But more have we to say on this subject. To God's children belongs a partaking of the inheritance, all of them being God's heirs, and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). On earth heirship is not necessarily connected with the birth tie. Many a one may be a child, and yet not be an heir. Abraham had several children (Gen. xxv. 2), but Isaac was his heir. He gave all that he had unto Isaac (5). With

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God's children, how different. And God would have us to know, that heirship in God's family is inseparably connected with the birth tie for all the heavenly saints. Then, too, if heirs of God, they will also have the position of His sons, which will be openly displayed in the future (Gal. iv. 7).

Here we would remind the reader of a word of the Lord in Luke xv. 31. The father addressing the elder brother, says, "Child (not son), thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." The proper home of a child is his father's house. The proper portion of God's children, is to have part in the inheritance. But poor, indeed, whilst in mortal flesh, must our apprehension be of the inheritance. We know, and God has revealed it, that it comprises the things in the heavens, and the things upon earth (Ephes. i. 10-14). All that belongs to the Christ, and we are joint heirs with Him. Looking around we see part of it, but how small a part. Looking up we see a part of it, but surely an infinitesimal part. The circumference of the earth men can measure, and know the distance from pole to pole, but who of mortal men have seen with the eye, or have measured by a human scale, the area of the heavenlies. All that we do see of the depth of space, and far more than we have seen, or can see, is a part of the things in the heavens which Christians will share with Christ. We speak of it in words, but the mind must fail to grasp the immensity of the inheritance.

Children of God! Such was the relationship, with its accompanying portion, that the Lord was willing that men should have part in. The Father's love, the family likeness, the Father's House, and joint heirship with Himself, He, the rejected One by the world, desired human creatures to share in. What do those lose, and that for ever, who reject Him! What do those gain in time and for eternity who, through grace, receive Him!

C. E. S.

FOR OPEN EARS.

“Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

WE realise after reading Matt. xv. 1-20 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1-8 ; Luke xviii. 15, 16, and similar portions, that a system of traditional teaching had gained currency which the blessed Lord in unsparing terms rebuked. How heavy an indictment for a careful, circumspect people to hear: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips ; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

To profit by the Word of God most definitely is self-judgment taught as a necessary accompaniment. “All flesh” comes under review in 1 Peter i. 24. How feeble, small, short-lived is man when viewed on his highest pinnacle of glory. The withered grass with its fallen flower gives suited expression to man’s temporal, passing glory. But consider the majesty, power, greatness of the Word, which is put in contrast, and see both preceding and succeeding portions which state properties belonging to the Word altogether its own—startling for boldness of statement ; for the passing ages of time, which tell so solemnly upon man and his doings, make no inroads upon that whereby man is “born again” of the “incorruptible” seed, the Word of God, “*which liveth and abideth for ever.*” We go on to read “*the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” What dignity ! What majesty !! What authority is here !!! And then that which is of a contrary part, affording no

nourishment or profit, is judged as having its origin from another source. "Laying aside *all* malice, and *all* guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and *all* evil speakings, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." Next bursts upon the view a soul, a saint, a living stone so under the power of ministry which proceedeth from Him that your gaze may behold a once destitute creature filling the priest's holy office offering sacrifices—spiritual sacrifices—acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

How needful that we should stir one another's pure minds by way of remembrance. Disciples were duly warned of the dangers to which they were exposed, while He was yet with them. They could witness as He unmasked the hypocritical pretension of the people who rested in ordinances and external piety, when, as a matter of fact, He was denied, and taught by tradition to be dishonoured in one of those choice relations of which He was Author and Originator. Indeed, the Son's mission was to manifest the Father. A people who had already become versed in pious disobedience would ever be at issue with Him who was obedient unto death.

Christ has died! Although not a manifest expression of power, yet therein His love is so revealed, furnishing material for endless praise; and the blessed truth is further announced, spite of bribes put in hands, and lies put upon lips, "after three days I will rise again." "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

With the death and resurrection of Christ, Christianity, with its rich store of good unfolded, has given forth its treasures—marvellous in working—when the blessed Word has been submitted to as sole and absolute authority to order our steps for worship, service, walk, communion, etc. What have angels witnessed on high when prodigals have ceased in their downward course of turning from the guide of their youth and come to this: “I will arise and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son?”

What do angels witness upon earth as place to Christ, the head of every man is given; woman ranging under man, covered and in silence, in assembly, eloquent indeed and full of meaning; man's glory when Christ has place, when He is not departed from, but unfeigned subjection is expressed.

What do we view when entering the Christian assembly in its order, according to His Word? What wisdom all His works express. What felicity, what rest, in that which His love designs! Who would refrain from giving glory to our God for sights so glorious? Who can wonder at angels desiring to look into and learn of that which is precious to Christ.

To see Jesus crowned with glory and honour—to view Him over His works and all things subjected to Him, and to know that for Him are all things, and that we are His; is not this another good view of what is unseen and eternal. This knowledge, how priceless and how humbling!

Shall we bow our hearts and ears to hear Him. The precious Scripture runs: “Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.” “Wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for a husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly. He is Saviour

of the body. But even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything. Husbands love your own wives, even as the Christ also has loved the assembly, and delivered Himself up for it, in order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the Word, that He might present the assembly to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and blameless. So ought men to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly. . . . I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly" (Eph. v. 22-33).

How beautiful when He who orders conduct in our several relations is pleased to use us as channels for the conveyance of that which is spiritual. When grace is known, when Christ imparts to parents, who are of the household of faith, the form of sound words, and graciously, early and constantly instructs us to introduce His claims to those under our care, we shall find a holy discipline in this, which so agreeably reminds us of having constantly the good to impart, of being subjects of grace ourselves, the good so superior and His will so delighting our hearts that His Word is duly treasured and obeyed; and that from the head of the house, the husband, wife, children, servants, all are in due subjection, when His Word—Himself—has place. May we all be exercised by these Scriptures—may the purposeful lives sketched here be entered upon to His praise. Wives will always be tempted on lines of insubjection to get out of their place, to usurp authority. Husbands will always be tempted to despise, not only their wives, but the Word. But it reads: "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord . . . husbands

love your own wives, even as the Christ also has loved the assembly, and delivered Himself up for it." To submit to receive all that is of and from Him—ministry of Christ—to fortify, preserve, to make proof against those wiles of the enemy, who ever seeks the weaker, to seduce, to ruin, to mar all that is of God, or for Christ. Where is there irksomeness in this? Will His commands, or the teachings of His Apostles ever prove grievous when put to us as the Spirit does, in order that we may live Him, give a savour of Him, glorify Him in our spirits, souls, and bodies which are His. If husbands find a weak point in those their life's labour for Him is to love and cherish—will not timely ministry be meekly and humbly persevered in that one dear to the blessed Lord be established and strengthened—yea will not this fresh putting to us of relationships and the path of service such opens up, but awaken to us all that the assembly is to Christ, and the discharge of that care, that nurturing, cherishing, encouraging, but strengthen hands where almost commonly the adversary has undisputed sway. What confidence would grow in the Word itself as we view His present use and future effect of it, and all that *must be accomplished by means of its spiritual use*, "purifying by the washing of water by the Word (present); that He might present the assembly to Himself glorious (future), having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless."

Shall we not, indeed, invite to us all that He so graciously puts to us. Searching it must needs be. Confessing to unwatchfulness and failure in entering upon our life's work as unto Him, who would after this fold hands as though no path were open to be soberly entered upon in which such stores of grace must needs be supplied to enable for a going on with this work of faith and labour of love for which in

ourselves we have nothing and are insufficient? What deliverance may be read between the lines from worldliness, mischief the enemy finds for idle hands, selfishness that eats at the very heart of Christianity. It is not a spur up to live Christ without life, but life first imparted and now fed by ministry—Christ's—and Christ lived—the relations ordered by Him serving as channels to give all the glory in His own blessed face.

It may be said all households have not this precious material—this life which is to be lived in the flesh by the just, by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Let us not faint because of difficulties. Difficulties can but provoke smiles, not tears or fears; “impossible” is a word not found in faith's dictionary, save that it is “impossible for God to lie.” In nature all around you get, notwithstanding the earth not yielding her strength, lessons which abundantly set forth that seed sown after its kind bears fruit in due season, and that His Word shall not return void. No labour is vain in the Lord. No light lit; no watering of precious seed; no life that is subject to His Word and will can fail of witnessing to Him, yea of winning to Him: “What knowest thou O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? . . . if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” The issues are referred to as “holy” (1 Cor. vii. 14); “thou and thy house” have been heard. Faith heeds and acts upon the Word, and nurture

and admonition are addressed in connection with children, as also loving and cherishing by husbands who fear the Lord and set value upon His Word. May we all show our appreciation of His love and grace, and prove fruitful in understanding what the will of the Lord is. W. B.

WATER TURNED INTO WINE.

(John ii. 1-11.)

It is with deepening interest that we peruse the account of the miracles recorded by the Evangelist John. They are few in number when compared with the records in the synoptic Gospels, and where not peculiar to the writing of the son of Zebedee (as for instance in chapter vi.), yet the bearing is palpably different, answering, of course, to the specific purpose for which the Gospel was penned. Here we find ourselves in the presence of that One of whose "fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Here we have unfolded the glory of Christ, "the eternal Son of the Father." Here we find the "Word made flesh," revealing wondrous secrets, and opening to our gaze the vast fulness of God's heart. And here also we see the glorious power manifested whereby freedom and emancipation will be wrought for Israel.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." Such is the comment of the disciple whom Jesus loved, upon this His first miracle. He also states a result of it: "And His disciples believed on Him." Pointed to Him at the first by John the Baptist, whose testimony to Christ captivated their hearts and irresistibly drew them to Him, enabling one to say, "We have found the Messiah," their faith now grew, and was increased indeed by this manifestation of His glory.

Water Turned Into Wine.

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Two days had already passed. John had had his day of testimony, and by his words he had carried on the thoughts of the disciples to the death of the Lord as the basis of blessing for the whole universe. The sin of the world should be taken away. Jesus also had spoken. Expressing with authority the command, "Follow Me," how ready had been the acquiescence; and then making His omniscience known to Nathaniel, He is owned by that "Israelite indeed" as the Son of God, the King of Israel. Blessedly, most blessedly true! but what a revelation to Nathaniel that though the rejected Son of Man then, yet e'en before the day of manifest power and glory came he should behold the exalted creatures of heaven, the angelic hosts, His willing servants rendering Him homage and service refused Him by His own on earth, to whom He had come (chap. i. 51).

But the day of His acceptance would come, and with it fulness of joy for Israel. This we have divinely portrayed in this miracle, when by omnipotent power He turned water into wine. So the third day arrives, and "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee," Galilee the despised, yet the abode of the faithful remnant; for here to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light had indeed sprung up (Matt. iv. 16).

"The mother of Jesus was there," we read. Now, why this prominence given to her if not to announce that all is here in connection with Israel? This is so; and that coming day, her bridal day of joy and gladness is here feebly set forth. Feebly, we say, for Jesus and His disciples are the invited ones. It will be different when His hour shall have fully arrived; for then He will be the Master of the feast and the Bridegroom, too. But we anticipate.

Jesus was there, and by His presence sanctioned the relationship formed, and the feast linked with it. But the

joy of this feast must come to an end, for it is in connection with man, and man's supplies are soon exhausted. Israel might seek satisfaction apart from Him, but disappointment is the inevitable result when this is done. What followed points us on to greater things, and was the harbinger of brighter days to come. Jesus, and Jesus only, can meet every want and bring in perfection; for in Him alone will everything be headed up. But the feast has commenced, the guests are there and harmony prevails. But not for long—the supply of wine fails. What is to be done? Who will supply the deficiency?

Jesus was there, and His mother appeals to Him, no doubt presuming on the relationship existing, and acquaints Him with the lack: "They have no wine." But what just title had she for appealing then? Not received by His own, they had forfeited every claim upon Him on the ground of relationship. Such claims could not be recognized, even if urged by one near and dear. Doubtless He will yet make all good, and establish Israel upon an unfailing covenant when ungodliness shall be turned away from Jacob (Rom. xi. 26). He will indeed provide everything, but how perfect the answer then; how precious to contemplate it. He was the Sent One, here to fully perform His Father's will, yet rejected, and increasingly so day by day, until its culmination was reached in the shameful cross. Then it would be man's hour and the power of darkness (Luke xxii. 53); now He says, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." What could relationship effect if He was rejected? It could avail nothing, and grace must come in or all would be lost.

"*Mine hour is not yet come.*" He looks beyond the woe and ignominy of Calvary; for death had to precede His manifestation in power and glory. In the meantime no

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appeal could move Him from the path upon which He had so voluntarily entered. He awaited His hour, consciously that the sufferings that pertain to Christ must come before the glories; and only by His death could He bring in, what was of all moment to Him, fulness of joy to God's glory.

But Mary, aware of His power, instructs the servants to do His bidding: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Thus they are turned to Him, and obedience to His commands is enjoined. And Jesus, though disowning her title to appeal to Him in this emergency, seeing that humiliation was His portion, proceeds to supply the lack, and how fully! It was to be according to His fulness.

Grace transcends law in every way, and is as superior to it as the "very image" is to the shadow; and who cares for the latter when the former is possessed and enjoyed? But the ministration of joy is linked up with Christ, and He it is who will turn the water of purification into the wine of joy.

Now the six waterpots of which we read, directly remind us of the Jewish economy, which in its measure sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (Heb. ix. 13). Much had grown up around that system. Punctilious to a degree about outward form and ceremony, the Jews sought joy and satisfaction in these, and reaped disappointment. But Jesus comes in. At His command the servants filled the six pots to the brim. There were to be no half-measures. They were to be filled *full with water*, and again at His command it is drawn and taken to the governor of the feast, none knowing but the servants what had been wrought. Well might astonishment seize hold of him as he drunk of this "good wine," since he was unaware of its origin. Could a precedent be quoted for such action as this? "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men

have well drunk, that which is worse," he says. And so it always is with what emanates from man, and is of him. Even if it commences brightly, yet, like the day, it declines into gloom and darkness. This good wine is followed by that which is worse. But how different with what comes from Divine fulness. The first taste is prelusive of what is to follow, and then, after all, the good wine comes last. This can never run out; it can never be exhausted.

Thus dimly have we foreshadowed what will be when Christ reigns. Decadence of joy will be unknown, for the wine will not fail. Communion will not depend upon the water for purifying, but outward ordinances will be replaced by the surpassing excellencies of the blood of Christ. His atoning death will be the basis for every blessing; for verily He died, "the Mediator of the New Testament," that all might be made sure to Israel (Heb. ix. 15). Everything short of Christ is short of perfection; so bright will it be in that day, when all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. Then the full joy of the marriage-feast shall be known, and once started it will know no ending.

What a day that will be! And as we reflect upon it we can see in figure that the water—the Word—that now cleanses and directs, will then convey only joy. All will tend that way. The Holy Spirit poured upon them from on high will be engaged, not in occupying them with themselves leading to repentance, but with Christ; for all will be according to God. It will be a feast of fat things indeed, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined (Isa. xxv. 6).

And even now, when the Word of God is admitted into the soul in its activity, purifying in truth, joy is the result. What do *we* know, then, of foretastes of full joy and blessing?

H. F.

REVELATION xxii. 17.

THE sinner is not told to say "Come." Observe the great and plain difference in the latter part of the verse. In the first two clauses they *say*, "Come"; but in the latter part they do not bid Jesus come, but are invited to come themselves: "Let him that is athirst *come*," &c.

Thus God shows that the first thought of my heart should be toward Jesus. If true to Him, I shall desire His coming. The Spirit prompts and sanctions this desire. And what is the effect on my feelings toward the world? It will give me a heavenly reason for desiring the conversion of sinners. I shall have the same moral motives, and the same affections, which act on my brethren who put off the coming of the Lord. And I shall have, besides, all the impetus which the hope of Christ's speedy coming can give me, and the sense of the danger of those to whom His coming can be nothing but certain judgment, even in this world. The more a Christian looks for Christ's coming at any moment, the more ardent must be his desire, and the more earnest his importuning, that souls should come and take the water of life.

LECTURES ON THE REVELATION BY W. KELLY.

SORROW TURNED TO JOY.

My burden presses hard, and weighs
 My soul beneath its load;
 With weary, faltering steps I walk
 Along the heavenly road.

Yes, o'er a dreary waste I roam,
 Where thorns and thistles grow;
 Sad oft at heart, yet seek I not
 A place of rest below.

A Stranger once passed through this scene,
 Filled with God's love divine,
 That I heaven's sweetest joys might taste,
 Clad, too, in glory shine.

See how the rays from that blest place
 Meet all up-lifted eyes ;
 There sits that One enthroned now,
 Heaven's choicest, richest prize.

That One Who on this earth below
 Poured out His blood for me ;
 The One Who bare my sins was judged,
 That I with Him should be.

He loves me now, says, " Cast thy load,
 Whate'er its weight may be,
 On me. I want to bear it all—
 We must keep company.

" I will not leave thee, fear thou not,
 Though all forsake, I stay."
 Lord, 'tis enough, with shame I cry,
 My night Thou'st turned to day.

Oh, blessed One, how dear art Thou !
 How matchless are Thy ways !
 With Thee ! how wondrous ! yet 'tis true,
 Through countless happy days.

With Thee ! Oh, this is better far
 Than all the glory given ;
 With Thee ! The Father's bosom Son,
 My brightest hope in heaven.

Then, Lord, while here Thou bid'st me stay,
 Oh, fill me with content ;
 A heart at ease in Thee, a tongue
 To praise Thee only lent.

In patience waiting for the hour
 Of Thy return to greet
 Thy ransomed ones ; Thy spotless bride
 Caught up her Lord to meet.

E. R. W., 1870.

THE FIRST SIN OFFERING APPOINTED BY GOD.

THE LAST SIN OFFERING ACCEPTED BY GOD.

SACRIFICE was a very early institution in the world's history. All readers of the Bible are acquainted with it. The history of Cain and Abel school children are early taught. The lessons derived from it Christians should ever remember. And of Abel's tragic end on earth most people in this land have heard at one time or another. In the fourth chapter of Genesis we read of it. In the New Testament we are reminded of it. The Lord Jesus (Matt. xxiii. 35), the Apostle John (1 John iii. 12), and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 4) all speak of it. The two first tell of Abel's death, and the last witnesses to his faith.

In that chapter in Genesis is the only mention that we have of him in the Old Testament. Was his history then to be regarded as a myth, as some would assert? The New Testament accredits it on the highest possible authority. The Lord Jesus speaks of his death. The Holy Spirit by St. John and by St. Paul sets His seal to the authenticity of the narrative. That sacrifice was never to be forgotten. And that fourth chapter of Genesis is shown to be reliable history.*

After him patriarchs, as Noah, Abraham, and Jacob reared their altars, and offered sacrifices. But no sacrifice, recorded in Genesis, is spoken of as a sin offering. With Abel the question seems to have been, how could one born in sin be accepted by God; but no question of sins committed had

* We have no mention of Cain either in the Old Testament after that chapter of Genesis. Abel was not a progenitor of any of the human race. Cain's descendants all perished at the flood. But the record of both brothers has survived. It is real history.

been, as far as we know, raised with him by God. Then Noah, surrounded by his family, the sole representatives on earth of the human race, offered up, after their exit from the ark, burnt offerings to God, his heart doubtless overflowing with thankfulness for the mercies so recently vouchsafed them. Later on Abraham came on the scene. He offered the ram instead of Isaac his son. Jacob, too, sacrificed, when on the mount with Laban. We close then the Book of Genesis without reading of any offering for sin.

Under the law, as we know, sin offerings were frequently required. But it is between the days of Genesis and those of the Exodus that we first read of such a sacrifice, and to the history of Job are we turned for the earliest record of such offerings. For Job lived after the days of Abraham, as the description of his three friends makes plain, and before the Exodus, as is generally supposed. He lived in the land of Uz, contiguous to, or forming part of Edom (Lamentations iv. 21).

At the opening of the Book of Job we learn of his practice to offer burnt offerings for his sons, as often as their festal seasons came round, fearing that they might have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts (Job i. 5). That was the patriarch's practice. But the first *command* of God to offer for sins is met with in the last chapter of that book. We quote it: "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, like my servant Job" (Job xlii. 7, 8).

The First Sin Offering Appointed by God. 43

Such a communication from above must have startled Eliphaz, we should think, and his two friends also. They had been pressing on Job that he was the sinner, as evidenced by his afflictions, and Zophar had pretty plainly intimated that Job was after all a hypocrite (Job xx. 5). Now they learnt, and that in a manner which left no room for controversy, that they had sinned in their utterances against Job, and that God had heard them all. God's wrath then was kindled against them, not against Job, and nothing would arrest its outbreak but a sacrifice for their sin.

Gracious is our God. He warned them of His wrath, and pointed out a way of escape from it. Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, He now had the last word in the controversy; so told them what they must do. Is not this in accordance with His character elsewhere set forth? The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Therefore the Gospel is revealed, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. i. 16-18), that men hearing of it, and receiving it may escape the wrath to come.

And now we would mark *three* important points illustrated in that history of Job's three friends.

First—God's estimate of sin is very different at times from that of man's. Gross sins and unmitigated wickedness all upright people will condemn. But here was nothing of that kind. Doubtless each of those three men thought they were acting right in pressing upon Job his iniquity. Each, too, would have said they meant to do no wrong. And people might have excused them as well-intentioned, though, as it turned out, mistaken men. And probably the advice such would have tendered would have been not to trouble themselves about the matter, as they meant well. Would

44 *The First Sin Offering Appointed by God.*

that do for God? No. He is holy. He could not as the Righteous One pass over their sin, as if it were nothing at all. What then was to be done? Excuses would avail nothing. Saying they meant no harm could not divert the outflow of divine wrath. Nothing but a sacrifice could meet the case. But what should it be?

This leads to the *second* point. Life must be taken to shelter sinners from the wrath of God. But who could say what sacrifice could meet offended Majesty? Who but God could state what He would require? In no doubt should Eliphaz and his two friends remain as to this. God appointed the sacrifice, and God, we may say, provided it. Creatures of God were to be immolated—seven bullocks and seven rams were to be sacrificed to meet typically the claims of His holiness. This was the first occasion on which divine revelation had made known, as far as Scripture is concerned, the requirements of God's holy Majesty. But be it observed, God made it known in His grace. Requiring a sacrifice to avert the outpouring of His wrath, He made plain to Eliphaz and his companions what it was that He needed, for judgment is His strange work. He acted in a similar manner under the law. He has revealed now His mind to all in the Gospel.

Eliphaz received the divine communication. Bildad and Zophar attended to it, and the three lost no time in conforming to it. This brings us to the *third* point, the sufficiency of the sacrifice once offered. God demanded no more than that of which He had spoken. If it was enough for God, it was all that they needed. So they sacrificed, and Job, the righteous one, prayed for them. His intercession was enjoined. Then all was done. The one whom they had regarded as the sinner was the accepted one by God. Each of the friends could return whence he came with his

thoughts about Job corrected, and that on the highest authority—the word of the Almighty. “Him will I accept,” let in a flood of light on the matter.

But more, they could depart from Job with the certainty that divine wrath would not overtake them for that which they had spoken. The sacrifice once offered assured them of that; and Job's acceptance by God, when he prayed for his friends, would be open evidence of the grace accorded them.

Thus far as to the first sin offering commanded by God. Just three verses of the chapter (xlii. 7-9) treat of it. Simple but important lessons flow out of them. We turn now for a few remarks on the last sin offering accepted by God.

As was the case with the burnt offering in the days of Job, life—the life of the victim—had to be surrendered. For “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. ix. 22). This is a cardinal truth connected with sacrifice. Then, too, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. x. 4). Thus it was beyond sinful man's power really to provide the suited sacrifice. Types of the true sacrifice were such animals, being too without blemish. But a type is not the anti-type. So the sacrifice of which we have now to speak was that of a Man—the Man Christ Jesus. Who of men after the fall, and before He appeared on earth, were without sin. Who since His death has been in himself spotless and undefiled. One Man, then, and only one, could ever have been a sacrifice wholly acceptable to God. Further, as God told Eliphaz what to offer, God has Himself provided the true sacrifice. “He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John iv. 10). “He gave His only begotten Son” (John iii. 16). Then, if the bullocks and the rams had no will of their own in the matter, the antitype far surpasses

the type; for the Lord Jesus Christ offered, and offered up Himself. The fortieth Psalm predicted the offering of Himself. The Gospel history of the cross speaks of His offering up Himself. No man could take His life from Him. He laid it down of Himself (John x. 18). He came to do God's will by dying as the sin offering. Further, the bullocks and the rams offered up on that day in the land of Uz availed only for Eliphaz and his two friends. But Christ, we read, was once offered to bear the sins of *many* (Heb. ix. 28). And He bare them, as Peter declares, in His own body on the tree (1 Peter ii. 24). This the godly remnant of Israel will learn and confess by and by (Is. liii. 6), and will want no other sacrifice by which to be healed.

Eliphaz and his friends offered, as we have said, but once, not twice. A sacrifice for a sin twice offered proclaims its inefficacy, a truth self evident when pointed out, but one which needs even in this day to be reiterated. "For the law," we read, "having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 1-2). The Lord Jesus, the true sin offering, died once. He will never die again. A repetition of His sacrifice there can never be. He Who was made sin for us is risen from the dead. God thus demonstrated that He accepted Him and His sacrifice, and we are to rest simply on that sacrifice for acceptance before our God.

And now to two little words met with in Heb. ix.-x. we would draw special attention. We refer to the words *once* and *one*. "Christ," we read, "by His own blood has entered *once for all* into the holy place, having obtained (or

found) eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 11-12). "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (26). "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many" (28). "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*" (x. 10). "This man after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for a continuance sat down on the right hand of God" (12). "For by *one* offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (14). Nothing can be plainer than these statements. God would thus remove from any mind all uncertainty as to the efficacy of the sacrifice of His Son. For upwards of eighteen hundred years God has not spoken of another sacrifice for sins. Since the death of His Son He has not asked from man a sacrifice of that character. All service at the altar has ceased, to be resumed in a coming day, but then only as commemorative of that which took place at the cross. For the earthly people an altar and sacrifices are constituent parts of their worship. But this long interval without any fresh sacrifice on an altar speaks loudly and clearly of the abiding efficacy of the Lord's sacrificial death. That death, needed to meet the claims of divine holiness, sufficiently manifests man's incompetency of himself to provide a sacrifice for his sins. God's silence as to another during all these centuries shows that He does not require one. The last sin offering that He will accept as valid to put away sins was offered by the Lord when He offered up Himself, and to its full and everlasting efficacy the Holy Ghost has borne witness in those soul-stirring words, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

Let those two little words, *once* and *one* have their proper effect on the heart; clouds will be dispersed, and doubts fly away.

C. E. S.

SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS.

(Malachi i. 2; iii. 8.)

THE prophet Malachi, in company with Haggai and Zechariah, was raised up by God to address His people after their return from the Captivity, and when, after the first bright burst of gratitude had spent itself, self-interest and indifference to His claim predominated in their hearts. Malachi, terse and emphatic, speaks to heart and conscience, uttering warnings mingled with tender appeals that are wafted, like winged arrows, right to the very core of the soul by divine power, the power of the Spirit of God. By the hand of His prophet God addresses some significant questions to His straying people, and it is just two of these queries and facts connected with them that we would at this time consider.

And the first of these is, and startlingly strange does it sound, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" How significant! The bestowal of great grace had been followed by great departure; for the marked, marvellous favour shown of God was soon slighted, and the recompense He received was base ingratitude coupled with forgetfulness. Inconstant as the wind they, nevertheless, were not forsaken by the unvarying God, and in His matchless way He strove to convict them of their folly in desiring that which only brought them sorrow, and to convince them of His love and interest unabated.

For why is this telling question asked? "I have loved thee, saith the Lord," is the opening declaration of our prophet. Passing strange, is it not, that He should have so said to a people in such a case. But note the effrontery of those upon whom such love is lavished: "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" Oh, shameless hearts that could so

interrogate! Proof they sought, then proof they should have, and the voice of the Lord is heard again giving incontestable proof of the truth that He *had* loved. “*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob.*”

Here, then, at first-hand we have the doctrine of election, of sovereign choice. Oh, blessed words! “I loved Jacob.” Let it be owned, if you will, that in manhood Esau seemed to be the nobler, manlier of the twain; but thereby you exalt the love that was Jacob’s portion so undeservedly, and increase the mystery revolving round the sovereign actings of God. Let the soul that rejoices in the sovereignty of God bow and adore; for it is a subject full of delights to the poor of the flock. *He* finds the reason for His action in Himself; for if Israel would desire to know why He had chosen them, then what could the reply be but that uttered by Moses, “*Because the Lord loved you,*” etc. (Deut vii. 8).

And would He now renounce them? The opening declaration in His theme by Malachi contains the proof and pledge that He would not. In league with the enemy, in complicity with evil, or almost sunken in indifference they were; and to awaken them to a sense of their failure and low condition He prefaces His solemn admonitions with this remembrance of His choice and His love; but renounce them? cast them off for ever?—“*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob.*”

Let us pause and learn. How sweetly at times does God remind our truant hearts of His unchanging love by bringing before us its positive character. Flowing spontaneously at first from its source, His heart, it continues in an unbroken stream, an even flow, from which none can separate us (Rom. viii. 39), and in which we are to keep ourselves (Jude 21). The objects of His choice, for us He spared not His

Son, and therein we have all the material surely for recalling and revivifying lukewarm hearts, and conveying in the most direct way all the force of the prophet's statement, "I have loved you, saith the Lord." Can we doubt it? But let us pass to our next question.

Service to be delightful must be the outflowing of love; and where affection is lacking true service will be scarce. But the plant of service should bloom abundantly when rooted in love and watered by love; and since Jehovah's love formed the basis of Israel's blessing, then how rich should have been the yield of fragrant fruit for Him. All that He finds delight in His love should produce—answering love, willing obedience, acceptable worship. However, the Lord of Hosts puts another question to His people: "*Will a man rob God?*" (iii. 8). How is that to be answered? Who would hesitate to say at the instant, Surely not! Does not the infamy of the creature stop short of so serious an offence? For a man to rob a fellow-man must be menial compared to this if any are found guilty of it. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed ME." Such is the indictment, and proof against them was forthcoming, though with senses blunted by long disobedience they might strive to turn aside the keen edge of the whetted sword by professing ignorance about it. "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" they ask. "In tithes and offerings," is the reply. Could they contradict now?

The tithes the children of Israel brought were given by God to the priests as their portion (Num. xviii. 12, 21, 24), but though thus surrendered they were God's, and consequently in defrauding the priests they robbed Him. Besides, out of them the priests were to offer a heave-offering, giving back to Him of His own, the token that all proceeded from Him. This they were hindered from doing when Israel failed to

bring them. How largely, then, was He robbed of what was so acceptable to Him, the thankful worship of people and priests rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord their God.

Patently, then, they did rob God ; and as we meditate can we not see that, when that which is but our reasonable, intelligent service to Him is withheld, we join hands with those of whom this is written. Have we nothing to render who have received so much ? Has He no claims on us ? To withhold the sacrifice of praise, to be lax in service, or cold in heart towards God, is to rob Him ; and when thoughts of revival, and desires for manifest tokens of spiritual power in our midst are uppermost, let us note well the spirit of the word we are considering and challenge our hearts.

And how shall the blessing be made to rest upon them ? To give is to get ; to water is to be watered ; to "honour the Lord with thy substance, and with all the firstfruits of thine increase," is to have the barns filled with plenty, and the presses bursting out with new wine (Prov. iii. 9, 10). Hence the gracious invitation of their God. They had but to perform their part to prove His goodness, and the fulness of heaven should be poured upon them.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house." That was the first step, whole-hearted return to what had been so callously abandoned, for they had not thought of how all this affected Him. The appeal, under such circumstances should afford distinct testimony that He was not unmindful of *their* loss of blessing. But He was losing, He was being robbed, and their alienation and estrangement from Him was too apparent in the way they retorted to His questions.

But blessing awaited this. The heavens were restrained over them, only to be opened wide when they should prove Him. The Lord of Hosts, Possessor of heaven and earth,

would pour out, empty out, of the abundance of heaven's store beyond conception upon them. Heaven's windows He would draw back, and in such a lavish manner would He show approval that room for the blessing should not be found. In response to their inbringing, copious showers were to descend from on high, making glad their hearts as well as fertilizing their land; and then, again, truly the people of Jehovah, they should be the centre of blessing to all; for all nations would call them blessed (verse 12).

And what was the immediate result of such a call and promise. Alas! how small. We read of a remnant who feared Him, and spake of Him (verse 16), and to a future day of appreciation and public recognition they are directed; for in the day when the Sun of righteousness shall arise, when the wilderness and solitary place shall be glad, and the desert blossom as the rose, then shall His own be "The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord" (Isa. lxii. 12).

Dear brethren, the whole Word of God is accessible to us, written, too, for our admonition and comfort. God was seeking reality in His people in Malachi's day. He seeks that still. Our best, our hallowed things, are surely His, and a "true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal" devotion He prizes, but Pharisaism, with its many pretensions, is odious to Him, and as smoke in His nostrils. Oh, that the pungent words and pathetic appeals of the prophet may be pregnant with moral lessons to our souls!

H. F.

GOD'S SAINTS.

FROM the ranks of the fallen children of men God gets His saints. He confers that dignity upon them quite irrespective of any goodness or merit on their part. He simply gratifies His own sovereign will and pleasure.

Not only are they without any goodness or merit, but they have a superabundance of badness and demerit. These become saints by the exercise of His prerogative. He calls them, and by that call those who receive it become thereby saints. There is no attainment or life of piety and self-denial to qualify for this great honour. But it is allowed, nay, it is required that God's saints should be saintly in their ways. They are to act as becometh saints, because they are such, and in no wise to make them that.

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians (i. 2), writes to the Assembly as "sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints." Not called *to be* saints, as in the A.V. the words (to be) are in italics and should be omitted. To some this may appear strange, and certainly contradicts the popular notion amongst Romanists and others, yet, nevertheless, it is the truth. Paul was a called Apostle. Had he to wait until the close of his life of suffering and service ere he could receive this honour? No, indeed. He went forth on his work as the Lord's servant, sent by Him, His Apostle, altogether independent of any others. None of the twelve could confer this honour upon him, nor could they even educate or fit him for the work to which he had been sent forth. To no college did he go, and no training did he receive.

A called Apostle through the will of God, and saints become such in the same way. Let us hear what he has to say to these saints at Corinth (verse 26): "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." Thank God he did not say "*not any*," for that would have excluded a class of persons altogether. "Not many," left room for some. But it shews plainly that wisdom, power, and nobility, as the world accounts it, are of no account with God. They are hindrances rather than aids where He

is concerned. The great mass of mankind lack these things. What a mercy that unwisdom, feebleness, and obscurity do not exclude any. They give no title, but they are not a barrier. It has pleased God to set this world's wisdom aside (verse 19), "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Solemn words! The possessors of true wisdom cannot be found amongst the unsaved sons of men. What the world so accounts is reckoned folly by God, and carries upon its face that expression. They strut about like peacocks in their pride of intellect, etc., and one taught of God can say, Oh, how foolish it all is.

Long, long ago an inspired penman had written, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and this elementary and indispensable characteristic they lack. No wonder the Apostle asks, "Where is the wise?" There are none—vain fools all. The Creator they do not know and never will find; for He has hid Himself from them. He can reach them, but they can never find Him, never. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him" (Acts xvii. 27). Yes, feel after Him, extending the hands of impotence and necessity, like a blind man who desires kindly help. Seeking the Lord, not in the pride of intellectual research, but in the deep consciousness of misery and want; seeking, longing, craving for a Saviour God, and of such will He be found. Yes; for He has been here. God the Son became flesh, came close to His fallen, ignorant, and sinful creatures, with a heart full of pity and compassion, a heart that could sigh and groan; with eyes that could weep over rejectors, and weep in sympathy with His bereaved ones; with power over diseases, over demons, and over storm and tempest, for by a word He controlled them; power, too, over death itself; with wisdom that confounded

all His adversaries, and yet never was one so hated. They crucified Him, and by that act the wisdom of man is condemned.

“Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (ii. 8). Peter, too, tells the Jews, “I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts iii. 17). That crucified Man was “The Holy and the Just,” “The Prince of Life,” “The Lord of Glory.” He was also the Only Begotten Son of God. Salvation is only through faith in the Crucified. Men and women are constituted saints by the call of God. Those whom He calls are for the most part foolish, weak, and base, that all the glory might be His own. Now we are to learn what the Crucified becomes to such (verse 24): “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,” and God has placed them under the headship of Christ (verse 30), and made Him to be everything to them, viz., wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Let us remember, then, “That no flesh should glory in His presence” (verse 29). We may glory, nay, we may exhaust all our energies in glorying, but it must be only in the Lord. Man has no place, all is of God.

The preaching is “Christ crucified,” and the servant who proclaims the message must be morally in keeping with his testimony. The ways and means he uses must be consistent. The less of self the better. That odious thing, the cross, cannot be made attractive to the mind and heart of man, and he who attempts it only shews his ignorance and folly. The Crucified has been raised from the dead, and is coming on the day appointed to judge the world in righteousness; for God has ordained it. Men must submit or perish. The awful crime of Christ's crucifixion stains the world,

and men are called upon to repudiate it, and to accept salvation through Him by means of the blood that He shed. Neutral they cannot be. They must repudiate, or endorse and take the consequences. And how awful! "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire!" some will have to hear. Oh, that men would be warned in time.

We have had the called, and the characteristics of the called, and also what Christ is to the called, and now we come to the last point—to what they are called. This verse 9 will tell us. "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." What marvellous grace! Sinners each and all; weak, despised and base, saved, and all their need fully met "in Christ," and then to learn that God has called them to have part with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Not title merely, but an inheritance more than enough to maintain quite regal dignity associated with the appointed heir of all things. Called unto the fellowship of His Son. Oh, let the reader ponder this! Never mind the brief trials we have to pass through here on earth. We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Moreover, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, and we have even now the Holy Spirit as the earnest. Hallelujah, we are on our way to God!

E. R. W.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON HEBREWS I. AND II.

GOD, who had in former days spoken by the prophets, now in these last days had spoken by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things. By Him He made the worlds. We get the glory of the Person of Him who stooped so low. See John i. 1-3. In the beginning He *was* The *Word*—the expression of what God is to man. *With* God—separate,

distinct Person. But the Word was *God* ! Oh ! indeed great is the mystery of Godliness ! The brightness of God's glory, the express image of His Person (Heb. i.). This glorious Person by Himself purged sins. "The Word was made flesh ;" stooped from all that height of glory to become man ; "took the form of a servant ; became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*" And this blessed One we *know* through grace. He is our Lord and Master, our Friend and Guide. What have we not in Him ? He is a nail fastened in a sure place surely (Isaiah xxii. 23, 24). How safe are those connected with Him ! How secure the resting place obtained by the sacrifice offered by such a Person ! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth*" (John i. 14). We behold that glory by faith. We trace that blessed pathway characterized by grace and truth. "His ways of grace we *love to trace.*" The grace and the truth so perfect ; not one at the expense of the other, as with us. We, upholding truth, lack the grace ; or showing grace keep back the truth. But there was no unevenness in Him. Oh, blessed Master ! May we learn of Him more. In Hebrews i. we get Him Who became the Apostle ; in chapter ii. the High Priest ; and as such He was made like to His brethren. *It became Him ! It behoved Him !* Wonderful words ! He must be made perfect through suffering. He, though Lord of all, must learn obedience ; not that He could be other than obedient as man, the only perfect Man ; but as a new thing, and in order to become perfect as High Priest. We may well consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus (Heb. iii. 1). May we be considering Him more till we see Him as He is.

S. B.

A GLEANING.

“In order to be satisfied with the best people, we need to be content with little and to bear a great deal. Even the most perfect people have many imperfections; we ourselves have as great defects. Our faults, combined with theirs, make mutual toleration a difficult matter; but we can only ‘fulfil the law of Christ’ by ‘bearing one another’s burdens.’ There must be a mutual, loving forbearance. Frequent silence, habitual recollection, prayer, self-detachment, giving up all critical tendencies, faithfulness in putting aside all the idle imaginations of a jealous, fastidious self-love—all these will go far to maintain peace and union. How many troubles would be avoided by this simplicity! Happy is he who neither listens to himself nor to the idle talk of others. Be content to lead a simple life where God has placed you. Be obedient—bear your little daily crosses—you need them, and God gives them to you only out of pure mercy.”

HIS LOVE.

What love, Thou gav’st Thyself for me,
 Endured for me the bitter Cross,
 The shame—the hiding of God’s face,
 That I in yonder Home above
 Might have a place.

What love, to leave Thy Father’s side,
 Those courts of pure unclouded light,
 For me, the sinner, lost, undone,
 That I might share with Thee the bliss
 Thy death had won.

Thy precious blood has washed me white,
 "Clean every whit"—Thou said'st it, Lord;
 Perfect Thy work, I bow the knee,
 In full assurance now draw nigh
 And worship Thee.

Oh, Lord, Thou now art seated high
 Upon Thy Father's glorious throne,
 I wait the summons in the air,
 When I with all Thy blood-bought saints
 Shall meet Thee there.

Oh, Lord, *then* shall this heart of mine
 Sing forth its praises unto Thee,
 Whose beauty fills the Holy Place;
 In rapture hushed I then shall see
 Thee face to face.

Oh, moment, passing human thought!
 Oh, wondrous bliss, supreme, untold!
 I with Thyself *for ever*, Lord,
 Lost in the ocean of *such* love
 My soul must be.

A. S.

THE SHEPHERD PSALM.

Jehovah is my Shepherd,
 Then wherefore should I fear?
 What foes can e'er disturb me
 When He is ever near?
 With pastures green He satisfies,
 So I can well repose;
 By waters still He leadeth me.
 What peace my spirit knows!

Poetry.

When faint and worn with fighting,
 He lifts my soul above
 The conflict and the sorrow,
 And cheers me with His love.
 In righteous paths He leads me,
 If I but let Him take
 Entire control of all my way,
 For His name and glory's sake.

And e'en while passing through the vale
 Where death has cast its shade,
 With my Shepherd still beside me
 How can I be afraid?
 The oil of joy and gladness
 He pours upon my head,
 He brings me to His table
 When the feast of love is spread.

Oh, what I owe my Shepherd
 My tongue can ne'er express;
 He gave His life a ransom
 That He might thus richly bless.
 He goes before to lead me
 Along the desert way,
 His mercy and His goodness
 Follow me day by day.

And if now so richly favoured
 The future shines before,
 Lit up with all the glories
 Of the Father's House in store;
 For ever, and for ever,
 My grateful song shall be,
 Honour, and praise, and glory
 To the One who died for me.

R.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

NEVER was there a time when He whom we know as Jesus was not the Son of God, the eternal Son, the only begotten Son of God. But there was a time when He was not a man. This He became, adding thereby to His Person that which He will never relinquish. As God's eternal Son He had no beginning, so we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (John i. 1, 2). Of Him, too, we read that "He is before all things" (Col. i. 17); and to Him as the Second Person in the Trinity, is creation ascribed. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3).

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," says John, which must not be understood as implying that there was any change in His Deity. He was still the Word. There was no alteration, no deterioration, for His essential Deity could not be lowered. "The children were partakers of flesh and blood; He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. ii. 14). Took part. The children were in that condition and had never been in any other. He, on the contrary, took part. What grace! What condescension! How the glory of His Person as God the Son is guarded. He took part of flesh and blood "that through death He might destroy, or annul, 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." Capable of dying as the eternal Son He was not: but He took

part of flesh and blood that He might as man be able to die.

Another question arises—Was it only in part that He became a man? Was it only something assumed? No; thank God. He became as truly a man as He was in truth the Second Person in the Trinity. He did not take part in humanity full grown, but was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and was born of a woman, entering, as every member of the human race (save Adam and Eve) has done, into the world by birth, thus proclaiming that He was as perfectly human as He had ever been Divine. Weak and dependent, needing a mother's loving care, yet, at the same time, the Creator of all things. But whilst this was true of Him, there was no deifying of His humanity, nor any humanizing of His Deity, both existed in Him, but perfectly distinct. Mary waited on her Infant's necessities, Who, as God the Son, upheld not only her but the whole universe.

A babe was He born in Bethlehem, and laid in a manger, and as such He grew; for there was development. So we read, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" (Luke ii. 52). There was then, not only growth of body but of mind, or, as we read, "He grew in wisdom." Beautiful and in season is this, and it helps us to understand and appreciate how truly He was human. Apply this to His Godhead and how false and abhorrent it becomes. God could not grow in either wisdom or stature, and of development there could be none. Moreover, He grew in favour with God, and consequently is presented here, not as God, but as man. He went down with His mother and reputed father to Nazareth and was subject unto them. Beautiful, indeed, is this, and yet He could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business"

(verse 49). Eighteen years of His wonderful life are passed by, but we are quite sure all the details of it were treasured on high. His private life was for God, but at His baptism "The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him" (Luke iii. 22). How different to Pentecost. There the Holy Ghost descended or was poured out, and upon each recipient there sat cloven tongues like as of fire (Acts ii.). Upon Jesus He came as a dove, fit emblem of gentleness, purity, and love. Our minds are carried back to the Deluge when Noah, wishing to ascertain if the waters were abated, sent forth a dove, but no rest could she find for the sole of her foot, so returned unto him in the ark. After seven days he sent her forth again, and again she returns to him with an olive leaf in her mouth. She brought good cheer. The waters were abating from off the face of the earth. Noah had also sent forth a raven, which did not return to him. She would, without doubt, find rest for her foot on many a floating carcass, and gorge herself to repletion, as it is her nature to do; but a dove, a sweet gentle creature, for her there was neither resting place nor food, only one wide, dreary waste of death and judgment.

As a dove the Holy Ghost came down upon Jesus, He being as a man holy, harmless, undefiled. Rest the Holy Spirit found; all was according to His mind. Around there was the wide, dreary waste of sinful and guilty humanity. He was the one (and the only one) bright spot in this sin-stained world. No second sending was required in this case. Jesus was worthy, offering in His Person all that God could desire to find in man. Luke tells us that He was praying; fit exercise for a dependent being. But, was He only man? Let us hear a voice from heaven—"Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." Here He

was owned, and publicly, for the first time since He was grown to man's estate—or grown up as we say. As man we next view Him as full of the Holy Ghost. Returning from Jordan, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Led. What submission! and where? Into pleasant surroundings? Nay. And for what purpose? To be tempted of the devil. The first man fell, as it has been said, with all to favour him; the Second Man stood with all against Him. Forty days in the wilderness without food, and, as Mark tells us, with wild beasts. Luke writes: "He afterward hungered." What a testimony to His true humanity! Did the devil know that He was God? Yes; for addressing Jesus he says, "If Thou be the Son of God command this stone that it be made bread." Why not? nothing was easier. Why be hungry? Why not use His divine power as the Son of God to relieve His necessities as man? Very plausible reasoning this, but very evil too. Jesus was the Son of God, but He was also a man, and as such was in entire dependence on God, and nothing could induce Him to step out of that position for a single moment. Let us note well the answer. "Man shall not live by bread alone." Blessed, obedient Man! The devil was defeated on this ground. Jesus had affirmed that He was Man, and to Him as man is the second temptation presented. Could he not awake in Jesus some ambition for power and glory? We read: "And the devil taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee: and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke iv. 5-7). Power and glory—how attractive! and all put before Jesus in a moment, so suddenly. Would He not yield on the impulse of

The Man Christ Jesus.

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the moment, even if He regretted afterwards? No; thank God. Jesus desired nothing but what God would give Him. Subject to the Word He replied, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Foiled the second time, the devil has still another scheme in reserve. He had tried to get Jesus as Son of God to use His divine power to relieve His hunger as man, but failed. He would not. God's words He loved to obey, and without a word from God no pangs of hunger would justify His doing what the devil had suggested. Next all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are presented to His gaze in a moment of time. Jesus had affirmed that He was Man; surely then He must have desires in common with all other men. He was indeed truly a man; but what a man! Never had there been the like before, and never will there be such another. Nothing presented to His eyes, not even when bursting suddenly upon His vision, could awaken in Him the least desire to obtain it by the owning of any person or of any lord save Jehovah. "Worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." This was God's command, and to this Jesus held fast in perfect obedience. We are inclined to say with Pilate, but with very different thoughts and feelings, "Behold the Man!"

The third and last assault of the tempter we are now to consider. Waiting for God in true dependence in the first, refusing to own any but God, no matter how great and immediate the gain may be, in the second, He is now invited to display His trust in God. Shew that your trust is in Him. Has He not in that very Word you have quoted from stated, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." You wait for

God, you own none but Him, then put Him to the proof; display your trust; shew that your confidence is genuine. From the pinnacle of the temple on which the devil had set Him, He was invited to cast Himself down, having nothing to fear. Meekly and promptly Jesus replies, "It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jehovah was His God, so we see Him here as man, meeting the enemy who had succeeded in the case of each and all that had gone before Him of our fallen race. But now there was a Man upon earth who defeated the devil by the Word of God alone. He was obedient and dependent, and all that the tempter has accomplished in his three assaults is to disclose the moral excellence and perfections of the Man Christ Jesus.

The devil leaves Him for a season, and Jesus, undisturbed by any further attempt to allure Him out of the path of obedience and dependence proper to man, is able to pursue the service and ministry to which God had called Him. Need, human need, surrounded Him. Sorrow, suffering, and death encompassed Him. His power, as God, could have dealt with all at once, but He was a servant, using the power that belonged to Him only when God desired it. No mere philanthropist was Jesus. God was ever before Him and His motive for working was not human need, but the glory of God. Albeit He could sigh, and groan, and weep; feelings of pity and tenderest compassion often filled His heart; never indifferent. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. A Man, a blessed Man, a Man to admire and to love. Jesus wept. No wonder the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him," but they did not know that Jesus apparently had turned a deaf ear to the sister's call begging Him to come to them. And why? The glory of God required it. Sorrow and need appealed to Him more power-

The Man Christ Jesus.

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fully than it ever had done to any man, but He acted only when God desired it, and it was within the limits of His known will. One instance will suffice. At the pool of Bethesda there lay a great multitude of impotent folk waiting for the moving of the water (John v.). Jesus selected from that multitude one only and healed him. This healing aroused the hostility of the Jews, and that led to the unfolding of truth of the deepest character, into which we must not enter now. Jesus, as man, had the experiences of a man apart from sin. What light the Psalms throw upon all this. The inspired writer in Ps. viii. asks a question—"What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" What, indeed! and proceeding says, "or the Son of man that Thou visitest him." Now Adam was not the son of man. Jesus was, and to Him the Spirit of God is referring, as Heb. ii. teaches us. Could the writer, under the direct control of the Spirit of God, wonder that God should be mindful of and visit Jesus if His Godhead were before Him? Certainly not. But viewing Him as man the question is as intelligible as it is fit and proper. Man, what an insignificant being he is. A worm! a moth! fitly express his littleness. Born into the world his mind becomes filled with questions. Why? Why? Why? Revelation alone can answer, and for that he is dependent upon God. With his mind he explores the heavens, but he cannot get there. Left to his own resources he is weakness itself, and if honest owns himself a fool. But the Son of Man, of whom the Psalmist was writing, was, as Heb. ii. tells us, Jesus, "who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour," and is to have all things put under Him. It is this same Jesus who speaks in Psalm xvi., "Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art

my Lord." So far we have the language of a man owning and realising his dependence. But what a lowly estimate of Himself does that which follow unfold to us: "My goodness extendeth not to Thee." A man He was, and so regards Himself, and His perfections are disclosed in His deep humility. True to God, and although death lay in His pathway, His heart was glad and His glory rejoiced. "My flesh" (He says) "shall rest in hope; for Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, nor suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." In Psalm xxii. we have the language and experiences of one forsaken of God, and in this He was alone; for never had a needy one really cried to God and remained unheard and undelivered. Was then this lonely One worse than they? No, indeed. Those whose cries had reached Jehovah's ears, and whose desires for deliverance had been granted, were, each and all in themselves sinners; but He whose cry remained unheard was the Sinless One, that one blessed exception to all others of the human family. Never was need so great, nor sorrow so deep, nor cry so earnest and continuous. Never had one been so dependent or trusted so perfectly. Never had there been a man whose estimate of himself had been so humble. "But I am a worm and no man" (verse 6). Thank God we know the reason for all this. The holiness of God on the one hand and the bearing of our sins on the other explains the mystery. But He was God the Son. True; but not as such do we behold Him here. The inspired penman does not even hint at His Deity, nor should we introduce in our minds in this connection His Godhead glory. If we do it is not only confusion, but to deeply dishonour Him. It is vain to reason. God's Spirit in the Scriptures never connects the Godhead with either sin, death, or judgment. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," forbids the

idea completely. A real man, He addresses the Divine Being. Had He spoken as the Son He would have said Father, but in the nature of things the Father could not forsake the Son; for we read, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me," and this is an essential condition in the Godhead. It may be urged that there are statements in the New Testament which sanction the thought that God and Man, in the person of Christ, bore our sins, endured wrath and judgment, and died for us. We reply, No, there is not one; and the astounding thing is that any Christian should have such an idea. It is freely granted that a few passages taken by themselves and ignoring all others may favour this view, but Scripture is one whole, and no part contradicts the rest. It is both unintelligent and unscriptural to reason from a few passages for a doctrine which is at variance with scores of others. But what are they? In John xii. 27, Jesus says: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour." The hour, without doubt, was that of His agony and death. He addresses His Father, not God as in Psalm xxii. But let us look back a little. "The hour is come that the *Son of Man* should be glorified (verse 23), and ere this could be, if He would have others with Him He must die. He must die or abide alone. As man then He dies, and as man by means of His death He can and will have others associated with Him; but as the Second Person of the Trinity He did not die, and in this sense can have no associates. He is infinitely above all mere creatures no matter how highly privileged and blessed. Paul says in Romans v. 10, "Reconciled to God by the *death of His Son*"; and again in Gal. ii. 20, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." It may be as well to remark that in two different senses was Jesus the Son of God. A Man, and calling Himself the

Son of Man, yet having no human father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and hence the Son of God; and the eternal Son of God, the Second Person in Trinity. Bearing this in mind there is no difficulty. It was not necessary to emphasize the fact in every statement. He who died was the Son of God. To that fact attention is called, but nowhere can be found any statement that says God died, that God bore our sins, that God's blood was shed. If such was the truth we might reasonably expect to find it stated in the plainest way. General statements we have, but explicit ones are all the other way. "The bread which I will give is My *flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51; see also verses 52-56). In the Lord's Supper it is His *body* that is given and His blood shed. In the bearing of our sins, He bore them in His Own *body* on the tree (1 Pet. ii. 24). "Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the *flesh*" (1 Pet. iii. 18). In Heb. ix. 14 we find these words, "Offered *Himself* without spot to God." Would any say that included His Diety? The Spirit of God prevents that, for in chapter x. 10, we read: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." As a man He was born of the Virgin Mary; as a man He became the sin bearer; as a man He died and rose again. By man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. Thus Scripture speaks and so should we. More might be added, but enough surely has been written. May our hearts love and adore Him, God and Man, known to us by the precious name of Jesus.

E. R. W.

"JESUS WENT BEFORE THEM."

(Mark x., 32-40.)

THE pathway of our adorable Lord and Master provides a never-ending study for the Christian. It is a well of instruction from whence he can draw, and draw again, delights for his heart and guidance for his feet. No word dropped by our Lord lacked meaning, and no action of Him, who both did and taught, is without significance. And when the fervency of His love causes our hearts to glow in return, then what page recording His eventful life can we contemplate unmoved?

But perhaps the records that most affect us are those that relate to His sufferings. To have vividly portrayed to our souls what He endured for us; to be put down in His company as He meekly wended His way, with varying receptions, to Jerusalem, is surely a blessedness granted us in the Gospels, and should cause such a blending of joy and sorrow in our souls—joy that we are called to follow the One who exhibited undying love in His path of unswerving obedience; and sorrow that, because of sin, acquaintance with grief and such awful streams of suffering should ever have been His.

"It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," our Lord said (Luke xiii. 33), and in the Scripture before us that city was the goal before Him. Perfect knowledge was with Him, but suffering was no deterrent to Him. What hesitation would mark our steps did we often know the path before us with its scorching trial and deep waters; but unfalteringly, without hesitation, He went towards Jerusalem accompanied by His disciples. And Jesus went before. In the path of suffering that eventually led to glory

He would be foremost, and all who would tread that self-same path must follow Him.

Amazement laid hold of the hearts of the twelve. To evade suffering and persecution is so natural to man, that to behold one knowingly going where enemies were thickest and most inveterate created no small amount of astonishment amongst His followers. Following, *they* were afraid. *His* face was set like a flint to go to Jerusalem. What a contrast! Natural timidity is strong, and often makes poor cowards of us unless impelled from within by the strongest of motives. Doubtless the disciples gazed again and again in real wonderment upon this astonishing spectacle; and do not our souls reiterate now that it was a marvellous sight to see One facing trial so calmly, confidently. But He came to do God's will, and the accomplishment of that was His only concern.

The end from the beginning was known to Him, and to prepare His affrighted and amazed disciples for what lay in front, He again goes over, and with more detail, the things that were to happen to Him. And firstly, in recounting the order of events, we have a reference to His betrayal. "The Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes" (ver. 33). Little did those disciples then dream that a traitor was of their number; that one of them would be instrumental in delivering their Master into the hands of the chief priests. But all was patent to Him, and He knew that "His own familiar friend" would lift up His heel against Him. But yet Jesus went before them to Jerusalem; for His was that love that "many waters cannot quench."

And secondly, we read of the awful part that those chief priests and scribes were to play in that dire hour. To sit in the judge's chair with guilty criminals arraigned before

it can be no enviable office. To judge and condemn men steeped in crime is not the best of occupations. But to sit as judges to condemn the guiltless on the confession of the truth is a crime so heinous as to be almost beyond conception. But the cruelty of jealousy would be there openly shown, and, having Him in their grasp they, who had long sought to encompass His death, would do their worst; for judging the Innocent to be worthy of death, they would deliver Him to the Gentiles. Yet still, we repeat, though this was there awaiting Him, Jesus went before; for no suffering could stay His love.

And passing on, He speaks of what He would receive from Gentile hands; for in that hour of darkness no eye would pity, no comforters be found. All would be against Him. Then religious and profane, high and low, cultured and debased, rich and poor would unite to shew forth the marvels of darkness from unregenerate hearts. Concentrated envy, hate, and malice would be spit out against the Holy Sufferer. And shall we wonder? If those to whom God had spoken would not scruple to wreak the passions of their impious hearts upon Him; if, with murderous hatred, they would not stay from delivering Him into the hands of despised civil authorities, then surely it could not be that hardened Gentiles would set a curb upon the licentiousness of their unfeeling hearts.

And Jesus, aware of all, to the twelve unfolds all, and the mystery of love deepens as we listen to Him. "They shall mock Him and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him." Here are rising stages of evil. The dagger of indignity and malice is plunged deeper at each stroke. What must it have been to His tender heart to contemplate such heartless cruelty! What grace to utter it to prepare the disciples for the path before them! Did He

not say, when what He here speaks of neared its consummation, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke xxii. 28)?—and what was it but His own sustaining grace and vehement love that had kept them.

But what a contrast is here between the "*they*" and the "*Him*,"—they, Gentiles past feeling surely; Him, the meek and lowly One, led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. And what strains were these for the twelve to hear, and for us to read. Here every word seems to bristle with the blackness of darkness. There unbridled lust would be against patient enduring, pride against meekness, folly against wisdom. Here every sentence is a sermon on the ruin of man. It was to be man's testing time, and the Good, the Holy, and the True, mocked, spurned, and crucified would be the unmistakable evidence of man's lost condition, as well as showing that he was too ready and suitable a vehicle for the venom of Satan.

But more. Here are thrusts home to *our* cold hearts eloquently appealing for love. They crave our attention. Yes, light divine has broken in upon our souls, and if we see ourselves represented in that rabble that could shoot the vile spittle into His blest face, there also we behold *our Saviour*, and with adoring hearts learn, as we now consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, that the floods could not drown His love.

But there was a measure of light amidst the darkness. Man's foul design would be accomplished; for, "They shall kill Him." Their spite would go to its very extremity. But like a rift in the black storm-cloud that allows the sunlight to gleam forth, so comes the declaration of the Lord, "And the third day He shall rise again." Comforting assurance!

"Jesus Went Before Them."

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Bursting the mighty bands of death He would come forth victor over all, emerging superior to the combined efforts of man and Satan. And now—

"No more the cruel spear,
The cross and nails no more ;
For hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore."

However, as He went before them, the Master's thoughts were anticipative of the cross. Completely emptied, He was going down. Very different were the thoughts of His disciples. With such a Master vistas of greatness and glory opened before their view, and their aspirations were upward to that. Was He to have a Kingdom and glory? That must mean much for them ; and so, anticipating the others, two of them, James and John, came with a request, asking of Him that He should do for them whatsoever they desired (ver. 35). We learn from Matthew that their mother accompanied them to urge their suit (chap xx. 20), presuming, it may be, on the fact that since they were related, her requesting likewise might add weight to theirs. Surely here self doth shew itself, though its garb be that of a suppliant.

Graciously the Lord hears them. Largely they ask. The places of prominence and power in His glory were the limits of their thoughts. "Grant that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory." They knew not what they preferred. They saw the glory, but were ignorant of the depths of the streams of suffering that must be passed ere it could be obtained. "*In Thy glory*," they said ; but what about the cup that must be drunk, and the baptism that must be entered into ere it was reached? Were they willing to walk that road to those positions of eminence? So Jesus asks, "can ye drink of the

cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Wishing to be great, they had in ignorance desired this certain thing of Him, and still ignorant of themselves, they maintained that they could both drink of His cup and be immersed in His baptism. Yes, mortals feared not to boldly crave, when hesitancy would have been far more becoming. What adequate sense could they have had of the meaning of the Lord's words to reply so fearlessly, "We can." At the supreme moment they ran away and left Him alone; yet Jesus, in His love would associate them in suffering with Himself. This was His to give. He could dispense of this to them, though as the dependent One, the perfect Servant, He would let them know—how astonished they must have been to hear it!—that the very places they sought of Him it was not His to bestow, but were reserved for whom prepared. In that the Father exercises His prerogative; yet in the path of rejection with Him sorrow and reproach they would know.

"Ye shall drink of the cup that I drink of," and without controversy it is no mean favour to be granted fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, save where He must be alone. This He gave to them. It may be that the anticipation of glory is more attractive and fascinating than the cross, yet fellowship with Him is sweet, and if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. In this path so much depends upon the appreciation of the person, and love to Him can never be excessive. Would that we loved Him a thousand times more than we do! Happy are we, if we possess towards our Lord, in proportion as our Lord is superior to David, the spirit of Ittai, the Gittite, who could say, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (2 Sam. xv. 21).

That is it. Whether in *death* or *life* to be with the object of our heart's affection and adoration is everything. And since to our Lord hatred was meted out, so hatred and persecution must be the portion of His followers. "If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you." Persecution is not sweet, but knowing Him is, and this we want to covet; and the reproach of Christ is not distasteful or toilsome to those who love Him. We want to remember whom we follow, and then though His rejection is ours, so that death is put before life, and cross comes before crown in God's inventory, yet we shall be able to sweetly and truly sing—

"Naught, naught we court as pleasure,
Compared, O Christ, with Thee!"

Christ filling the heart is the guard against the entrance of evil, or the working of the flesh; and as we adoringly retrace His pathway of sorrow and see Him "going before," may the desire to behold Him in His beauty be intensified in our souls, and until that blissful moment arrives let us follow in His footsteps, finding therein rest unto our souls.

H. F.

GOLDEN GRAINS.

THERE are Christians whose piety is strong but not tender, sublime but not lovely, who need sorrow to soften and to make them more like their Lord, more useful to others. A Devonshire wall when first built up of undressed stones, though strong, is rough and unsightly; but when winds and storms have carried to it the seeds of ferns and flowers, which sunshine has developed into Nature's unrivalled tapestries, how lovely becomes the lane thus bounded by walls no less strong than before, but how soft and beautiful!

The marble block could it speak would not resent the chisel that cut away what imprisoned the angel to be revealed *afterwards*. The rough, dull diamond would not quarrel with the grinder's tool that enabled it to flash back all the glory of the solar ray, and be a fit ornament for a kingly crown. The swelling Nile, that seems to devastate the land, leaves the fertilising deposit that *afterwards* enriches it with plenty. The soul may not complain of the plough and the harrow that yield in autumn "the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

"The sons of God, by passing griefs are blest,
Amid the dark He ever leads to light,
His purposes and plans are always right.
Commit thy way to Him—His way is best;
O wait for Him, wait patiently and rest."

UNCTION is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless; yet it is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus. To the secret pleader with God this secret is committed; upon him rests the dew of the Lord, about him is the perfume which makes glad the heart. If the anointing which we bear come not from the Lord of hosts we are deceivers, and since only in prayer can we obtain it, let us continue instant, constant, fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the threshing-floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven. Go not to minister in the temple till you have washed in the laver. Think not to be a messenger of grace to others till you have seen the God of grace for yourselves, and had the Word from His mouth.

Time spent in quiet prostration of soul before the Lord is most invigorating. David "sat before the Lord"; and it is a great thing to hold these sacred sittings; the mind being receptive, like an open flower drinking in the sunbeams, or the sensitive photographic plate accepting the image before it. Quietude, which some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inward poverty, is as a palace of cedar to the wise, for along its hallowed courts the King in His beauty deigns to walk.

Priceless as the gift of utterance may be, the practice of silence in some respects far excels it. Quiet contemplation, still worship, unremitted rapture, these are mine when my best jewels are before me. Brethren, rob not your heart of the deep sea joys; miss not the far-down life by for ever babbling among the broken shells and foaming surges of the shore.

LEARN, believer, from this conflict and victory of thy Lord, that there is a foe who will and does oppose all who strive to serve and honour God; and though as yet, it may be, thou hast not suffered much from his fiery darts, still be assured he will come, and come when thou art weakest, too, to pierce and wound thy soul. Was Jesus led from the presence of His Father, and the sweet voice of His love, into a dreary wilderness to be tempted of the devil? Then be not surprised if from the most sweet and rapt enjoyment of thy Saviour's love thou should have for a time to descend into the low valley of soul-desertion to grapple with the same foe. Was He to whom all things belonged by native right called to suffer from hunger? Then be not surprised if for a time thy Father's providence should bring thee,

however thou mayest labour, but a scant supply, and the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil should often seem to be well-nigh spent. Was thy Saviour tempted to doubt His Sonship and Father's providence—tempted to idolatry and presumption? Be not surprised if thou art tempted thus. But fear not—tamper not; at once present the shield of faith, and hide thyself in truth. Fear not the tempter's poisoned arrows, though sharp, but fear to play with them, lest they should pierce thy soul. The shield of faith will protect thee, but thou must hold it up, nor let it fall one moment from thy grasp. The sword of truth is sharp, and Satan fears its edge, but thou must keep it bright by use. Into solitude thou mayest not go to seek the foe; but when he comes then thou must fight or fall. Meet him not in thine own strength—what would'st thou be in the hands of him who slew man ere weakened by the taint of sin, and dared to attack the Son of God Himself? Remember, that if permitted of Christ, he has strength enough to tie the entire race of man to his chariot wheels, and drag them down to hell. Forget not that he knows his way into the heart of man, and is so acquainted with its secret windings that he is often present when least suspected; with the weakness of every saint he is perfectly acquainted, and desires to have all such, that he may sift them as wheat. Relax not then thy vigilance, oh, believer. Bear in mind that he who watched thy Saviour forty days is watching thee, to seize the moment most favourable to his designs against thee. Keep thine eye, therefore, steadily fixed upon Christ; give heed to His solemn admonition: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And let His victory over Satan teach thee that it is by truth as grasped by faith that thou art to meet, oppose, and overcome every foe that may assail thee in thy heaven-bound course.

TIMELY REVELATION.

DIVINE ministry to the heart is a real, and may we not say, a wonderful thing. That the Almighty should think of, and minister to an individual—a worm (Job xxv. 6), tells of grace and mercy indeed. It speaks, too, to us of the minute knowledge of the Creator, taking note of the circumstances of one individual, it may be, out of the whole number of men and women upon earth. To a few instances of such ministry by *timely revelation* we would here call attention.

Our first instance will be found in the record of the life of Abraham, and that early in his history. Accompanied by Lot, his nephew, he had left Ur, and subsequently Haran, and had reached the land of Canaan. At Sichem in the land (Genesis xii. 7) God first made known to him, that Canaan was the country of which the Lord had spoken to him when dwelling in the city of his birthplace (Acts vii. 2, 3). A great company we suppose it must have been that left Haran, and reached Sichem (6). In time their substance increased. Lot evidently became a wealthy man according to the life of a nomad of those days. He had flocks, and herds, and tents (xiii. 5). Abraham also was very rich in cattle as well as in silver and in gold (2). A vast encampment then it must have been, and strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot ensued.

What should be done in these circumstances? Abraham now speaks, and proposes to Lot a separation. "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray

thee, from me ; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left " (8, 9). A fair offer all will say. But who was the offerer ? It was the one to whose seed God had promised the *whole* land. To Lot no promise had been made, so he was in the land, as we might say, on sufferance. Lot agreed to separate. But the spirit of meekness and quietness, precious in God's eyes, was displayed by the uncle, and not by the nephew. Surely natural feeling should have prompted the nephew to leave the choice to the uncle. But self-interest governing Lot he chose the plain of Jordan, which he saw was well watered everywhere (10), just the district suited for pastoral pursuits. Self-interest, we have said, governed Lot. Meekness characterised Abraham.

Who witnessed the settlement of this matter between the two ? It may be no human ear overheard it, nor was there, we must suppose, any formal instrument drawn up about it. The separation, however, took place. Lot, doubtless, thought he had the best of the bargain, and separated from his uncle with, we may believe, a light heart. He left Abraham, to find out subsequently his folly, when a captive in the hands of Chedorlaomer and his vassal kings (xiv.).

Meanwhile, what about Abraham ? He dwelt in the land of Canaan, whilst Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain. We have said that very likely no one on earth was a witness to the arrangement made between the two. But there was a witness of it. God had known it. And now, when the separation was accomplished, He spoke, but spoke to Abraham. Lot might enjoy the plains of Jordan, " well watered as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt " (xiii. 10). But no revelation from heaven was vouchsafed him. To the uncle God spoke. To the nephew He was

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silent. For "the Lord said to Abraham, *after* that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest; to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (xiii. 14-17).

Had Abraham lost by his meekness? People might have said, he has foolishly foregone the best of the land in allowing Lot to choose. But was he not the better off with this revelation from God? Timely indeed it was. It assured him of the divine approval of his conduct, just when natural thoughts might have risen up to reproach him for his folly. And now, wherever he looked around, he could see but part of the land to be given to him and to his seed for ever. God knows when to speak; and no time could have been more fitting for this revelation to be vouchsafed to Abraham, the Hebrew. How grateful it must have been to him to receive that token of marked approval from the Lord! "The meek shall inherit the earth," so we learn (Matt. v. 5). Was not Abraham an illustration of it?

Let us turn to another illustration. And this time let us go in spirit to the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, nigh to Bethany. The eleven had walked out to it that day following the Lord—their last walk, as it turned out, with Him. His latest instructions were ended (Acts i. 9). And then in the act of blessing He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 51). He who had gained their hearts' affections was thus taken from them. We can understand something of that which they must have felt.

In silence, their hearts too full for utterance, they were looking up to heaven, following with their eyes, as far as they could, their ascended Lord, ere the cloud hid Him from their sight. Peter, generally so ready of speech, was, we can quite believe, silent at this moment. But the silence was broken most unexpectedly by two men who stood by them in white apparel, which we learn, also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 10, 11).

That was all. It was a message sent them from heaven, and two men conveying it were a competent witness of its veracity. They heard it, they received it, and that without question; and turned their steps back into the city, which they had left in company with the Master but a short time before. He had returned to heaven, gone to the Father as He had forewarned them, and now they would see Him no more (John xvi. 10). In person He had gone back to heaven. In person would He return, coming "in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Now, naturally, the effect on them of His departure would have been to plunge all into sorrow. And returning to the company in the upper room without Him, and with the account of His ascension, would have clouded that day for them all. But the revelation of His personal return filled each heart with gladness. "They returned to Jerusalem," we read, "with great joy" (Luke xxiv. 52). What tidings had they to communicate? They could tell of their walk with Him. They could recount the conversation on the way. They could announce His ascension. But more. They could communicate the angels' revelation, vouchsafed to them without any prayer poured forth by their little company. If

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ever there was a timely revelation surely this was. And God thereby ministered to their hearts a balm, a spring of joy, of which neither man nor devil could deprive them.

For another example we invite the reader to come with us in spirit to Corinth in the days of its licentiousness. The Apostle Paul was labouring there. The Jews rejecting the message, he turned to the Gentiles. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized (Acts xviii. 6-8). The enmity of the Jews was no small matter, as Paul had experienced at Antioch in Pisidia, at Iconium, and at Lystra in Asia Minor, and at Thessalonica, and at Berea in Macedonia. And if possible, as was their wont elsewhere (1 Thess. ii. 14-16), they would make trouble at Corinth, as indeed they attempted a little later (Acts xviii. 12-17). The Lord, knowing their opposition and that which would follow, spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city" (9, 10).

Driven away, as he had been from the cities we have mentioned, he was not to leave Corinth in that manner. Boldly was he to speak. The Lord would be with him, and much blessing would result. Timely, indeed, was the revelation. It kept the Apostle there labouring, just when needed, for the carrying out of God's purpose as regards souls in that city. "I have much people in this city," said the Lord. For all, who would be converted, had already been given to Him by the Father. Now, how welcome must that message direct from the Lord have been to His servant. Paul must thus have been assured that the Lord was perfectly acquainted with things in Corinth. He knew, too, hearts, and before the

attempt of the Jews to put in force legal means to arrest the work, Paul was encouraged, that he might labour on without fear.

We would pass on now to another revelation, as timely and as gracious as those we have been considering. To Paul was it also vouchsafed, and like the last one, in the quietness of the night. Darkness and light are both alike to God. In the night season at times has He spoken, as well as in the day. For He never slumbers nor sleeps.

The Apostle was now at Jerusalem, his last visit there, as far as we know. He had on this occasion gone there against the command of the Spirit (Acts xxi. 4). Fruitless in men's judgment might have seemed his visit. The hostility of the Jews was marked indeed. "It was not fit that he should live" had been the cry, when the Apostle addressed his countrymen from the stairs of the fortress of Antonia (Acts xxii. 22). Before the Sanhedrim on the next day, it seemed to the chief captain as if they would tear Paul in pieces (xxiii. 10). In the night, then, which followed, Paul alone, we may suppose, in his prison had a revelation again from the Lord—"Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (11). For years had he desired to visit Rome (Rom. xv. 23). He should do it, and bear witness there for Christ.

What a cheer! One can well believe that the Apostle's thoughts that night had turned to the past. Doubtless he remembered the warnings he had received, and that command by the Spirit through disciples at Tyre. A failure, too, he may have felt had his visit to Jerusalem turned out. But now the Lord assured him it had not been a failure. He had borne witness there for Christ, and the Lord would yet use him in testimony in the metropolis of the empire.

Like a draught of cold water to a thirsty person must that revelation have been to him. Unsought had it come, and the welcome assurance that the Lord would yet use His failing servant must have been a cordial indeed.

Just one more instance, and we have done. To Patmos we turn, that little rocky island in the Ægean Sea, made famous for one thing—the exile to it of the Apostle John. The power of the enemy was great. John's brother James had been killed by Herod Agrippa. Paul had been martyred by the Emperor Nero, and Peter, too, had suffered death at his hand. Now John had to succumb to a power he could not resist, and banishment to Patmos was his lot; and he, the last of the Apostles on earth. Was the enemy after all to triumph and Christianity be wiped out? It might seem so. But now whilst in the isle of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev i. 9), a revelation was vouchsafed him, the only one specially addressed to John of which we have any record. It opened up the future, a far distant future then, a future for the most part still. God, not the enemy, would finally triumph. The power of Rome would be annihilated. The devil would receive his final and everlasting doom. All things here would be made new.

Just about 18 months was John in banishment there, and perhaps no Christian fellowship could he enjoy. But the Lord knew where he was, and no power could hinder communication from Him. Then the future collapse of all the power of the enemy was unfolded to the exile for his encouragement, and that of all saints from that time and onward. Surely again must we say how timely and how gracious was this forecast of the future. A forecast shall we say. Yes, an inspired forecast which certainly will be made good.

But revelations have ceased. Has divine ministry stopped? No. At times, as needed, the Christian may receive a message for his guidance or encouragement *through* the Word, and that direct from above through the teaching of the Spirit. It may be that some word is specially fixed on the mind ere the great need for it becomes apparent to the individual. Or it may be, when in deep anxiety, in sorrow, or trial, a word is ministered, which lifts up the soul and braces it with hope of deliverance. Probably some of our readers have proved that. But in each case it is a word of God, a word of divine written revelation which is used. Then the Christian can trust, and give thanks for the witness to his heart, that the Lord is thinking of him, and the Spirit is ministering to him. If prophecy is not vouchsafed, as once it was, the ministry of the written Word of God by the Spirit is found sufficient. But, be it remembered, it is *God's Word* which is thus ministered by the Spirit. This will keep the individual from following or cherishing fancies of his own, mere *Will-o'-the-wisps*, which might land him in grave disaster.

C. E. S.

PSALM XXIX.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD.

GLORIOUS things in this small portion are spoken of "The voice of the Lord."

I leave the direct or primary bearing of the Psalm for

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others to unfold, and meditate for a little on what seems to me is to be found in it for the present moment.

To us we may say "the voice of the Lord" is the Word of God when we *hear in it* the voice of God.

The Psalm opens by calling on the mighty to *give* unto Jehovah glory and strength. This is a wonderful position for man to occupy. There has been a long tale of sin, of departure from God; and man, until as a lost sinner he *receives*, in the boundless grace of God, from God, has nothing to give. The last verse affords a clue to the understanding of the first—"Jehovah will give strength unto His people." Thus they become mighty. They learn to say, "We triumph in Thy triumphs, Lord." Then Jehovah will bless His people with peace.

Who are they—the mighty ones? We answer, Those who are "daily, daily" learning that "separated from Christ they can do nothing,"—who like Jacob have had the seat of *their* strength touched by that hand that writes death on all that flows not from God. Then they have power with God and "do exploits." They have received and therefore *can give*.

In Rev. v. we have a sevenfold ascription of glory to Him who is represented as coming and taking the book out of the hand of Him who sitteth on the throne. "They sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth. And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures and the elders: and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb

that has been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Verses 3-10 in various ways sets forth the glory of Him who "sitteth King for ever."

He will have those who follow Him whithersoever He goeth in the possession of perfect peace, hereafter associating them in the manifested glories of His kingdom.

Man who in himself possesses only a fallen history, must be a receiver of the boundless grace of God. He must know on the testimony of God that all the questions that Divine righteousness could raise and has raised have been righteously settled—that he has been brought to God—fitted by God to be a partaker in that glorious scene into which we shall be ushered when Christ the Lord shall come.

In verse 2 we again listen to the call to "give"—"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "Due unto His name! That is a ceaseless song and one that should be deepening in our souls. "His name," what He *is*. And as we give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness; holy boldness fills our souls, and holiness—His holiness—we adore as we behold it.

Jehovah is supreme. "His voice is upon the waters—the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters." His people are acquainted to-day with "a still small voice"—a voice which controls and affects one, where "whirlwind," "earthquake" and "fire" have no power. The soul as it hears *that* voice says, "That is Jehovah, that is the voice of my Lord," and we wrap our faces in a mantle and we *listen*. But at another time He thunders. His voice once shook the earth, but by and by it will shake not only the earth, but also heaven. He will thunder, and as

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it is written, "At the voice of Thy thunder they hasted away."

"Jehovah is upon many waters." The nations with all their apparent power are as nothing, "they are as a drop in the bucket," and "the isles He taketh up as a very little thing." He thunders, He calls all to hear, to attend to what He says. He is above all. He is far above all principality and power, and might and dominion.

The Jehovah of old—the I am—the One who *is*, is the One who became flesh and dwelt amongst us, who came to take away the sin of the world.

"The voice of Jehovah is powerful." "The voice of Jehovah is full of majesty." This we can say as we get near Him, and turn to see the voice that speaks unto us. "The voice of Jehovah" searches the thoughts and intents of the heart—lays bare our motives—shows us what we would not allow to ourselves, but which He sees.

His voice is powerful to-day when He speaks to a sinner. He stands still and calls the sinner to Himself—makes him obedient in the plenitude of His love and grace. But powerful is His voice in every day. He girds His people, so that they can run and not be weary. He makes those who in the sight or estimation of their enemies are only "sheep for the slaughter," more than conquerors, because nothing present nor to come can separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. What majesty in His words as He went out and in among men! He was among His creatures as the servant, yet He said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." "The voice of Jehovah is full of majesty." So Daniel felt it to be—so John in Patmos—so *we* shall if still ignorant of its greatness.

The cedars—yea, the cedars of Lebanon are broken by Him. The greatness of man is brought low.

“The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.” Yes, it is no judgment that is wielded by an undiscerning mind. It is apportioned with most perfect knowledge.

“The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness.” Remember this friends—the wilderness is where we are searched—where we are tested and proved—where we learn what we are—where we find the truth of His Word, that in us, that is in our flesh good does not dwell.

“The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve and discovereth the forests,” and glorious it is to read “*In His temple doth everyone speak of His glory.*”

It will be, when we are home, Himself alone which we shall delight to glory in. Our notes seldom rise above thanksgiving. Our hands do not witness to being filled with the “wave breast” and the “heave shoulder,” the portion of the priestly family.

And now we have “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” He is far above all principality and power, and might and dominion. “The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods have lifted up their waves” (Psalm xciii. 3). There seems to be no answer above all the din. It looks as if the flood would carry us away. But “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea” (verse 4).

Our God would have us learn that if He is for us, no one can be against us. The Psalmist writes (cxxiv.)—“If it had not been Jehovah who was for us, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick (alive), when their anger was kindled against us. He would have

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us learn also, in all the conflict we have to sustain, that the battle is the Lord's, not ours, so we can be of good courage, and not be afraid, but sing on our way :—

“ He sitteth o'er the water floods,
Then doubt and fear no more ;
For He who passed through all the storms
Has reached the heavenly shore.

“ And every tempest-driven bark,
With Jesus for its guide,
Will soon be lodged in harbour calm,
In glory to abide.”

D. S.

THE COUNSEL OF UNBELIEF.

(1 Sam. xxvii.)

It has been pertinently remarked that circumstances never make or mar anyone ; they only test and prove. The bell must be struck to give forth its tone, and show its soundness, and the seaworthiness of the vessel is proved by the storm. So with men. Many an one has been brought out in his true colours by circumstances ; and in the case of God's saints how often have events laid bare the inherent weakness and the lowness of faith, whilst at other times clearly revealing the presence of hidden strength.

Now David's path was one brimful of varied experiences, and it has pleased God to give us a very full account of the ups and downs, the trials and persecutions which he had to wrongfully endure ; and on the whole we see a man,

through trust in God, superior to it all; tested indeed, yet cleaving to God and the path of rectitude. But faith could ebb low; the soul could be swamped with the adverse tide; and in our chapter we have one instance where his faith failed him and unbelief became his tutor.

A perusal of the preceding chapter will convince any of the beautiful spirit David displayed towards Saul though hunted by him like a partridge upon the mountains. There was the utmost tenderness of heart and conscience, and so simple and real were his words that they could not but appeal even to Saul; and for the moment convicted of his foolishness and folly he bids David return, saying, "Thou shalt both do great things, and shall still prevail" (verse 25).

David goes on his way after passing so creditably through this fiery ordeal, but surely not with the words of Saul quoted above ringing in his ears, for he begins to muse with himself. And this is a dangerous exercise always, so near to us all is "the sin that doth so easily beset." When we hold conference with our own hearts then unbelief with doubt, distrust, fear and all its numerous progeny soon succeeds the most brilliant displays of faith. And here David was no exception, for *all* flesh is as grass, and therefore naught will sustain any of God's saints save constant dependence upon Him. To shift the eye from Him to the heart is to shift it as from light to darkness, from all-sufficiency to nothingness. We then go from success to failure, from zeal to craven fear. And so with David. Musing with his heart he says, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (verse 1).

Had he so soon forgotten that he had commended himself and his cause to Jehovah—"Let Him deliver me out of all tribulation"? Had he also forgotten that Saul had sought a covenant with him, knowing as he remarks, that

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David would surely be king, and that the kingdom would be established in his hands? Surely, yes; quite forgotten; and memory seems to lapse wonderfully when faith ceases to rule the heart. It is by faith we stand, and so standing we do not say, "We are not able," as did the faithless of old, but "God is able;" for it is not our ability but God's competency to do everything for us. Oh, let us learn to keep our faces Godward; for in Him all our springs are found; and then we shall be preserved from turning from communing with God to speaking to our own hearts. And it is when we exult in the fulness of God that the soul bubbles over with gladness, and the mouth praises him with joyful lips.

Now let us trace out the effect of David's attending to the counsel of his heart. Unbelief seeks the easy path, whereas faith accepts all from God and affects not to plan for itself. Since the day of Adam's fall the path of faithfulness has been a difficult one; and besides faith luxuriates most on the thorny, upward road. What says David? "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." That is it. Unbelief counsels us to abandon the very position God has brought us into, and a position thus wrongfully and unfaithfully entered upon will lead to wrong and misrepresentation whilst there. When a stone is set rolling there is the possibility of its reaching the valley, and when the heart heeds unbelief who shall say where it will stop in that downward course? The land of the Philistines looms before the eyes of David, and there he would be secure from Saul—"So shall I escape out of his hands." It looked fair; it appeared easy,—but the effect upon the soul? Unless God in mercy interposed how great would be the loss.

The Philistines were the inveterate enemies of God's

people. David had oft sallied forth in the strength of Jehovah against them and come off victorious; but now in his forgetfulness, all was forgotten except the false thought that he should perish, and that hence there was *nothing better* than the human remedy unbelief suggested to his heart. Nothing better? How about the time when he cried, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears"? Was not *that* something better? But there the lesson is again recorded in bold, readable type for our learning, that yesterday's experience and communion will not avail us in to-day's conflicts. Dependent yesterday, we must be dependent to-day, or the reasonings of our hearts will overcome the dictates of faith.

"Ceasing to pray we cease to fight;

Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright."

David, with his band, flees away to Achish king of Gath; and Saul, hearing of it, "Sought no more again for him." As David had supposed so it came to pass, a fact that often leads the saint on reviewing the circumstances to judge certain steps to be right. But is it not plain that walking by faith we should be above the leading of circumstances? True, to be guided by His eye there must be the looking up; and just as true is it that, when there is the lack of understanding, the bit and bridle are required.

Coming to Achish, David morally degrades himself by calling himself the servant of that king. He asks for an abiding place away from the royal city. "For," he says, "why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?" (verse 5); and obtaining Ziklag he abode with his men in the country of the Philistines a year and four months. Shall we call it an eventful or uneventful time? He enjoyed, we can judge, a measure of quiet and ease unknown for a long period before, but where do we read of sweet sonnets

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sung and harmonies composed by David in communion with God during this full year and four months in the Philistines' land? Could the Spirit strike melodious chords on the strings of David's heart whilst in such a wrong position? It must have been sadly out of tune.

Can we not learn from this that it is far better to be in difficulties *with God*, than in ease *without Him*. Trials are no barriers to communion with Him. They need not stay the songs of the soul; for though perchance we do see better in the light than we do in the dark, yet it is ours to sing in the night the songs of deliverance He has taught us.

For this there must be the activity of faith, and we in spirit with Him. Thus sweetly sang one when shut up within a dungeon:—

“Nought have I else to do,
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still He bends to hear me sing.”

In that beautiful figure of the Psalms, the chickens hiding under the wings covered with the feathers, it is manifest that safety was not in *seeing* but in *trusting*. And applying this to ourselves, to be *with Him* in the holy calm of communion is inestimable joy, and then when clouds gather and His face we cannot see, we shall, in the language of David when full of faith, trust 'neath the shadow of His wings.

And now let us briefly consider David's conduct whilst in Gath. He goes on a raiding expedition against the nations that were of old the inhabitants of the land (verse 8); and whilst the cattle and sheep are brought away as spoil, all the people, women as well as men, are slain. He played

the oppressor in slaying the people, and he did it lest word should reach the ears of Achish. Alas! a false position will ever lead us in paths of falseness to maintain us there. But this was not all, for on returning, the king enquired where he had been, and to ingratiate himself with Achish David replies, "Against the south of Judah," etc. That would have been against his own people, and was untrue. No wonder his answer caused Achish great chuckling of heart; for believing what David had said, he reasoned that Israel would now utterly abhor him, and hence he had obtained a servant for ever (verse 12).

The mighty had fallen indeed! The simple had, through deceit, ceased to be that! Is it not strange that he who had been so exceedingly sensitive, his heart smiting him when he did but cut off the skirt of Saul's robe (chapter xxiv. 5), should now seem so hardened? Wondrously so; yet it is just the difference between a man actuated by simple faith and one who has given way to unbelief. In the one case the heart is directed by God's Holy Spirit; in the other the head is influenced by natural reasonings. In the former there is "enduring as seeing Him who is invisible"; in the latter sight and sense are the most potent factors.

We must not sit in judgment on David; but as realizing that we are yet beset with infirmities and trials may this little study urge us to more earnestly pray lest we enter into temptation; to pray without ceasing lest we are overtaken by a fault and yield; and to continue instant in prayer finding our safeguard therein. Let us turn from musing with our hearts to listen to God. No ear must we give to the lisplings of unbelief lest we become its dupe; and know, oh! know that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Rest from enemies, freedom from persecution, immunity from trials and distress will be ours

presently, not in the Philistines' land, but in the Sabbath rest of God, where unalloyed, undisturbed bliss shall be enjoyed throughout the ages of ages. So then, "Let us hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

H. F.

JOHN XVII. 5.

"NEITHER the Son nor the Holy Ghost is excluded from the Deity, which is elsewhere predicated or assumed of both equally with the Father. The object in hand is to assert it of the Father, and to state the place taken here below by Him Who did not regard it as a prize [act or object of plunder] to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman. He was here to obey, to do the will of the Father that sent Him. But that He took such a place in lowly love is the strongest if indirect proof of His proper and eternal Godhead; for even the archangel is a servant, and can never rise out of the position or relation of a servant. Whereas the Son was pleased to take it, in order to make good the full blessing of redemption unto the glory of God the Father. So life was in Him, and He was eternal life before all ages; but here He is viewed as coming down to impart it in a scene departed from God, and to a creature, which otherwise must know death in its most terrible shape of judgment as now of guilt.

"It is not that He ever did or could cease to be God, any more than after becoming incarnate He will ever cease to be man; but, having in divine love come down to be a servant and a man to glorify God the Father and make a righteous channel for all the purposes of divine grace, He asks to be

glorified by the Father along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was. There He had been from everlasting as the Son; there He asks to be as the Son, but now also Man, the Word made flesh but risen to everlasting. It was His perfection as man to ask for this glorification. Not even as risen does He glorify Himself. He had emptied and humbled Himself for the Father's glory; He asks the Father to glorify Him, though He states His eternal and divine competency by asking to be glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Never so weighty a plea, never so solid a ground for righteousness, never such exquisite and infinite grace."—*From Exposition of John.*

GOLDEN GRAINS.

How was the carnal mind shewn to be enmity against God in the rejection of Christ! Wickedness was summed up and brought out in all—people, priests, rulers. If a friend, he is a traitor; if disciples, they either fled when danger approached, or denied Him when near. The religious chiefs, who ought to have owned the Messiah, took Him to the infidel power of the world. He who was in the place of judgment washed his hands, owning His innocence, but gives Him up to man's will and rage. Thus man's evil was brought into complete juxtaposition with that which was perfect, and this in putting Him to death. It is no use to look for God in man. Not that there are no amiable traits in nature, but God has no place at all if man is put to the test.—*Notes on Luke.*

J. N. D.

AN UNCHANGING PURPOSE OF OUR GOD.

MAN, including in that term woman, was the last exhibition of God's creative power (Gen, i. 27 ; ii. 2 ; v. 2). The man, Adam, first appeared ; after that came the woman. Adam was the first man (1 Cor. xv. 45), as New Testament revelation sets forth, and Old Testament teaching clearly indicates ; for he was *created*, a term not used of his descendants after the flesh.

Pre-Adamite man is a dream, a myth of human invention, to which the only authoritative history of the creation gives the most unqualified contradiction. Animals, living creatures, existed before Adam ; and lived, and died on this globe, ere it was prepared to be man's abode. The remains in different stratas of the earth's crust witness to that. But man only appeared on the sixth day of the making of heaven and earth. We say *making*, not *creating*, in accordance with Exod. xx. 11, to which we would add Gen. ii. 1-3, for in this latter portion the acts of making and of creating are viewed as distinct.

On the sixth day " God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth on the earth after his kind : and God saw that it was good " (Gen. i. 25). The earth teemed with life, both vegetable (i. 12) and animal, ere man appeared on the scene. And all was fully in accord with the mind of the Almighty. " God saw," so runs the inspired statement, " that it was good " (12-25). How often do the results of man's efforts fall short, if not very short, of his conception. Sculptors, painters, writers and others can attest this. Not

so with God. What He executed fully corresponded to His mind. What He had conceived stood forth in its completeness.

And now the earth ready for man, fresh creative power was exercised, and there stood forth as the last effort of that power, both Adam and Eve. But ere Adam appeared God's interest in the coming human race was manifested. For "God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them" (i. 26, 27). Two remarks may here be made. Plurality of persons in the Godhead is now first indicated—"our image," "our likeness." And the chain of animal life was completed by the appearance of its head.

Divine counsels had been in exercise for man's creation. "Let us make," etc. Man then appeared—a creature such as never had previously been seen. His body formed out of dust, he was capable of dying. God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, gave him an immortal spirit; and thus he became a living soul (ii. 7). Never before, we may surely say, was such a creature in existence. Then, and not till then, was such an one *created*. Like beasts of the earth he was capable of dying. Like the angels he was, as to his spirit, immortal (Luke xx. 36).

As divine counsels had been in exercise for his creation, divine thoughtfulness was displayed on behalf of this new order of being. God's blessing was to rest on them, and that in a special manner; for, whilst God had already blessed all living creatures in the waters (Gen. i. 22), the

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blessing on man far exceeded anything said before. Increase of animal life in the waters was contemplated, and provided for. Increase of the human race was also contemplated, and foreshadowed; but more, man filling the earth was to subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (28). Man's place in this creation was thus defined, and supremacy assured him. He was its head.

Further, all his wants would God supply, giving him every herb bearing seed, which was upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which was the fruit of a tree yielding seed. All that was to be to him for meat (29). No want, no stint was there to be, and no earthly creatures were to dispute supremacy with him. All were put under him in the animal world; and everything suited for his food in the vegetable world was to be at his disposal.

Placed then as head over this creation, that position was to be real indeed. So all animals on land, and all birds of the air were brought by the Creator to His creature man, to see what he would call them (ii. 19, 20). And articulate speech from a creature on earth was now heard, as Adam, with his mind active, and his mouth opened, distinctly and definitely named each animal as it passed before him. With rational intelligence had he been endowed, and now was it in exercise, the Creator, we might say, standing by.

His position secured, and his bodily wants met, a suited companion for him would God also supply. Nothing less than companionship with an intelligent creature of his own nature was the divine thought; and the provision made for him. "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him" (ii. 18), were the words of

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the Creator, which tell of His interest in the welfare and happiness of His creature. The companion provided, brought to him by God, again did the man exercise his power of articulate speech. The animals brought to him by God he had named. And now another creature was brought by God; different, how different, from all the animals which had passed before him. Again he spoke, discerning the difference, "This is now (or, this time) bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*Ishah*), because she was taken out of man" (*Ish*).

The sixth day's work of the Creator now ended. The seventh day followed—a day of rest from all His work, which He had created and made, and He blessed it. And the pair on earth just created were left, we must suppose, together, to enjoy companionship, and to delight in the garden in which the Creator had placed them.

For it was a garden, its locality eastward in Eden—a garden planted by the Lord God, and in which grew every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food, and it was watered by a river which went out of Eden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. Everything concerning Adam was arranged by God; his place as head allotted him, and owned as such by all the animals God had brought to him. He was supreme under God upon earth. A companion, a help meet had been provided. And their home was in that garden, planted by God, which for occupation the man was to dress, and to keep. Man needs occupation, and God provided for that also.

What subjects of interest to God were this pair. And He came down to walk in the garden in the cool of the day.

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Hitherto there had been no dread in the creature's heart of his God. The Lord God brought the animals to Adam, and he was not afraid. He next brought the woman, and Adam did not run to hide himself. But now what a difference. God had not thundered, He had not even spoken to Adam. They only heard His voice, and they were afraid. Where were they? Hidden behind the trees in the garden, afraid to face their God. The devil had wrought that evil under the guise of a serpent, posing before Eve as man's real friend. The pair had fallen. Intercourse with God, as it had been, was stopped. He who is holy could not have allowed of its continuance. Never again did God walk in that garden. And the guilty pair were driven out of it, its foliage never again to shelter them; its fruits never again to refresh them.

But why had there been such interest in those creatures? Did not God know what they would do? Had he not seen Eve take of the forbidden fruit and give of it to her husband? Was He not perfectly aware how they would requite His beneficence, believing the lie of the serpent, and so distrusting their God? Romans v. 14, in a few words gives the answer. Adam was a figure of Him that was to come. Supremacy and companionship bestowed upon Adam were foreshadows, and yet how poor, of that which the Second Man should possess.

And now personal intercourse between the Creator and His human creatures thus broken off, was it never to be renewed? Man could do nothing to that end. By his fall the interruption had come in; and he could not repair it. Any movement in that direction must come from God. And time after time God showed His interest in the welfare of His creatures. He would not, if possible, irrevocably cast

them off. But how were these movements on His part responded to?

In Exodus xxv. we read of one such. God spoke of His own will and grace, saying to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (8). A people redeemed by the arm of divine power, God could dwell among them. He would do it. He did so, first in the Tabernacle, and then in the Temple. But after centuries of prophetic ministry, warning the people of their ways, God's presence was at length withdrawn, for they had defiled His sanctuary (Ezek. viii. ; xi. 23). The disobedience of our first parents caused God to walk no more in the garden. The iniquities of Israel drove God away from His House at Jerusalem.

Nigh six centuries rolled by without a Divine Person dwelling on earth. Had God abandoned men never again to be with any of them down here? The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ tells us of God's continued interest in His creatures. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, to get the fruit of the vineyard. We know the history. The husbandmen took the heir, cast Him out of the vineyard, and killed Him (Luke xx. 15). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). What a thought is this! But the world would not be reconciled. The Lord Jesus Christ "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him" (Acts x. 38). Man's answer to all that was to crucify Him, as one unfit to be tolerated upon earth. Even the presence, and the gracious ministry of the Son did not win the world for God.

Was divine patience now exhausted? It might well be. But it was not. A new movement was inaugurated by the

coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell on earth in the Church of God. Again a Divine Person took up His abode on this globe. God would have in this scene a habitation by the Spirit. The Temple at Jerusalem left desolate, a Temple should be formed as the House of God (2 Corinthians vi. 16 ; * 1 Tim. iii. 15), composed of Christians here below. A ministry of reconciliation was then raised up, and the word of reconciliation provided, souls were converted, and formed the divine dwelling place as the Church of God (2 Cor. v.). How God has yearned over His human creatures !

What can be said of this fresh movement on the part of God ? The Jews, as such, resisted the Holy Ghost (Acts vii. 51). As for the Gentile world, it remained for a great part unmoved, obeying not the Gospel (2 Thess. i. 8), being blinded in their minds by the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4). Judgment must therefore fall on this world. And it will after the departure of the Holy Ghost.

Three times over, then, will it be that God has sought to dwell on earth, but each time constrained by men's ways to leave it. First as Jehovah in Israel. Then in the Person of the Word made flesh, which dwelt, writes John (i. 14), amongst us. And thirdly, in the Person of the Holy Ghost, who has been here since Pentecost. By and by the Lord Jesus will reign here for a thousand years, the devil then be bound, blessing enjoyed on earth such as men have never known since the fall, and He who sits on the throne shall tabernacle over them, as we should read Rev. vii. 15. Yet at the end of the thousand years, a multitude as the sands of the sea in number will, as Satan's dupes, turn against the

*The better reading is "*we* are a Temple," not "*ye* are," etc., as in R. v.

Lord Jesus and the saints ; but only to meet with condign and everlasting punishment.

Will God, then, be always frustrated in His purpose ? No. For in the eternal state, when there will have been made new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, God's desire shall be fulfilled. He will have intercourse with men on earth, which neither man nor devil will again frustrate. For the Tabernacle of God will be with men ; and He will tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

Unchanging is the purpose of our God. He will have at length unhindered intercourse with men upon earth. "God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." The enemy, who has hindered time after time, will then hinder no more.

Who will see this ? Every true Christian, and, may we not say, every heavenly saint will behold it. Would any ask, How can this be ? The answer is plain. The Tabernacle of God at that time will be the new Jerusalem, the Church of the Living God. He will dwell in the Church, and tabernacle with men. My delights were with the sons of men, says Wisdom (Prov. viii. 31). God *will* delight to be with men, may we not say ?

God in the garden, holding intercourse with Adam, is set before us at the opening of written revelation, and God tabernacling with men on earth is the latest picture presented in the Word.

C. E. S.

“FRET NOT THYSELF.”

MY DEAR A.—How much we are warned in the Word of God against fretting. The subject has been much on my mind lately. I have been specially thinking of the 37th Psalm, which begins with “Fret not thyself.” It is a most beautiful Psalm. If only we carried out its teaching in practice more how much happier and useful we should be. It is so contrary to nature though, especially to some natures. When we see so much contrary to God, not only in the world, but also amongst the Lord’s own people, it sometimes overwhelms one with sorrow. While souls are perishing around, to see the Lord’s servants either indifferently consulting their own ease and pleasing themselves, or else splitting hairs as to the ways and means of reaching lost souls, is enough to make one mourn. It is as if a house were on fire, and some looked carelessly on, while others let the precious time fly while they discussed the *right way* to fetch the people out. But though we must mourn over the state of things around we must not *fret*. I have been very much struck lately with the rendering of verse 8 of this Psalm in the Revised Version. “Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil doing.” It is so true fretting leads to wrong doing; it leads to impatience, and then impatience leads to *wrong action*. On the contrary, patient waiting for God leads to *right action*, if to action at all. But I was looking at the French translation of verse 5, the other day, and so enjoyed it, “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” or “Roll thy way unto the Lord, put thy confidence in Him and He will work.” In the Authorised Version it is, “He shall bring it to pass,” *it* being in italics.

So evidently the thought is, you put it all into His hands, whatever it is that is a burden to you, and *He will work*; not, perhaps, just as you think He ought, nor bring to pass exactly what you would like, but if He does work it will be the *right thing*. It is so natural to us if we see evil at work in any way, to want to step in and stop it; but God knows just *how far* to let it go on, and just the right time to step in, and *all things* are under His control. So whether it is our own personal concerns, or what is more trying still, things which concern the Lord's work and interests, how much better to leave all in His hands, to cease to plan and worry, but to leave Him to work. If we take things into our own hands He'll leave us to do it perhaps, but we shall soon find it best to turn it all over to Him. But He won't hurry, therefore it says “*Wait patiently for Him.*” And in the Revised Version we get in the margin, “Be still before the Lord.” Oh, to know more of that stillness in His presence. Then we should know more of *delighting* in Him, and if finding our delight in Him there would be no fretting, and we should get the desire of our hearts, for we should have no wrong desires. But all do not need to be warned against acting too quickly. We must not always be still. It is plain that Psalm xxxvii. refers especially to evil working, and the saint in trouble and misjudged by those who were doing wrong (verse 6). It will never do to be still when God would have us act. The Lord said to Moses, Exodus xiv. 15, “Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak to the children of Israel that they *go forward.*” Had they stood still then it would have been ruin.

Well, I must not say more on the subject now, God alone can teach us each when to be still and when to act. He

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can teach the too active ones to learn to wait for Him, and those who are inclined to lag to go forward. But may we all learn that priceless lesson of absolute confidence in Him. Things will not get better, God's Word tells us that; the end draws near, but God abides the same, and though all may be confusion in the world and in the Church, and though there may be much to cause sorrow, He is over all and is working out His own purpose in spite of man's failure. But let us seek to cheer and help each other, not discourage, for that is the enemy's work.

Yours in Christ,

R.

"I WILL" OF PSALM IV.

(Verse 8.)

WE have now to retire for a moment from the strife of tongues and the open hostility of foes, into the stillness and privacy of the chamber of sleep. Here, also, we find the "I will" of trust. *"I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."* God is here revealed to us as exercising personal care in the still chamber. And there is something here which should be inexpressibly sweet to the believer, for this shows the minuteness of God's care, the individuality of His love; how it condescends and stoops, and acts, not only in great but also in little spheres; not only where glory might be procured from great results, but where nought is to be had save the gratitude and love of a poor feeble creature, whose

life has been protected and preserved, in a period of helplessness and sleep.

How blessed would it be if we made a larger recognition of God in the still chamber; if we thought of Him as being there in all hours of illness, of weariness and pain; if we believed that His interest and care are as much concentrated upon the feeble believer there as upon His people when in the wider battle field of the strife of tongues.

There is something inexpressibly touching in this "laying down" of the Psalmist. In thus lying down he voluntarily gave up any guardianship of himself; he resigned himself into the hands of another; he did so completely, for in the absence of all care he slept; there was here a perfect trust. Many a believer lies down, but it is not to sleep. Perhaps he feels safe enough as far as his body is concerned, but cares and anxieties invade the privacy of his chamber; they come to try his faith and trust; they threaten, they frighten, and alas! prove too strong for trust. Many a poor believer might say, "I will lay me down, but not to sleep." The author met with a touching instance of this, in the case of an aged saint whom he visited in severe illness. This worthy man's circumstances were narrow, and his family trials were great; he said, "The doctor wants me to sleep, but how can I sleep with care sitting on my pillow?"

There is a trial in stillness; and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battle field. O that we could trust God more and more with personal things! O that He were the God of our chambers as well as of our houses! O that we could bring Him more and more into the minutiae of daily life! If we did this, we should experience a measure of rest to which

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we are, perhaps, strangers now ; we should have less dread of the sick chamber—we should have that unharassed mind which conduces most to repose in body and soul ; we should be able to say, “ I will lie down and sleep, *and leave to-morrow with God.* ” — *Power's “ I Wills ” of Psalms.*

A TAUNT AND A CHALLENGE.

(Matthew xxvi. 43.)

MEN'S words have additional force and meaning when we consider the circumstances under which they were uttered. In the day of judgment, when of every word that men have spoken they shall give account (Matt. xii. 36), the due proportion of things shall be observed and all attendant circumstances be considered. How terrible, then, must be the case of those here, who, in presence of such a scene as this chapter depicts give utterance to the words found in this verse. A terrible scene it is. No darker page of history ever was written. The actual utterances inscribed upon it ought, on that account even, to be memorable. But these are to be remembered alas ! for other and sadder reasons ; for are they not amongst the last greetings the Son of God received on earth ? and what do they express but the awful hatred of hearts alienated from God ?

Let us consider, first, who are responsible for the words. The chief priests, scribes, and elders, the instigators and

leaders of the attack upon Christ, and largely because of whom Pilate reluctantly gave sentence, in this also lead the mocking crowd. It was "their hour and the power of darkness." Power of darkness not only for the Holy Sufferer, but surely also over the minds of these unhappy men. How else can we explain the blindness of their hatred? For one of the most noteworthy features of this memorable scene undoubtedly is the way in which all concerned in it combined, without the least design on their part we may be sure, to work out the fulfilment of prophecy. Our verse forms a striking instance of the fact. The language used, as has often been remarked, is almost an exact quotation of Psalm xxii. 8. Strange, is it not, that this should pass so completely unnoticed at the time? Well said the Apostle Paul (Acts xiii. 27), "They that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath Day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." Probably no prophet's voice was more familiar to them than David's, and the 22nd Psalm would very likely be one of his best-remembered utterances. The pathetic language, the passionate outpouring of grief, the deep anguish expressed in the sorrow-laden words, could not but impress themselves on the memory of whoever once heard it read. Yet, all-unconsciously we may well believe, these unhappy men shape their very actions and words to the conduct of those spoken of in that familiar Psalm. The manner of Christ's execution—verse 16; the dealing with His clothing—verse 18 (compare John xix. 23, 24); and their actions towards Him after crucifixion, are all set forth in detail for us there. Not only are such things noticed as the scornful laugh and the shaking of the head—verse 7, but their very

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words also are given—verse 8. A most remarkable, yet solemn delineation this surely is.

In the words themselves may be seen two things—a taunt and a challenge. “He trusted in God.” A taunt this was, and bestowed upon the One who, to all appearance, was now completely in their power. “Let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him.” In these words we have a challenge to God Himself, to the One of whose care He had professed to be the object.

“He trusted in God.” Such was their taunt. Were their words true? Unquestionably so. Then we may turn their taunt into an occasion for glorying in our blessed Saviour. There was nothing sinful, nothing dishonourable in all His life they could taunt Him with. Had there been the least resemblance of such, their wicked hearts would have remembered it then. During His ministry, at least, He was under the public eye as perhaps none other was. By crafty means, the scribes and Pharisees tried to catch Him in His words—Luke xx. 19-26. On the highway, in the synagogue, even at feasts to which they themselves had invited Him, the cold eye of suspicion, the watchful gleam of malicious hatred was ever upon Him. And now that their hour has arrived, what is the result of their careful scrutiny? What foolish word, what offence against even their rigid and frigid righteousness, can they charge the victim of their malice with? None. But if they cannot taunt Him with sin, they will taunt Him with His piety. “He trusted in God.” As in other instances, the truth of their words takes away the sting of their taunt. “This man receiveth sinners” was a jeer once levelled at Him, whom now we glory in because of that very fact. And so here. “He trusted in God.” Verily this was the key-note of His life—Ps. xvi. It characterised

especially the closing trial—Heb. v. 7. Prayers and supplications were made, strong crying and tears were the accompaniment; but it was One who was able to save out of death who was addressed. Yes, it is a fact that “He trusted in God that He would deliver Him.” And will His trust be in vain? Evidently His persecutors think so.

Their challenge makes it clear that they consider His case now hopeless. “Let Him deliver Him now.” From any other source deliverance would be looked for in vain. From this one also, in their opinion, one would infer from the words that follow:—“If He will have Him.” “Seeing He delighted in Him” is the ironical language of the persecutors in Ps. xxii. “If He will have Him” is the question raised here. But irony or question, your challenge, proud Pharisees, shall be answered, and that which you have expressed in jeering language shall be proved to be blessedly true. God will have Jesus. He delights in Him. And He will prove it by rescuing Him out of death. Not by making a way of escape from death, else were redemption impossible, and our sins still left upon us. The purpose for which in grace He took that place would be frustrated by taking Him from it before atonement was accomplished. But that being done, and sufficient testimony to His death being rendered by His burial in and occupation of the tomb, on the morning of the third day God precedes Mary Magdalene in paying honours to the One who died on the cross. He was “raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” In resurrection was the answer given to His prayer. “From the horns of the unicorn” was He heard and “for His piety.” Deliverance is His in resurrection. He is shown the path of life, beyond death, a path that ends in fulness of joy in God’s presence, in pleasures for evermore at God’s

right hand. “Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.”

And what of those who, heartlessly exulting over their victim, have contributed this text to holy writ? Would not the disappointment, the chagrin, the mortification, the hopeless despair of defeated Haman and his friends in that old story in Esther be reproduced in them, if they but realised how perfectly they have been answered. As ever, in God's wisdom, the designs of darkness defeat themselves. Their challenge was answered according to the very terms of their taunt. “He trusted in God.” God has delivered Him, and by the deliverance has shown that He will have Him, that He delights in Him.

J. T.

“**BETTER THAN WINE.**”

Now I want you to think of *the love of Christ in the flagon*, where His precious love is stored up for His people; the love of His promises given to you; the love of His providence, for He rules for you; the love of His intercession, for He pleads for you; the love of His representation, for He stands at the right hand of His Father as the Representative of His people; the love of His union with His people, for you are one with Him—He is the Head, and you are the members of His body; the love of all that He is, and all that He was, and all that He ever shall be, for

in every capacity, and under all circumstances, He loves you, and will love you without end. Think of His rich love, His abundant love towards His people; I call it love in the flagon, this love of His to all the saints which He has stored up for them.—*Spurgeon.*

“CONSIDER HIM.”

There above in heaven's bright glory
Sits the blessed Son of God,
Having wrought a full salvation
By His own most precious blood.
Brightness of the Father's glory
Image of the blessed God,
He, the glorious Creator,
This dark, ruined scene once trod.

God from heaven by Him is speaking;
He who once by prophets spoke,
By His Son now sends the message,
Who the power of Satan broke.
Let us heed how we receive it,
Lest the precious words shall run
From our hearts, like leaky vessels,
Melt, like dew drops in the sun.

Who can tell out all the glory
Of that Holy, Peerless One?
Know the mystery of His Person?
God the Father's blessed Son!

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Yet He stooped from highest glory,
 Human form on Him to take ;
 Bore rejection from His creatures,
 Pain and sorrow for our sake.

Learned obedience through suffering,
 He whose right it was to reign ;
 Learned to feel for those who suffer
 In earth's school of grief and pain.
 Now made perfect, there in glory,
 Captain of the chosen heirs,
 Leading every ransomed follower
 To the home His love prepares.

Fully fitted He to succour,
 Knowing all the daily need,
 Bearing on His heart each saved one
 As High Priest to intercede.
 There by faith we see Him seated,
 Crowned with glory by our God,
 Soon around Himself to gather
 Those He purchased with His blood.

Well may we *that One* consider,
 Gaze by faith upon the Lord ;
 Follow Him, our glorious Leader,
 Feeding on His precious word.
Run the race He sets before us,
 Weary not, nor fainting prove,
Sure our path will end in glory,
 Such the triumph of His love.

R.

A L O N E .

Alone ! yet not alone, for we have One
 Who walketh at our side along the road
 Sustaining, comforting, with His dear love
 The weary, fainting heart.
 Ah, well He knew the desert path of old,
 Which once He trod with weary steps, alone—
 A stranger—in the world His hands had made ;
 Scorned and despised, forsaken and unknown,
 E'en by His own rejected.
 A Man of sorrows He, with grief acquainted ;
 None understood the yearnings of His heart.
 He looked for sympathy, but found it not
 E'en in His followers.
 A lonely Man was He, yet ever *one* with God,
 His sole delight to do the Father's will.
 Perfect obedience marked His *every* step,
 Which suffering stayed not.
 Now throned on high, through suffering perfected,
 He understands most perfectly His people's need.
 His tender heart is "touched," and keenly feels
 For those tired feet that tread the lonely path
 In sorrow and in pain.
 Be comforted, sad heart, for those who follow Him
 The nearest and the closest, needs must walk
 Alone. A little while, a very little while,
 And then—no more the wilderness, but home, and rest
 With ransomed hosts, to walk with Him in white,
 Praising eternally His matchless grace.

A. S.

PETER'S FALL AND RESTORATION.

(Luke xxii. 31-35.)

I ASK you to notice that the Lord in speaking to Simon Peter begins by saying, "Simon, Simon," and ends by addressing him as "Peter." I am sure that the Spirit of God would have us learn something from that.

It was, I suppose, as Simon, as the fisherman, the humble, lowly man that he broke down, though at the same time he was an Apostle, and one of the twelve.

"Simon, Simon," the Lord said, "Satan hath desired to have *you*, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Master, prayed for His feeble, failing though loyal servant. The Lord Jesus Christ knew that Peter would thrice deny Him, yet the Lord prayed for him, that his faith should not fail *altogether*.

And though he failed so sadly, he would be converted or restored; for at heart he was a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And is it not striking that though he failed, as none of the others did, he should be the one selected to strengthen his brethren?

Now, let us turn to the 21st chapter of St. John's Gospel, 3rd to 17th verses.

Simon denied the Lord thrice; and thrice does the Lord address him as Simon, thrice challenges him, and the three-fold forgiveness we can all see.

How beautifully does the Lord deal with him in this scene!

Simon needed to be restored; and the Lord desired to use him to strengthen his brethren. We may be quite sure that his words, guided by the Spirit of God, were effectual.

How bold he was before the rulers, as recorded in the

beginning of the Acts! How confident when in prison! How beautiful to see him, without anxiety, resting calmly in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ! When awakened by the angel, he was neither startled nor showed the least fear. Such confidence had he in the love of his Master, that he could face anything.

This afternoon the first chapter of Peter's 1st Epistle was read to us.

A beautiful portion, indited by the Spirit of God, which brings to us in our day strength and encouragement.

We notice, then, that the Lord addresses him as "Simon, son of Jonas," and not as "Peter."

"Peter" means "rock"; which seems to imply strength, majesty, and grandeur.

But the Lord puts him on a lower level, and speaks to him, not as Peter the Apostle, but as Simon. The one who denied Him thrice.

In the 5th chapter of Luke's Gospel, we find how the Lord dealt with Peter's soul when he had to say, "Lord, depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

And here, when the Lord was risen from the dead, we find him as an ordinary fisherman, not so much the Apostle, because he had resumed the calling that he was in when he was taken up by the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said, "I go a fishing." And the others follow him. They all knew how terribly he had failed; but they also knew him to be a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are sure they understood that he loved the Lord in a very wonderful way.

John, we know, speaks of himself "as the disciple whom Jesus loved." Perhaps it means, not that the Lord loved the others less, but that John, by the Spirit of God, is allowed to speak of himself in that way, because he realised

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in his own soul very markedly the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to him.

On the other hand, the Lord does take account of our love to Him; and this we can show best by our obedience to Him.

In the 15th chapter of John's Gospel we read, "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Abraham obeyed God, and he is called "the friend of God."

Of Moses, although not exactly called "the friend of God," we read that "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

These two men, Abraham and Moses, had such sympathy with Jehovah in His thoughts in regard to His people, that God looked upon them in a very special way. There was communion of thought between each of them and Jehovah that no others enjoyed with Him.

Abraham so honoured God's word—not then the written Word of God—but the word that reached his heart through the Spirit of God, when he was in Ur of Chaldæa.

He heard in some way, we know not how, the voice of God.

In obedience to the call he left everything; and from that time, throughout his career, we find him more or less responding to the voice of the Most High God.

When told to offer up, on that mountain, his only son, he obeyed without hesitation.

We find in Abraham a very remarkable trait—he was prepared to do exactly what Jehovah told him to do.

At Jehovah's bidding he was ready to sacrifice his only son; the son of his old age; the one on whom his affection was deeply set.

In Moses we find the same ready obedience to follow the Lord's bidding.

We turn to the New Testament to see the sympathy that existed between the Lord and His disciples.

In the 15th chapter of John the Lord speaks of those who are His friends.

Peter was very especially His friend. And, undoubtedly, Peter and John were most devoted one to another. How frequently do we find them together.

In the Acts we see Peter and John as the foremost two in testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. How deeply attached one to the other they must have been, because of the mutual love that existed between Christ and each.

The Lord knew that Peter loved Him. And Peter could say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." But poor Peter was trusting in his own natural strength. He was a man of very great energy.

The Apostle Paul, too, must have been marked by great energy, but, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, learnt his own weakness, and was taught to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Strengthened by Christ, he was able to strengthen others. As he was comforted by God, he was also able to comfort others.

Now the Lord gives His own authority to Simon: "Feed My lambs." It is an exhortation: "I want you to do this. Have no questions about yourself as a backslider. I, the Lord of Glory, whom you thrice denied, exhort you to feed My lambs."

"Begin with the young ones. Tell those young in the faith of your own mistakes, and help them over their trials and difficulties."

Peter, too, could speak of the grace that had met him in his three-fold denial of his Lord, and of the Lord's three-fold forgiveness.

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Now the Lord has been tried in all points like as we are, yet always apart from sin.

In His conflict with Satan we see how sharply He was tried, but fell back on the written Word; surely an example for us to do the same.

Satan evidently wanted to sift them all. "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." Notice the "you." "But I have prayed for thee." The Lord prayed on behalf of Simon, particularly that his faith should not break down altogether.

We might have supposed that it did; but when the cock crew, we read, "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The confession of his mistake must have been manifest to all.

The other disciples were not tested in the same way. Of the others, John alone was present, and he "was known to the High Priest." Peter was the only disciple who was there without any encouragement. He desired to confess his Master; but trusting in his own strength, and having his eye off Christ, he did the very opposite—he denied Him.

Peter could not disguise the fact that he was a Galilean; as were most of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And although he did not wish to be recognised, his speech betrayed him.

But the Lord had prayed for Peter. How much depended on that prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord prayed for him; how is it with us?

We read in the 8th chapter of Romans that "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The Apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians wrote that he did not cease to pray for them, and desired that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom

and spiritual understanding; that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

How can we get anything like that? Manifestly only through reading the Word of God.

We can always refer to the written Word. Many of the early saints fell asleep in Jesus before Paul's, and no doubt the other Epistles were written. But we have now the whole of the revealed mind of God.

We have questions about doctrines; instruction as to our walk and conduct in life; and guidance for our steps in difficult pathways.

Is the "Word dwelling in our hearts richly"? Do we love the Word of God? We really love it, if we obey it.

And the Apostle says, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Was that meant only for the Colossians? We are sure it was not; we are thankful that it is also written for us.

The Word of God will alone work in us to strengthen us with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

I remember hearing that patience was a mark of the Apostles. They had an enormous amount of patience; they needed it in ministering the Word.

People will, in a way, accept the truth, and say that they have enjoyed it, but wait a long time before they put it into operation.

This is disappointing, and great patience is needed by those who are seeking to help others.

And not only is patience needed one toward another, but

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toward those who are in the world. If we have none, let us ask for some.

“And long-suffering with joyfulness.” A Christian's life should be a happy one.

Happiness sometimes follows, and is worth much more, after a deep trial of faith.

And a beautiful inheritance awaits us : “Made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

People in the world are always in doubt as to what awaits them ; everything to us is assured. Getting on in the world, and such like things, are of secondary importance to us.

If the Apostle is not here to pray for us, we have the Holy Spirit, who guided the Apostle in his prayer. And we have the Word of God.

Peter, in his Epistle, says, “Love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

We want to understand better what the love of Christ is, and then exhibit love one to another.

Peter loved the Master, and he could speak of, and exhibit real love to the lambs because he had tasted of the love of Christ.

We are sure that the Lord loves all alike ; His love is set upon us ; “The love wherewith I have loved them may be in them, and I in them,” is not said of any in particular.

We want to show practical proof of our love one toward another. How can any man love God if we love not those who are begotten of Him ?

We want to exhort and encourage one another, and it does not require any special gift to exhort.

Let us pray one for another, and for every little company of the Lord's people ; and “let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

Notes of address by E. E. W.

GETHSEMANE'S GARDEN.

WHAT thoughts cluster round Gethsemane, that place of seclusion to which our Lord was wont to retire with His disciples, and where, in the quiet shade of the olive trees, Master and disciples had doubtless enjoyed many moments of blissful repose and communion together.

Of the exact position of Gethsemane it is probable that little is known ; for though many travellers have visited the Mount of Olives and have tried to locate the spot, their efforts seem to have been unavailing, and what they say lacks confirmation. We know it formed a part of Jerusalem and was situated on the other side of the Cedron, over which stream Jesus and His disciples went after leaving the Supper room in the city (John xviii. 1).

But it is not so much the place as the events that happened there that have an interest for us ; and over these the devout heart delights to linger in thought and restful meditation. And the mention of that Garden brings before the soul, as with a lightning's flash, one of the most momentous moments in our Lord's life. If at all familiar with the record, the soul has vividly portrayed before it One in deepest exercise and agony, and yet One who speaks still as man never spake before, with perfect submission though horrors inconceivable to us were passing before His holy soul. Ah !

“Who can thy deep wonders see,
Wonderful Gethsemane !”

and remain unmoved ? And it is good to have our souls stirred with recollections of what Christ passed through for us. Gethsemane preceded Calvary, and a contemplation of Him in that Garden, with the shadow of the cross looming before Him, must be fraught with interest and full of lessons for us. Let us, then, go with Him to Gethsemane.

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Having delivered Himself of those wondrous words recorded in John xvii., when, with the glory full in view, the Lord spake of His exaltation and manifestation, He, with His *eleven* disciples, went forth from the upper room and crossed the Cedron. One disciple was missing; one was even then doing quickly the awful business of bargaining away his blessed Master; for gain undertaking to betray Him into the hands of enemies who were swift to shed blood. And familiarity with the place of resort would enable the traitor to fulfil his contract; for "Judas also which betrayed Him knew the place." Was ever familiarity put to such an use, or confidence so outraged? Was ever such a bargain struck as this, when an infatuated creature, overcome with the greed of money, stopped not short of selling the Lord of Life and Glory?

They reach the Garden, and with the full knowledge of the trial before Him, "He saith to His disciples, 'Sit ye here, while I shall pray'" (Mark xiv. 32); for He who had been *led* into the wilderness to be tempted would now anticipate the drinking of the cup, and in praying would manifest the perfection of His manhood in desiring release, and yet withal bowing with perfect resignation to His Father's will.

Accompanied by Peter, and James, and John, Jesus withdrew a little from the rest, and then the holy calm that had pervaded His life gave place to pent-up feelings finding vent in sore amazement and earnest entreaty. The great deep was broken up. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here and watch" (Mark xiv. 34). In grace, infinite and blessed, He takes them with Him though they could not enter into the depths of His sorrow. But more than they could give He does not ask. "*Watch with Me,*" He says; not "Pray with me"; for, seemly, words

on such an occasion they could not have uttered. Prayer for themselves would be comely and proper.

An opportunity was now presented for the proving of devotion and the manifestation of professed love. The mental agony, awful in its intensity, produced by the anticipation of the load that would soon bow His head, disciples could know nothing about—it was His alone; yet He makes a request and craves their sympathy, asking them to watch with Him as He offers up strong cryings and tears amidst the quiet of the olive-groves of Gethsemane. What a theme for meditation is here. Not of Himself alone did He think; but human agency, poor, feeble, brittle thing that it is, fails Him. Indeed, yes; but He was heard, He was seen, and an angel is sent to strengthen Him (Luke xxii.), though we know not in what way that was effected. Perfect, dependent Man! Gethsemane's scene is no silent witness to Thy perfection. There Thy actions, as everywhere, were redolent with the sweet fragrance of grace and dependence!

But we pass to His urgent entreaty. Going forward a little from the favoured three, He prostrates Himself on the ground and prayed that “if it were possible the hour might pass from Him.” The hour of densest darkness when He, the Holy One, should have that load of guilt rolled over upon Him, and He should die for the seed of Abraham was nigh. Not unmoved could He contemplate it. We might cast the line to fathom the depths of that sea of suffering, but no line of ours will ever sound the depths of that “*exceeding sorrowful*” of His, words which, coming from His lips, are expressive of unuttered and unutterable suffering.

That the hour might pass from Him, He desired, and Mark gives us His words: “Abba, Father, all things are

possible unto Thee ; take away this cup from Me ; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt " (verse 36). As a man He spoke, fully conscious though that the One He addressed possessed omnipotent power and *could* take away that dreadful cup. He had not been Man, holy and undefiled, had He expressed less, or felt the full bitterness of the cup awaiting Him less keenly ; but knowing it fully He brings it all before His Father, and pours out His plaint in His ear, yet withal accompanied by the deepest submission and resignation, unreservedly leaving Himself in the hands of His Father.

Could He desire less than that the cup should be taken away ? Could *He* do other than say, " Not what I will, but what Thou wilt " ? He does not contend for His wish, but endorses His petition with the desire that that will, which is always right, and best, and full of love be still fulfilled. Here was piety indeed, and He was heard (Heb. v.) ; for such petitions must prevail ; and though bruised and put to grief, He is to see His seed and be satisfied (Isa. liii.).

And we are permitted to learn practical lessons for our souls from this. Our Lord, when His great trial was impending, prayed ere Calvary was reached, and then with a holy calm went forth to surrender Himself to the band headed by Judas, that all predetermined by God might be fulfilled. Let us not wait until we are in temptation, but, following our Master's example, pray before it comes upon us. " Watch and pray."

Again our Lord asked for deliverance—" Take away this cup from Me "—and so *may* we, with this in remembrance, that He said, " Thy will be done." This we *must* likewise do. Happy will the issue be when the Father's will is our chief concern.

Rising from His prostration on the ground, the Lord

comes to His disciples and finds them, not full of sympathy and watching, but sleeping. Nature failed to support them in a position that required power, and even Peter with his vehement declarations of fidelity and love, above all others, is found with eyes heavy in the folds of slumber. Addressing him by name the Lord said, "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch with Me one hour?" with the emphasis on *thou*. The words must have pierced the heart of Peter. How fickle are human protestations of faithfulness. In faithfulness indeed the Lord was speaking to him; for secure in his own confidence he was neglecting to watch and pray. "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," and then the full force of the scorching blasts of trial would have to be endured. Was it not wondrously gracious of Him to impart this instruction just then, and to utter an excuse for them all? Not unwillingness of spirit, but weakness of flesh was prominent, and hence the urgent necessity for diligence in watching and praying.

To rely upon the fact, then, that the spirit is willing and ready will not secure us in the hour of temptation. The weakness of the flesh is present. Perfectly the Master understood, and perfect in wisdom, love, and grace He excuses where all else would condemn. Shame on us if we so divorce our Master's gracious words from their setting as to use them to palliate our indolence in carrying out His behests. *Watching*, the need for prayer will soon be manifest; *praying*, power requisite for our needs will be given. Neglecting to watch, the enemy finds us unprepared, and basking in the false assurances of self-confidence.

We need to be careful *what* we profess, and *where* we profess; for, depend upon it, the testing time is not far removed from the time of assertion. Peter professed a love and fidelity superior to all the others: "Although all shall

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be offended, yet not I." Bold words! uttered in the presence of the Lord, in the very face of His words that *all* should be offended, and, as it were, at the foot of the cross. Sorrow must intervene; for what is this but saying that you can stand where all else will fall? But trial must not be courted, nor must the flesh be trusted.

Doubtless, had strength pertained to the flesh, Peter would not have so ignominiously failed, for the spirit was willing; but whilst so confident he proved untrue in trial's hour. Better far to be less assertive and more faithful in action. Love is best proved by works, and faithfulness by obedience.

The Lord Jesus again withdraws Himself from them to once more give utterance to the same words, but more earnestly. Of this the Evangelist Luke writes, and with the information tells us that His sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood (Luke xxii. 44). How this marks the immensity of His suffering! He only knew the measure of the cup He was about to drink, knowing the righteous requirements of a holy God, and the deep, deep needs of guilty sinners.

"*The same words*" He spoke, and this was no vain repetition, but the burden of His soul. Earnest entreaty thrice ascended heavenwards from that Mount as the anticipation of the cross pressed upon Him, but supplication was mingled with perfect submission as He said, "*Not My will, but Thine be done.*"

Three times He prayed, and three times He came to His disciples (Matt. xxvi. 43-45), finding them asleep on each occasion. They slept the sleep of sorrow (Luke xxii. 45), and knew not what to answer Him. It was a night never to be forgotten by them, a night memorable in many ways; for His agony and His desire for them to watch with

Him would be linked with their failure and loss of this golden opportunity to respond to His request. He looked for comforters, but found none.

But the agony is over. The assaults of the devil He had overcome by prayer and obedience, and now in perfect calm He can meet the rabble led by Judas (who had given no slumber to his eyes) as they came to take Him. First, bidding the disciples to sleep on, He then exhorts them to rise, for the betrayer was nigh. The hour was come. He was prepared; they were unprepared. He had prayed; they had slept. But even now He thought of them, and instead of leaving them to the mercy of the crowd, sought to protect them whilst the power of darkness was let loose against Him. "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John xviii. 8). Blessed Master! as Thou wast then so Thou art now.

Can we not say again that many thoughts cluster round these scenes? Gethsemane's Garden provides a fruitful page for meditation, and should be eloquent to our souls. Reader, how speaks this to you?

H. F.

THE LORD'S PRIESTHOOD.

How deeply interesting is the subject of the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet there appears to be a good deal of uncertainty in the minds of many as to what Scripture teaches about it. Now there are three things absolutely indispensable before He could exercise any of the functions of His Priesthood.

First, He must have a call from God. This we learn from Heb. v. 4-6: "And no man taketh this honour unto

himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." The call, then, must precede His Priesthood. Can we fix the time of this call? Verse 5 has been said to shew it was at His incarnation. That, I take it, is a mistake. What the passage states is that He who owned Him as Son in incarnation, quoting from Ps. ii., has likewise owned Him as Priest in Ps. cx. But even if the call took place at His birth into the world, still He could never act as Priest until the two remaining things were found existing. This would equally apply to the statement that the Lord was made a Priest at His baptism.

The second indispensable thing is fitness, or perfection, *i.e.*, that which would qualify Him for His office of High Priest. His personal perfection our hearts delight to own; but as Priest He would have to act for those who were not that. Hence it was indispensable that He should acquire by experience in suffering, the kind of perfection that would enable Him to succour them that are tempted (Heb. ii. 18). Chap. v. 7-10, states: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered; and being *made perfect*, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him; called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec." Who, in the face of this Scripture, would say that the sufferings of the cross were not included? Yet it would be necessary to exclude them if it be maintained that our Lord was a Priest

at the cross. Made perfect through sufferings reached to death. No acting as Priest, then, could precede death. The Lord, then, was consecrated or perfected by His own death.

The third indispensable thing was that His Priesthood was after the order of Melchizedec, "Made, not after the law of a carnal (or fleshly) commandment, but after the power of an endless life." No interruption of His Priesthood could there be. All of Aaron's line had died. He would never die. Death, then, did not take place after He was made a Priest, but before it.

It seems overwhelmingly evident that our Lord was not a Priest until after death, and this is stated in the plainest way in chap. viii. 4: "For if He were on earth He should not be a Priest." As such He is in heaven, and there all His priestly work must be performed (ver. 1, 2).

We will now notice what He has done as Priest. In chap. ii. 17, we read: "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; to make propitiation (not reconciliation) for the sins of the people." Here, then, we have something to be made which only Christ as High Priest could effect. On the earth it was not accomplished, nor could it be. Some would make it to be expiation, but that clearly it could not be; for that was made in this world and on the cross. Propitiation it was; made by Christ as High Priest after He became that, and in the heavenly sanctuary. I believe chap. ix. 11, 12, is in perfect agreement with this. "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into

the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." Did Christ obtain it before entering the holy place—in this world and on the cross? Yet some think and assert that it is fundamental error to teach otherwise. Where is that found in Scripture? Is not Aaron's entrance into the Holiest on the great day of atonement purposely brought before us to shew how the type has been fulfilled, and contrasted too, to shew how the Antitype blessedly surpasses it. Aaron entered not without blood, which he offered for the errors of the people; the answer to which, on the part of God, was the acceptance of the people. He did not obtain it at the brazen altar. It was the divine answer to the blood, not when shed, but when presented before Him in the Holiest. Christ, as High Priest, has entered the heavenly sanctuary by His own blood. God's answer to that blood is an eternal redemption, and consequently it never needs to be repeated. He entered in *once* for all. This may be termed an unintelligent use of the types; but can it be intelligent to flatly contradict the type? or is it intelligent to eliminate from the making of atonement the most solemn and impressive portion of the ritual on the great day of atonement? The blood presented by Aaron was shed at the brazen altar (it was the blood of the sin offering). The blood Christ presented was His own; shed on the cross; and so was what is termed the blood of His cross. When did He present it? When as High Priest He entered the heavenly sanctuary. Is it necessary to say that must needs be when He ascended? I believe not, for the type teaches that all was accomplished on the day of atonement. That Christ was in Paradise immediately after death we know from His promise to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Make ascension Christ's entrance as High Priest and then you postpone the making propitiation for forty days, and

contradict the type. It appears to me that the simplest solution] is that which has been advanced, namely, that all was accomplished on the day that Jesus died.

E. R. W.

MY SHEPHERD.

I shall not want, I know it,
 Whatever may betide,
Jehovah is my Shepherd,
 For me He will provide ;
If all around is hostile,
 If all is dark and drear,
I have no cause to murmur,
 No enemy to fear.

He made Himself my Shepherd
 Unsought, unasked by me ;
His love alone constrained Him—
 He must consistent be.

He cannot throw me over—
 He would not if He could—
His character would suffer ;
 Besides, He is so good !

Oh ! I have found Him tender,
 Most merciful, and kind ;
Surrounded with abundance
 I eat when I'm inclined.

When fillèd to repletion
 He makes me down to lie,
Or leadeth by still waters
 My thirst to satisfy.

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And should my soul grow languid,
 Why, then He doth restore,
 And leads in paths of righteousness
 Till life on earth be o'er ;
 And all for His own name's sake,
 This makes my heart so gay,
 He is caring for His glory
 As He leads me in His way.

If death should cast its shadow
 Across the vale I tread,
 I will not fear—no evil
 Can ever touch my head.

Jehovah, He is with me,
 He comforts with His rod
 And staff; He is my Shepherd,
 The great almighty God.

Should enemies surround me,
 They shall but see His care,
 In spreading on a table
 For me quite royal fare ;
 My cup is running over—
 How good He is to me !

Goodness and mercy all my life
 Shall closely follow me.

Oh, what a glorious prospect !

I know that I shall dwell
 For ever and for ever,

I who deserved hell,
 In His house so richly furnished,
 In His dwelling-place on high,
 Most dearly loved, most richly blest,
 Himself, Himself so nigh !

E. R. W.

THE MORNING COMETH.

“ Night is far spent,” and we watch for the morning
To break o’er the hills, where the deep shadows lay,
Morning of cloudless joy, when comes the Bridegroom,
Calling from desert scenes His Bride away.

All in a moment, a shout of glad triumph—
Voice of a trumpet, falls on the ear !
Hearts thrill with gladness ; then wrapt in a cloud away
Into His presence, caught up in the air.

Meeting of rapture, who shall describe it !
After long waiting, and heart-hunger sore,
Longings unutterable stilled, and for ever,
As with Himself thro’ the wide open door—

We enter His chamber of peace, and of stillness,
No sorrow, no pain, no crying, no care ;
Home of untroubled rest, love, light, and gladness,
God and the Lamb have their dwelling-place there.

Wonderful moment, in the near future,
There in the glory His eyes shall behold,
Radiant and spotless, the bride he had won Him,
Through bitter sorrow, and anguish untold.

Wonderful moment, of joy, deep, unfathomed,
He in His love shall rest, in silence sweet,
While the best object of all His devotion,
Bows low in worship at His piercèd feet.

A. S.

THE BASKET OF FIRST FRUITS.

(Deuteronomy xxvi.)

WE have in this chapter revelations, one for an annual service, and one for a triennial celebration. The yearly service was the offering of the first of the fruit (1-11). That every third year was the dealing with a special tithe. The land was Jehovah's. His people were to remember that, and by these services to acknowledge it. The heathen might use charms, as the seething of a kid in its mother's milk, to procure a fruitful season (Exod. xxiii. 19). The Israelites were to bring their tithes every three years, the year of tithing, and to ask for God's continued blessing on His people Israel, and on their land (Deut. xxvi. 15). Acting thus they could count on divine favour, and on the continuance of fruitful seasons. But the offering of the basket of first fruits was different. That reminded them of the *past*. It was too, as we have said, an annual service, and directions about it are only found in the book of Deuteronomy.

Moses was just about to leave the people, who had not yet entered into the land of their possession west of Jordan. He spoke, therefore, in this chapter of that which was future, viz., the entering on the country west of Jordan. But he spoke of it as a certainty. How could that be? The people, as such, had not deserved it. But God had covenanted, and that unconditionally, after the matter of the golden calf, to take them into the land (Exod. xxxiv. 10-27). Their entrance into it was, therefore, assured them. Their continuance in the enjoyment of it was, however, quite

another matter. That depended on the observance of the covenant, to which they were parties, made in the plains of Moab (Deut. xii.-xxix. 1). With that was connected the service of the basket of first fruits, when they should be dwelling in their possessions.

God knows what His people are, and how apt to forget, whilst enjoying the blessings, whence they come, and to whom they themselves belong. So with a basket of fruit of all the fruits of the earth, given to them by God, were they annually to present themselves before Him in that place which He would chose to place His name (Deut. xxvi. 2). Evidently, then, this was written whilst the Tabernacle, a moveable structure, was standing. For its locality might change, as we know it did, Shiloh, Nob, and Gibeon becoming its places of sojourn. After the Temple was built such an instruction would have no meaning, for there was no other spot where the altar and sanctuary were then to be found. For a permanent structure therefore wherewith to comply with this law of Deut. xxvi., the people were not to wait. Wherever the sanctuary rested, thither each year were the people to go up with this offering to their God. Now this was a personal, not a national service. On each owner of a plot of ground in the territory of his tribe was it incumbent thus to present himself before God.

What he was to bring, what he was to do, and what he was to say, all were prescribed. This was in character with the dispensation of the day, ordering the religious service of the earthly people. And now with the directions before us we may picture something of the scene.

An Israelite stood before the brazen altar with a basket of the first of all the fruit of his ground for that year. It might be a full basket, or it might not. That would depend on the harvest and on the vintage just secured. But,

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whether the yield had been plentiful or not, he was to appear with his basket of the first of all the fruit of the earth, grown on the land which the Lord his God had given him.

To the priest, who would be there in those days, was he to speak, saying, "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us" (3). Then, relieved of his basket by the priest, who would take it and set it down before the altar of the Lord, the Israelite again opened his mouth to speak before the Lord his God, addressing Him directly (verse 10), "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terrible-ness, and with signs, and with wonders: and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me" (5-10).

God's faithfulness to His word the Israelite acknowledged, for He had brought him into the land. God's goodness to him he confessed, for he had given him an inheritance in a land flowing with milk and honey. God's description of that land, of which Moses had told the people, was really true. Its fertility had not been exaggerated, and the basket which this man brought sampled its great and varied fruitfulness. But all was of grace on the part of their God. What Jacob

had been is confessed—a Syrian ready to perish. What their past condition had been is remembered, and recounted. Egyptian bondage in all its rigour and oppression had been experienced. The nation's helplessness, too, is acknowledged. They could but cry to God. Afflicted and oppressed, such had been their condition. But the people were now free from all that, never again to endure it. They dwelt in the land of their possession, and could enjoy without hindrance the fruits of the soil.

What a resource is prayer when in affliction. Saints in all ages have had recourse to it. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth," so sang David in the last Psalm in the Psalter that bears his name (cxlv. 18). "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm xxxiv. 6), was the experience of David, who had taken refuge in the land of the Philistines. And in our chapter the Israelite recounts that the cry of the fathers in Egypt did not remain unanswered. And of One who cried, and was heard, but delivered only in resurrection, we read in Psalm xl.—"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Now for Christians, as for the Lord, deliverance may not, perhaps, come in this life. But God's ear opened to our cry, He will not forget it nor remain unmindful of His people. And if the Lord Jesus is the example of One heard in resurrection, the Apostle Paul has put on record the importance of prayer and supplication for the Christian in his pathway. "In everything," he wrote, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." Such is the exhortation. Then follows the

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encouragement. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 6, 7). Israel heard and delivered, Christians in a coming day, when reviewing their pathway here, will surely bear witness to the interest God manifested in His people who cried to Him.

Now to return. Of redemption by power the Israelite was to speak. That was never to be forgotten. At the Passover they celebrated the remembrance of their shelter from divine judgment by blood—the blood of the lamb. On this occasion their redemption by the arm of God's power was the great subject to occupy them. That, too, was never to be forgotten, God thus providing for keeping it in remembrance. And cannot we speak of a similar way taken by God with us? For privileged to sit around the Lord's Table we show His death till He come, remembering redemption by blood, whilst the Israelite remembered redemption by power.

And whilst on this point our readers will permit us to remind them of the two special blessings connected with the former, viz., forgiveness of sins (Ephes. i. 7; Col. i. 14), and justification through God's grace (Rom. iii. 24); all redeemed by blood, the blood of Christ, being true saints, and so saved for eternity. With Israel in the past the redemption was national; with us it is individual. In each case it was not to be forgotten. Israel were reminded of redemption by power, and were annually to confess it by the basket of first fruits, which they were to present to God. Presenting it, they recognised, too, God's right to the land. It was His, and they thus gave Him the first of its fruits.

Was this service to be just a formal matter? We think not. For the Israelite, after making mention of God's goodness in redeeming them, was to worship, ere he left the

altar. And surely that did not mean just the posture of his body that he was to assume. The heart was to be in it undoubtedly. But here no form of expression was prescribed. Out of the fulness of his heart was he to worship his God. Then he could return home, having conformed to this ordinance, found, as we have said, only in this book of Deuteronomy.

The fruits of the ground he brought, the fruit of our lips we are permitted to bring, worshipping in spirit and in truth, as we worship really by the Spirit of God. The Israelite made mention of Jacob's condition. We remember and confess what was ours.

C. E. S.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

(Verses 1-4.)

How varied are the compositions of Solomon, and small wonder, since to him was granted the spirit of wisdom and understanding, God giving him wisdom exceeding much. He was learned in the whole range of nature, and he spake "three thousand proverbs: and his songs are a thousand and five" (1 Kings iv. 29-32).

In the canon of Scripture we have three books attributed to Solomon; for in His unerring wisdom it pleased God to have the Son of David as one of the inspired penmen, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have the Proverbs, that wondrous compendium of wisdom, setting out the path for man in this scene. The voice of wisdom is loudly heard denouncing folly and commending prudence.

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Then, in Ecclesiastes, he expatiates upon the vanity of all things under the sun, and who more fitted to do so than the one who had more deeply drunk than any other of the streams of pleasure here? His soul had all that soul desired, in fact, was surfeited with the abundance of possessions, but remained unsatisfied. His cry was empty, empty, empty—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit." With all his glory, and with all his wisdom, he was yet unable to extract from these things the nectar of satisfaction.

Of his thousand and five songs one only finds an abiding place in the Scriptures of truth known to us as the Canticles or Song of Solomon. It is a love sonnet indeed, couched in the most beautiful Eastern imagery, containing the breathings of ardent affection conveyed to the heart in sublime poesy. It is the language of the heart, and hence some of it appears, to untutored minds, extravagant. But love is extravagant, not cold and calculating like a scientist working out his problems, or a miser reckoning his stored-up hoard. Heart speaks to heart here, and He whose love alone is unfailing and perfect, the Messiah, the Bridegroom, is, with His bride, whose love could wax and wane, and who could play truant and be indifferent, allegorically set forth as speaking to her in His matchless way of her excellence and beauty, thus to establish her in grace, fitting her to be a fit companion for Himself in glory. Judah shall yet stand as queen by His side, arrayed in gold of Ophir, and morally like unto the King (Ps. xlv.); for He who greatly desires her beauty labours greatly to that end. He would have communion. He is seen desirous and ready; but she, though desirous, is found unready, and has to pass through exercise of heart again and again to learn at last thoroughly, what He has been endeavouring to teach her all through, that "His desire is toward her." What a consummation!

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But though the primary interpretation of this love song has reference to the Messiah and that Zion, His earthly bride, loved and chosen, in which He delights, and hence desires the re-establishment in grace of the relationship now broken, yet, since all turns on the pivot of His love, and one of the main features is the beauty of communion, the saint of God can draw sweetness from it now. Who has, or can have, a monopoly of Christ's love? Precious indeed is the truth that each one of His redeemed ones can think of His love as set upon him or her in all its immensity and wealth. It is not for one individual only to say, "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*," but each, with varied emotions, can utter that into the ears of others.

This much by way of introduction, that we might remember, that since the love of our Lord is unchangeable we may use this precious portion for ourselves, and here listen to the voice of the Beloved speaking and fully enjoy it, without in any way setting aside the distinctive blessing that pertains to those who joy in redemption accomplished, and have perfect peace on the basis of that perfect work. An old writer has said, "If you would be holy, read the Psalms; if you would be wise, read the Proverbs," and to this we would add the further remark, "If you would learn love's language, and be instructed in the action of love to establish real, lasting communion, study the Canticles, and seek to breathe the fragrant air that surrounds the utterances of the unchanged heart of the Bridegroom to the bride. Love begets love, and that is the principle upon which the Beloved acts, though He has to wait long oftentimes ere He receives the answering love. But we turn now to the Song.

It is the "Song of Songs"; for where shall another be found to compare with it? Truly it is Solomon's, yet how

little of Solomon, and how much of the One wiser, and greater, and more gracious than Solomon appears in it? Mention is first made of *love*, and the desire is expressed by the bride that the most intimate and blessed manifestations of love might be given her; for what is a kiss but the expression of this? "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," she entreats. From Himself, warm and fresh, she would receive them; for, to her, there were none like His. She would have many of them—the kisses; and thus she desired love, His love, to expend itself upon her. Doubtless she had received many tokens of love; for every blessing from Him would surely be a kiss from Him. Not in word only, but in action would His love find display; and numerous blessings strewed about her would fall like kisses from her Well-beloved, testifying to her of His love that was better than wine.

For that is her testimony about it, and her reason for desiring it and then wanting it multiplied. "For Thy love is better than wine," she declares. How, then, could she help craving to quaff from such a bowl? A little knowledge of this is not dangerous; for but one taste of Christ's love serves to prove it to be superior to all others, and deepening acquaintance will only deepen the first impression that His love passes knowledge. All who know Him have proved this. Kisses have often seemed sweet when pressed upon the lips, but have turned into the bitterness of wormwood and gall when the person who imprinted them there has proved a traitor. But His love is sure and changeless, in the midst of all that is uncertain and unreal—

"In earth beneath and heaven above,

One thing is sure—the Saviour's love."

How well, then, we might desire to have signs of it given us again and again; and morning, noon, and night, when

blessings in abundance, of whatsoever kind they might be, surround us, let us feel, as it were, His loving lips pressed hard upon ours, and receive them as the kisses of His mouth. He assures us of His love. May we crave more and more of it, and in craving receive.

"Better than wine" it was, for there was none to compare with it. Wine is the symbol of happiness, joy and prosperity; but His *loves*, for He has many ways of expressing it, are better than anything earth can provide. Better, because it can never fail; better, because it can never injure, only bless; better, because it is pure; better, because it is the very sum and substance of all that is sweet and precious. It imparts strength to the arm and joy to the heart. It gives consolation to the downcast and comfort to the tired, putting weariness to flight, and enabling sufferers to sing sonnets of praise. It intoxicates with joy and a holy exhilaration, but who can declare all that Christ's love is, and all that it does? Let us cry with the bride, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

She speaks of "kisses," and she speaks of "loves," and the former are the manifestations of the latter. But whether we reckon up the tokens singly or combine them and have them as a cluster but yet one, the supremely precious fact still stands that the highest joy earth affords bears no comparison with the joy His love bestows.

It is no mean exercise to sit before our Lord and go over the various ways His loves have shown themselves—His undertaking on our behalf, His stooping from riches to poverty, His life of humiliation and suffering here; and then to see all these unite in that death on Calvary, that henceforth and for evermore His love might be better than wine to His chosen ones.

Delighting in the preciousness of His love, she tells of

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the savour of His graces and merits, comparing them to ointments, rich, fragrant, and rare; and then *His name*, fully expressing who and what He was, shed fragrance all around, being like unto ointment poured forth. "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments Thy name is as ointment poured forth." Every virtue, every grace, all things lovely, pure, and of good report, were without measure displayed by Jesus. He was verily "virtue incarnate." Think of His meekness, humility, gentleness, and say if the name of *Jesus* does not embrace them all? His name, as in no other case, was the full expression of Himself. Does not the mention of that dear name bring before heart and mind the picture of One living a life divine amidst sinful men? Ointment in the box might be of great value, but the unguent gives forth its sweetest perfume only when emptied out. So the name of Jesus, combining all that Jesus was and did, is aptly likened to ointment poured forth. How well we can sing:—

"Jesus—it speaks a life of love,
Of sorrows meekly borne;
It tells of sympathy above,
Whatever makes us mourn."

And others beside herself were attracted to Him. She knew Him; others discerned His worth and loved Him in consequence:—"Therefore do the virgins love Thee." The pure ones, purchased indeed from amongst men (Rev. xiv. 4), found in Him all their hearts desired. Keeping themselves from the idolatrous practices of the apostate part of the nation, they are regarded as virgins, as undefiled ones; and upon Him, the savour of whose ointments they had smelt, their love was set. He was the object for them; for Jesus meets the need of every yearning heart, and only those who love Him can conceive His worth.

But "nearer, still nearer," she would be to Him, and the yearning of her heart gives vent to the cry, "Draw me." The virgins might follow in her train, running after her since she was after Christ, but that cry proceeded from her lips, they saying, for desire of heart was with them likewise, "We will run after Thee." As the pole attracts the magnet, and then the magnet the needle, so does Christ's attractive power first exert itself upon the soul, and then through His own upon others. It was Christ they were after, for they would follow the Lamb whithersoever he went (Rev. xiv. 4), but when she cries, "Draw me," they say, for they loved Him, "We will run after Thee." The answer to her request is contained in the next clause of our verse, and the latter portion gives us the joyous occupation of her companions.

Does she express the wish to be drawn irresistibly along? then immediately she finds herself transported into the banqueting chamber of the King. "The King hath brought me into His chambers," and so in holy fellowship and communion with Him she would enjoy the feast His love provided. None could be nearer, and there, in the beauty of holiness, with the King of kings, she would be kissed afresh with the kisses of His mouth.

Do we, with holy energy, desire to be drawn by Christ? Then we may rest assured that this desire of our hearts *shall* be gratified. For the expressing the desire is immediately followed by the being bodily carried into His chambers. To no heart is Christ sweeter than to the desirous heart; and though little is revealed to us of heaven's joys, yet enough that we shall be there with Him, and that is heaven. The innermost chambers are for His bride. Her companions run, and then rejoice, speaking of His love more than anything else, though not so near in relationship as she. "We

will be glad and rejoice in Thee." Oh, blessed resolve! that should shut out every wandering tendency. How well they would be repaid, for each bit of gladness, and every rejoicing, would enhance the beauty of the King of Glory to their souls. Their joys were to be reduplicated. With a calm gladness and ecstatic rejoicing they would think of Him. His mercies they would prize; His blessings would distil as the dew; but in Himself, the Giver of all blessings and mercies, they would joy, making mention of His love.

Himself and His love were the themes of their hearts, and shall not these themes be ours also? Good reason have we for remembering His love, that love which, though old as eternity, is new every day. His love no suffering could stay. It breasted the billows of ignominy and scorn; and that *His* love might be ours He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Adorable Lord! until *we* see Thee *we* will remember Thy love as the most precious, constant, and enduring love there is! His love is worthy of remembrance surely then, for it is love excelling, immeasurable; a love displayed in life, a love unfolded in death, and a love continued in resurrection. He who loved loveth still. All the blessed qualities of love like His passeth comprehension, and cannot even be told; but if with the bride and these upright ones, we will but tell over to our souls the story, yea, the history of the love of Christ, our souls will be glowing and our lips a-praising ere it is half told. The remembrance of His love will go farther than anything else in increasing our growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and will help us with lip and life to commend One so exceedingly precious.

"Upright ones love Thee," they declare. Where shall uprightness be found apart from the Beloved? and to know

Him is to love Him. Does it not seem as though these sanctified ones are endeavouring to refresh and rejoice His heart, and would acquaint Him with the fact that others also loved Him? All who were upright must have come in contact with the King, the Beloved; and when the virgins tell of their blessed resolves they make mention of the fact that all upright ones love Him. Upright, and yet not love Christ? Impossible; for it is not the uprightness of nature that constitutes them “upright ones,” but the working of grace; and, as has been declared, “the apple of nature hath not the taste of the pomegranate of grace.”

“Upright ones love Thee.” Yes, surely, and always will, never ceasing to celebrate in song the worth of the Redeemer that makes them upright. The saint can glorify God for every upright one that loves Christ. Never was love so deserved; never more worthily bestowed. Too much love can never be given Him; too many to love Him there cannot be.

(To be continued, D.V.)

“IF HE WILL HAVE HIM.”

(Matt. xxvii. 43.)

Not only do our words take colour from the circumstances which occasioned their utterance, but the solemn fact should be remembered that they may have, for others, an interpretation we never intended them to bear. Such are the subtleties of human language, that, although therein we put forth from our lips the thoughts of our minds in a certain shape, many things may occur to enlarge the perspective, and give

an exaggerated meaning to them in the minds of our hearers. Regarding the words at the head of this paper, it is to this, the larger issue so to speak, that attention is now drawn.

In the mouth of the persecutors of Christ these words may have been no more than a jeer, at One whose claims to be the Son, and the Object of the special favour of God, they regarded as baseless. The close of the verse bears this out—"For He said, I am the Son of God." But suppose that we allow their words the force of a real question—"If He will have Him"—as if divine satisfaction in Him were to be doubted. How momentous a question it becomes, if we regard it as making His acceptability to God a matter of uncertainty. Yet never had scepticism better grounds, never was doubt more justified by appearances, than at that moment. They had done their worst against Him, and had found Him all-unresisting. No fierce and powerful opposition had He offered. No unshorn Samson in the hands of the Philistines had He proved. But for the lull, caused by the incident in the garden, when at His words, "I am He," they went backwards, and fell to the ground (John xviii. 6), the storm of their fury had spent itself upon a passive object. Of this seeming powerlessness they had taken notice, and on it they had remarked (verse 42), "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." And if, on the one hand, He had done nothing to combat their power, or effect His escape, on the other hand, neither had God. No wall of divine power had hedged Him round. Fire from heaven had consumed Elijah's would-be captors (2 Kings i. 10, 12). Bears from the wood had devoured those who mocked Elisha (2 Kings ii. 24). But neither heaven nor earth was moved in favour of this One, who professed to be the Son of God. With this lack of divine interference they taunted Him (verse 43), and

in so doing have supplied us with words that raise a most important question. "If He will have Him." Keeping in mind the various spheres this would affect, how much is at stake, we must again remark, if it be a matter of doubt. For consider some of the relations in which He stood. To Christ in two characters does the question apply itself in our minds. A *King* He was; a *Sacrifice* He was about to become. If, crucified in weakness, the circumstances of His death gave enemies room to question, and friends occasion to doubt, with no uncertain voice His resurrection, we shall find, testifies God's approval of Him in both respects.

"King of Israel" is a title used of Him in verse 42, and it was in this character, primarily, that the speakers had to do with Him. As such He had presented Himself to them, and had met with rejection. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Their treatment of Him clearly declared now, as afterwards finally in Acts vii., "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14). The question now is:—Will God endorse their judgment or reverse it? He must have something to say in the matter. A king was undoubtedly in His purposes for them, for of such He had made promise unto the fathers. Was this, then, the person? Will *He* have Him in this capacity since *men* will not? In resurrection is the answer given to the question. In spite of the rage of men, and the hostile counsels of kings and rulers against Jehovah's Anointed, the settled purpose of God, "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6), is thereby avowed in the face of the opposition, and in raising Him from the dead, we see God taking measures to bring about its fulfilment. He is declared to be "Jehovah's Anointed," "His King." Not that the appointment was newly made then, either, for it dates from the time

when it was said, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." This date, as we learn from Acts xiii. 32, 33, coincides with the time when, in the providence of God as men speak, God raised unto them Jesus. The promises made unto the fathers were thus fulfilled to the children in the advent of their Messiah. Their subsequent rejection of Him neither cancelled His office nor annulled the promises; for, though "cut off and having nothing" (Daniel ix. 26), His resurrection (Acts xiii. 34) establishes afresh His appointment, makes sure the mercies of David, and testifies of God's delight in Him. Pilate's unaltered accusation on His cross is, after all, but God's unalterable declaration upon His crown: "Jesus the Nazaræan the King of the Jews" (John xix. 19). Evidently, as such His acceptability is proved. Here at last is found a King, in the most absolute sense, after God's own heart, "He will have Him."

Important as it is to remark that, as King of Israel, Christ is "approved of God," a truth of far deeper significance comes into consideration when we apply the question "If He will have Him" to His sacrificial work. Of the necessity for a sacrifice to God on man's behalf the Word of God had again and again spoken. God, from the necessity of His nature, and man, by the choice of his own heart, stood on opposite sides of a great gulf formed by man's sin. By an atoning sacrifice could this gulf alone be bridged, was the language of Old Testament type and prophecy. To span the chasm the bridge must rest on each shore. Propitiation towards God answers to the one foundation, as substitution for sinners to the other. The claims of God, and the need of man, must alike be attended to. Where will such a sacrifice be found? As the Gracious Designer of the plan, and the One most affected by its execution, it must have

God's approval. Did the sacrifices of old provide Him satisfaction? "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein" (Heb. x. 8). The law provided it not. Shall the cross of Calvary? Will He have *Him*, since He would not have *them*? Can He find *here* the pleasure He failed to find *there*? An accepted sacrifice will mean salvation. "If He will have Him," men will be saved. The question, viewed in this light also, finds its answer in that most powerful of all testimonies, His resurrection. God has not only by words revealed the efficacy of Christ's death (as particularly in Hebrews), but has also testified to it by His actions. The rending of the veil of the temple was God's doing, and was full of significance. The raising of His Son from the dead was not less so. Of more than of future judgment, hath God "given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Acts xvii. 31); for, in that remarkable display of His power, we can surely also read the evidence of His entire satisfaction with what Christ, by His death, accomplished. Indeed, no stronger proof could be given, that

"All that blessed work is done,
God's well pleased with His Son;"

than that

"He hath raised Him from the dead,
Set Him over all as Head."

If resurrection marks God's approval of Christ in any respect, it certainly does of Him as the Sacrifice; if of any of His acts, most assuredly of the last work He accomplished, that of making atonement for sin by His death. "Delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification"

Poetry.

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(Rom. iv. 25). Blessed event! for, if His death settles all questions, His resurrection answers every one. "Lamb of God" as He was, of God's own provision, there never was really any question as to His acceptability. His resurrection has for ever put it beyond the possibility of doubt.

How precious the results to men! There is hope for Israel, for "He will have Him" to be their King. There is assurance for believers, for "He will have Him" as the accepted sacrifice.

"If He will have Him." The question may be raised with regard to any of the various positions He filled. It will always find an affirmative and emphatic answer in His resurrection; for, thereby, God has cast His vote in favour of, has put the stamp of His approval upon, has expressed His delight in the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. T.

MARY.

An empty tomb!

And only yesternight, low laid within
 She saw that form beloved; and watched them roll
 A ponderous stone against its entrance,
 Then had they sealed it, setting there a watch;
 All seemed secure, and she had homeward gone
 With others, some sweet spices to prepare,
 Thinking to come at daybreak to embalm
 The still, and lifeless form of Him, who was
 Her *all* in death as He had been in life.

Poetry.

Now where was He?
Where was the body of her dear dead Lord?
Who had removed the stone? For it was gone,
As was the precious form she vainly sought;
Twice lost seemed He, and bitter was her grief.

She stooping, looked,
And saw within the tomb two angels sit,
One at the head, the other at the feet,
Where He had laid. They speak to her, and say,
“Why weepest thou? He is not dead ye seek,
He hath arisen; behold where He was laid.”
She turneth back, and seeth Jesus there,
Standing beside her, yet knows not 'tis He,
So dim her eyes, so full of blinding tears.

He speaks:
“Woman, why weepest thou; whom do ye seek?”
She, supposing Him to be the gardener,
Saith: “Sir, if ye have borne Him hence, tell me
Where ye've laid Him, and I will Him remove.”
She tells not whom she seeks, but *One* is there—
One person in the world for her lone heart;
She in days past had been a sinner great,
And much had He forgiven; now much she loved.

He speaks again
One word—“Mary” (calling her now by name,
In tone of tenderness). Enough—'tis He!
She turns herself, answering, “Rabboni!”
And in a rapture of untold delight
Beholds her Lord.

A. S.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

(Chapter i. 5-14.)

AND now, addressing the daughters of Jerusalem, she gives utterance to one of those blessed paradoxes found in Scripture which grace has created and which grace likewise solves, "*I am black, but comely.*" Her lips gave expression to this double confession. By nature and by practice she was truly black, and yet withal, through His comeliness which He had now put upon her, perfect. And to show forth the intensity of the blackness, she uses the figure of the black tents of the herdmen of Kedar which, we are informed by some travellers, glistened in the full blaze of the Eastern sun with an intense blackness. And what simile shall she use to shadow forth the perfection of beauty with which He had invested her, but those curtains of Solomon, curiously wrought, and skilfully and richly ornamented?

How different the appearance as she thought of what she was in herself, or what she was in His sight—"Black, but comely." 'Tis a strange mixture, and yet, O believer, how true it is of all that believe on Jesus. Meditate on what we have learnt of ourselves, and part, at least, of the confession of the spouse will flow from our lips. Black? Yes, indeed! By nature children of wrath, and deeply dyed with the guilt of our many sins, the term *black* is certainly not an untrue expression of our former condition. But now complete in Him, and clothed in garments of salvation which He has put upon us we can say—

"Like Thee, O Lord—how wondrous fair,
How like Thee, all Thy members are."

Yes, black yet comely now; but the moment comes when we shall be seen in glory with Him, perfectly reflecting in the heavens the radiance of His blest Person—and then we shall be comely, but *not* black.

But she proceeds to mention another blackness; for she had passed through severe trial, and the sun had scorched her. She felt herself very unworthy, for if she had suffered at the hands of others she also realized that she had failed to fulfil her own responsibility. The burning sun had scorched her black, and that was the mark, the sign to her of her own failure, and she makes the humbling confession, and shows that she would now trust herself less than ever.

She had been the object of derision and hatred even by those who stood in near relationship to her: "My mother's sons were angry with me," and they had imposed labours upon her. Burdens hard to be borne she had had to bear, and labouring thus her fairness had withered away, and blackness had taken its place.

She adds, however, "Mine own vineyard have I not kept." That which was her immediate and proper responsibility she had grossly failed in. Set to care for the vineyards of others she felt then that she had been neglectful of her first duty, her prime duty. Oh, sorrowful thought! oh, sad meditation! remorseful retrospection! But the truth is out, and the lesson is writ large for others to profit by.

Can we read it? May we not regard the figure of the vineyard as standing for ourselves, and find in the regret of the spouse that which we might, perhaps, with equal truth utter as well? The spiritual needs of our own souls must first be attended to surely; or, like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, thorns and nettles will cover the face thereof (Prov. xxiv. 31). It may be that we have neglected

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to cultivate the plants that should be growing in our vineyard vigorously. Communion needs cultivating; prayer requires attention; and if these have not our care, then depend upon it, we are not keeping our own vineyards, though, mayhap, we are bestowing a very great deal of thought and labour upon others.

It is easy to set about putting other people right without one's self being right. It often happens that God's Word is read for others, not for ourselves; and the needs of the heart, the home, the family are shamefully neglected whilst outside work is carried on zealously. "*Mine own vineyard have I not kept.*" Then let us set about finding the remedy; and if we can only discover what the One we love best wants we shall have found the strongest possible motive to help us to that end. We will take the path of the spouse.

Confession and humbling is followed by distrust of self and desire to be with her Well-beloved. "Tell me," she says, "O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one wandering beside the flocks of Thy companions." Apart from Him she was in danger of falling into manifest and manifold corruptions, appearing to others indeed as a lewd woman. None but Himself would satisfy her; in no one else's presence would she be free from the drudgery of self; with no one else could she be happy. How could she be when He was the One her soul loved? Love can repose in love. It delights to sit at His feet. It is crowned when leaning on His bosom. Love finds its answer in the presence of its object. And what a title she here uses: "Thou whom my soul loveth." Be it that she had failed, that the sun had burnt her swarthy, yet she wanted to fail no more, and would find a security in the

presence of the Beloved; for, spite of her neglect she speaks to Him with certainty, sure that He who heard and understood her confession would not chide or upbraid at all.

For her there was but One, and the love of her soul was set upon Him; and in His presence she would be and abide, there ever happy and there ever secure. No desire had she to wander beside other flocks, her inclination was quite opposed to that; and to find out where He fed His flock, and where He made it to rest was the object of her query. On love's wings would she speedily be there. Soon she would soar away from herself, to be in spirit with the King, the Shepherd, there to find repose in His love. How sweet, how indiscribably precious to be in such a place, the very abode of love and tenderness. She loved Him and would plead it, and would argue it, and if others derided and oppressed He never. He was *such* a Shepherd *feeding* His flock, and making it to *rest* during the heat of the day, that love's cheering beam must delight indeed as it flashed from His heart, unfettered and free, refreshing, sustaining, banishing thoughts of care, and ministering thoughts of love.

“ From pole to pole let others roam,
And search in vain for bliss;
My soul is satisfied at home;
The Lord my portion is.”

“ At home ” is with Him, for with the poet she says :
“ *His person fixes all my love.* ”

Well, she obtains her answer. Could *love* plead and be refused? It may be that she ought to have known; that the very question told of her indifference to keep ever with Him. The “ *If thou know not* ” may convey this;

nevertheless the information is vouchsafed to her, "the fairest among women," and to follow in the footsteps of the flock of the unfailing Shepherd would bring her where she desired to be.

There she is bidden to tend her flock. There in fellowship with Jesus and with those shepherds raised up to perform His work, she would be able to do hers. Oh, blissful labour performed under such auspicious surroundings!

But in thinking over this portion, do not our hearts recall that scene depicted in John i., when the Baptist's disciples, having been directed to Jesus as God's Lamb, were desirous of knowing where He dwelt? "Master, where dwellest Thou?" and graciously they are invited to "Come and see," and then in sweet intercourse with Him they abide there that day. Love must respond to love's desire, and in the secrecy of love's chamber they converse of wondrous themes unrevealed, as is seemly.

And yet another word does this portion suggest to the heart. Where is the One, lover of us, found? He has not left us in doubt. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst" (Matt. xviii.); so if we would find Him, if we crave fellowship and communion, and the bliss of His immediate presence, we must be amongst those gathered to His peerless name. There we can get the sweetest foretaste of glory possible. There we feel the strength of love almighty, love irresistible, love overpowering; and there in full enjoyment of Himself we enjoy a blissful antepast of heaven. Oh, why should we wander here and there, though it may be with those who love Him and labour for Him, and remain unsatisfied? Who, or what, can fill His place? "Where makest Thou Thy flock to rest at noon?" "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst." Aimless soul, let thy

wanderings cease. There with Him thou canst take thy fill of love, and joy and delight, and thy love canst find its ease in the utterance of love's strains of praise.

In tones of unmistakable affection and delight the Well-beloved's voice is heard speaking directly to the heart of her who had but just then ceased saying, "I am black." In her ear He sounds her praises, ravishing and transporting her soul, and declaring the secrets of His wonderful love, which seemed to discover quite a multitude of graces and beauties. He lets out the fact that His heart had been occupied with her. He had been engaged in comparing her to what was world-renowned—the horses of Pharoah's chariots. "I have compared thee, O My love, to a steed in Pharoah's chariots" (v. 9).

Egypt was famous for its horses, and the king's chariots would have the very best. Noble and graceful in appearance, the very embodiment, to admiring eyes, of excelling beauty were those steeds. They reminded Him of His spouse, and we can say from what He spoke then, that on the beholding of those sensitive, strong and beautiful creatures, instinctively His admiring, loving heart compared her to them. It is what He, the King, saw in her. He expressed it, not even by a friend, but Himself. She heard it—and was glad.

But He stops not there. Beholding her He joys, and says, "Thy cheeks are comely with plaits, thy neck with jewel chains." According to the Oriental custom she was arrayed in this way. Often they were well-nigh laden with ornaments as well as plaiting their hair about their cheeks. To Him she appeared comely with it all. Peradventure to others it might appear overdone and almost hideous, but in His eyes it was suitable. She was the *one* to be adorned, and far from being overdressed He would add other decorations,

putting on her "plaits of gold and studs of silver." "We will make thee," He remarks, as though He would associate others with Himself in perfectly arraying her. She was the centre of His heart's love, and too many could not be engaged in bedecking her to His satisfaction. Surveying her in her beauty the Beloved would make her more beautiful still, supplying what she lacked, thus ornately adorning her, for she was precious to Him.

But not the spouse alone; for she stands forth as an illustration of what the saint is to Christ. Redeemed one! *thou* art precious to thy Lord. Bejewelled with those virtues which His grace has put upon the ransomed, they are comely. The excellencies of Christ when manifested by His own, are like unto chains of jewels and precious stones which richly embellish the person of the wearer—ornaments are those beauties, unappreciated by most, spurned and regarded as touches of hypocrisy by some, but highly valued by the Lord. And then "we wait in His beauties to shine," and He will yet deck each one with His glory and make them to shine with the glorious, abiding results of His atoning death. With unfading beauties He will clothe them. Let us hear His words of love, and standing in light, marvellous and wonderful, may we discern what is suited to Himself, and act accordingly, each day more perfectly reflecting, though but feebly still, the all-varied graces of our blessed Lord and Master.

The King had brought her into His chambers, and there, as He sat at His table, her spikenard emitted its fragrance. The sweet odour of grace flows most freely in the presence of the Well-beloved. Surely it is for Him. Others may get a smell thereof, but that fragrance is for Him, for His delight, the answer to His own love and goodness. What a

season of joy it is to be in the presence of the Beloved! There the affections are moved as nowhere else; and in the abounding of holy ecstasies of joy His soul is delighted with the sweet fragrance of her precious perfume. When *He is at His table, her spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance*. Then it is that she, gazing on His face, rests in serving Him; and, happy in that service, her love in its sweetness flows forth in broadest, deepest stream. Oh! may Christ have our best thoughts, words, and deeds. Whatever grace effectuates is of Him, and therefore for Him. Such is like unto spikenard of great value, and in His presence the alabaster boxes are to be broken.

And the heart of the spouse worthily responds to the appeals of love. She will show why her Beloved should have the precious perfume of her spikenard, "*My Beloved is unto me a bundle of myrrh.*"

Myrrh was one of the costly drugs of the East, and was there used in many ways; for not only was it expensive, one of the choice products of that land, but it was useful likewise. So we see again that love alights on appropriate figures to express the heart-yearning; for without doubt the Beloved was both very dear and very useful for delights and satisfaction to her. "It shall lie between my breasts," she says. Not only "all night," but always. That is the place she made it to occupy; and there, in the very seat and centre of love her King was enthroned, and there she would, as it were, clasp Him to her heart and find her joy and her preservation in Him.

What can we say of Christ? Not less than that He is inexpressibly precious to the believer; for there is, and can be only one Christ of God. In Him all wisdom is found. In Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii.). He is Saviour, Lord, and Master, and there is enough in

Him "the heart and mind to fill." What joys do we lack when Christ is possessed? The bundle of myrrh might preserve from many an infectious disease, but Christ enthroned in the heart will keep out every obnoxious thing. He is the only preservative against the seekings of self and the attractions of the world. It is said that the followers of Mahomet usually wear a portion of their Koran round their necks as a charm. Christ is the charm for *us*, and if He lies betwixt the breasts all others and all else shall be effectually excluded. He alone is excellent, and He alone in His peerless person combines all the preciousness and all the uses of the much-used myrrh.

"Jesus, in Thee our eyes behold
A thousand glories more
Than the rich gems and polished gold,
The sons of Aaron wore."

But she has not said all yet. To fully describe what He is to her she must pile figure upon figure, and even then fail to set forth all His praises.

"My Beloved is unto me a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi;" for, if myrrh lacked any virtue that belonged to Him she would find it in the cluster of camphire from Engedi. All excellencies, we repeat, pertain alone to the Beloved.

(To be continued, D.V.)

SEQUEL TO PAPER ON PSALM XXIX.

(Page 88.)

I MIGHT remark, in the first instance, that in order to appreciate the full beauty of this Psalm a man who is ignorant of Hebrew should read it in the translation after J. N. D., published by Morrish, which in this place, in my judgment, is better even than R.V.

Having spoken of the wonderful characteristics of the voice of Jehovah, as presented to us in this glorious hymn, we will now turn back to the third clause of the foregoing paper, and will consider the relation of the voice of the Lord to ourselves personally.

It is said there, that where an ear exists to hear, it is the living voice of God that speaks to the soul in the written Word. And in proof that this is no exaggeration I appeal to the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. iv. 11, 12, where all the characteristics of life are attributed to the written Word, and a sentence that begins with a quotation from a Psalm ends with the immediate presence of God. It seems to me that we scarcely at all enter into the true wonder of the present position and relation of a saint, faith with us is weak, and our "ears are dull of hearing." But *such* a man stands in (I do not say enjoys, that is as it may be) the ineffable privilege of being personally spoken to by his Maker, of listening to the voice of God uttered in the ears of his soul. It was a wonderful thing in Israel of old for a man to be able in cases of difficulty to come to the tabernacle, and there, with ceremonies and the intervention of the priest, by means of the Urim and Thummim in the High Priest's breastplate, to obtain an answer direct from God to some enquiry for his need (Num. xxvii. 21). There there might be help, but certainly there was nothing like communion.

Immensely beyond this is the portion of the saint now ; possessed of the Scriptures, indited under the immediate influence and guidance of the Holy Ghost, he holds in his hand the Word of God. If he reads in faith, that all-essential in the things of God, the light of the Divine Spirit gilds the words, and the voice of God echoes in the recesses of the soul, and the man is filled with the joy of a direct communication from God Himself. The mind, and thoughts, and purposes of God are unveiled to the soul, and it drinks in the blessed favour with thankfulness and joy untold ; this is what I understand by communion, not what I have to say to God as to my thoughts about His things, this has its place without doubt, but the higher thing is Mary's place at the feet of Jesus (Luke x. 38-42). I think she would have been too eager to listen to put in many words of her own, even if they were words deeply appreciative of the things she heard. The Lord himself, we know, before he left the earth, gave the greatest weight to his Word, in that he made the valuing of it, and obedience to it, the sole proof of love to Himself that he would condescend to accept ; and he attached to it the most gracious and loving reward it is possible to conceive (John xiv. 21-24). He promised too, that the Holy Ghost should bring back to the memory of the Apostles all things that He had said to them, and this teaching of the Lord, thus divinely recalled, we possess preserved for us in the Scripture, so that we, too, might share the blessing of "having and keeping." It is a matter of great interest to us, that not a single truth presented to us in the Epistles, or elsewhere in the New Testament, but is found in germ, at least, in the oral teaching of the Lord. The Holy Ghost, apart from the words of Jesus, initiated nothing : "He shall take of Mine and shall declare unto you."

Also, "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10). So not only is the whole Scripture to us the Word of God our Father, and our Maker, but it is in a special and endearing way linked with Him whom we own as Lord; the *Lord* whose men we are.

The Word of God is, too, the vehicle of Divine communication to us in times of obscurity (2 Pet. i. 19-21); in such times we are enjoined to take heed to it till our path is clear, and we are emphatically warned that no one can say what application the Spirit of God may not give to a passage in case of need, and that because the Word of God is super-human and supernatural, being the direct work of the Holy Ghost, though spoken through the medium of a man. I lay stress upon these points in order that reverence for the unique place and the supreme authority of the Divine Word may be deepened in us, and that the act of obedience may become instinctive in our souls. If so that it might be, by the great favour of God, that the Lord one day may be able to say of us, whatever may be our earthly insignificance and feebleness, "Thou hast kept My Word" (Rev. iii. 8).

It may be said that I advocate bibliolatry, the worship of a book. Not so. But when my Maker stoops to speak to me through the words of a printed book, or in any other way (though I doubt if He uses any other way in this time), it becomes me to listen to His voice with the deepest respect.

I think, if I may speak of others from myself, that but few of us at all adequately apprehend the estimation as a mark of Divine favour in which God holds the revealing of His mind and purposes in the Scripture. In Ephesians i. we are instructed that above redemption, above the forgiveness of our sins, above election, above position and personal acceptance, as the very crown and height of overflowing

favour, to which indeed these other things are steps, God places His having made known to us the mystery of His will, that which was His secret, *His own good pleasure*. Inestimable proof of Divine favour! That God Himself should seek responsive interest from His dear, adopted children, His creatures and once rebellious, in what He intends to be the outcome of all the long earthly history; the glory of His Well-beloved, the Son of man. On this account indeed we give thanks for the Word.

There is another aspect of the Divine Word replete with absorbing interest to us. It is that aspect in which the Scripture presents to us the Living Word, and the spoken Word (to us the written and now printed Word), as sliding into one another, and almost indistinguishably lost the one in the other. We are now upon ground of profoundest mystery, and it behoves us to speak with bated breath. In three Scriptures written many centuries apart but closely allied (John i. 1-4, Prov. viii., Job xxviii. 20, 28), the same glorious Being is spoken of, but in a status altogether outside the human environment and consequently beyond human conception. But in each one of the three He steps into the circle of human mental reach, and stands in a special relation to man. In John i. the Word that was ever with God, the Word that was God, the Author of being to all that has come into being, the Well-spring of life, is named as the *light of men*. In Job xxviii. the speaker, after vainly seeking throughout creation for the dwelling-place of the Wisdom that illuminates the understanding of man, and even interrogating Death and the Grave, can only learn that that secret is known to God alone, He only understands the way thereof! But it was His companion when He called the Universe into being, and it left a message for men—"And unto man He said" (Job xxviii. 28). In

Proverbs viii., that blessed and ample foreshadowing of John i., the Eternal Companion of the MAKER, His continual delight, the Master Workman (see R.V.) by whom He carried out His works, found His pleasure in *the habitable parts* of the Maker's earth, and His delights were with *the sons of men*. And it is this ONE of unutterable dignity, and of yearning affection for human kind, that utters those blessed admonitions that fill the early verses of the chapters, to which we may well give the most earnest heed.

In these places the Word or the Wisdom of God (the expressions are synonymous) is spoken of as the Illuminator, as the Guide, as the Protector and Life-Giver to man, and each and all these things are predicated of the written Word in an endless number of passages, as we may all remember. "The entrance of Thy Words giveth light." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word" (Psalm cxix. 130, 9). "By the words of Thy lips have I kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psalm xvii. 4). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed . . . by the living and abiding Word of God" (Peter i. 23, J. N. D.). "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John vi. 63). "And I know that His commandment is life eternal" (John xii. 50).

I am (I speak for myself) sure that one has the most inadequate idea of the greatness and the solemnity of having this wonderful writing in one's hands. Where faith is, a man reading it is brought into the immediate presence of God, while still he is here in the body. But if the Word is to do this for him it must be read like no other book, and in an attitude of mind that it would be idolatry to bring to any human writing. I must subdue my mind in its presence, and humbly sit before the Divine Teacher to learn, to be

taught, to receive; not to bring my own thoughts, or to seek support for my own views, nor even to find ground for discourses, though that, of course, may be often called for, for some. I must seek to it for myself alone, attent to what, from its living words, the Spirit of God may deign to say to me. But above all there must be the subdued will, that is ready to obey, asking no other sanction, "if a man wills to do His will" He shall receive the Divine informing.

Let no one suppose that one so occupied has nothing for the Lord actively, if act is called for. No one but Mary had the precious flask when the occasion arose, and of no one but her was it said by the Lord that remembrance should go wherever the Gospel went. In Rev. iii. 8, in the epistle to Philadelphia, we learn that where the Lord found His Word laid up in the soul, there He also found His Lordship owned in act.

I am loth to leave this subject without alluding to one excellent feature of the Holy Writings—it is their perpetual newness. If one should read an epistle say, or a gospel with enjoyment, and gather up the instruction given, and leave it, and go to some other part with like profit, and after a while return to the first portion, of course, always reading with faith, it will be found quite new, new thoughts, new suggestions, new blessing. What is this? Was the first not right that it needs correction on a second reading? Far otherwise. It is part of the virtue of the Scripture; Divine wisdom lies there infolded, fold upon fold; you have but gathered of one fold and another lies ready for you, and so on and on, if you read to the end of time, because the Word of God partakes of His nature and is infinite.

W. H. D.

THE GIFT AND RECEPTION OF THE SPIRIT.

My object in writing the few lines which follow is to place before your young readers principally, a few of the statements as to the gift and reception of the Holy Ghost.

I call attention to the words, "the gift of the Holy Ghost," (Acts x. 45) as a distinct thing from being "born of the Spirit," in John iii. 5. The testimony of Scripture on this matter has often been presented, but there needs be no apology made for again asking attention to what is written on so important a subject as the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell on earth, and His operations in the believer.

All along the line there have been saints of God. God wrought in giving life. Abel, Enoch, and Noah before the flood, and Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, and many others who witness in their lives and utterances to the grace of God, active in life giving. But it is plain they were not indwelt by the Spirit. We read in 2 Peter i. 21, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." David knew of this, but not the abiding presence which the Lord Jesus Christ intimates in His teachings to His disciples. "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). David speaks otherwise in Psalm li. 11, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

The indwelling of the Holy Ghost, or "sealing until the day of redemption" was consequent on the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (John xiv. 16, 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13).

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When the Lord returned to Him that sent Him, He promised to send the Holy Ghost, as the Scriptures I have just noted teach us.

We read, "At that day ye shall *know* that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20). Here there are *three things* spoken of that they would *know* when the Holy Ghost came. They were facts before that day arrived to which the Lord refers. But when the Holy Ghost would come they would *know* them.

It was always true that "the Son was in the Father." This did not become true when the Holy Ghost came, but the disciples would know it when the Holy Ghost should come. Such a statement is self-evident as being the truth regarding the Lord's words about Himself. I submit that the disciples being "in Him," and "He in them," did not become *facts* when the Holy Ghost came, but they would then know them.

It is not the same as being *in Christ*. That is connected with His manhood—with Him as Head of the new race. "In the Son" they were. They did not, however, know it. They had life in the Son though they did not know it, and the Son was in them though they did not know it. "In Christ" was not a fact until He, as the victorious man, ascended on high. That was followed by the descent of the Holy Ghost. Believers then were united to Him who is the Head of the new race. I do not here refer to the union of believers to Christ as Head of the body. The not distinguishing between "in the Son" and "in Christ" has been a source of much trouble among saints of God in our day.

That the gift of the Spirit follows on believing is easily seen to be the teaching of Scripture. Paul asks the disciples he found on going to Ephesus, if "they had received the Holy Ghost *since* they believed." And in his Epistle addressed to

the same people, he writes, "In whom *after* that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). In Acts v. 32, the Holy Ghost is spoken of as given to them that obey God. God works in those who are disobedient, turning them from darkness to light.

Acts viii. 12 tells us that the Samaritans *believed* the message delivered to them by Philip concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and that this was *followed* by the reception of the Holy Ghost (17).

The case of Cornelius also attests the same thing. Evidently he was a man who feared God. He was seeking God (Acts x. 2, 22). When Peter came from Joppa at his request, being directed by the angel of the Lord to send for Peter, Cornelius said, "We are all here before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Peter delivered his message, and as he told of Christ's death and resurrection, and the blessed results that were open to any who believed in Him, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the Word.

Peter then appeals to the brethren with him, asking, "If any one could forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (44, 47). Until this point was reached by Cornelius he would not be described as a *saved* man. He was informed that in sending for Peter he would hear words from him, whereby he and all his house should be saved (chap. xi. 14).

We now have placed before those who may read these few lines sufficient testimony as to the point we started with.

Saints, before the coming of the Holy Ghost, had life in the Son—in that life they lived and were acceptable to God. Hebrews xi. gives us ample ground for our statement as to saints of God in Old Testament times. But they were not what is described as being "in Spirit." That condition did

not exist until the Holy Ghost came and dwelt in the believer on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, *if so be* the Spirit of God *dwelt* in you” (Rom. viii. 9).

D. S.

“OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

The Son of the bosom, He came
The love of that bosom to tell,
To those who by nature were vile,
To sinners deserving of hell.
A man He became amongst men,
God's goodness and love He expressed,
The sick and the suffering He healed,
And comforted all the distressed.

He wooed human hearts, but in vain ;
They cared not ; they would not be won ;
Words of wisdom, of tenderest grace,
Works of power too—of Him they'd have none.
The cross was their answer ; their hate ;
But in love He there suffered for sin ;
Forsaken by God was He then,
Eternal salvation to win.

His life so unique, and so pure,
He meekly surrendered in death ;
Mid scorn and contumely to God
He peacefully gave up His breath.

God's will He had perfectly done,
 His glory He fully made good,
 His life work completed, He died
 And accomplished redemption by blood.

His body was laid in the tomb—
 Not long in the grave could He stay ;
 For righteousness, glory and love
 Must take the Belovèd away.
 Triumphant He rose from the dead,
 The power of the devil He broke,
 Appeared to His own—to them shewed
 His wounds, and to comfort them spoke.

He led them to Bethany, thence
 He ascended to sit on the throne,
 And the Holy Ghost coming, has told
 How He and His saints are made one.
 The universe does not contain
 A position too high for His worth ;
 All heaven is filled with His fame ;
 He shall rule by and by all the earth.

Lord help us to watch and to wait
 For Thy promise fulfilled—"I will come
 To receive you, My own, to Myself,
 To be with Me, to dwell in My home."
 Oh, Jesus Thy fathomless love !
 What glories shall shine in Thy face !
 We shall see, we shall know and adore,
 And be like Thee—'tis infinite grace !

E. R. W.

THE FIRST LESSON ABOUT THE BLOOD OF THE SACRIFICE.

THE institution of sacrifice was of God. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. xi. 4). We presume that he had received some intimation of that which would be acceptable. Job's three friends learnt from God what sacrifices they should offer as a sin offering on their own behalf. But it is not till we come to Exodus xii. that any mention is made of the efficacy of blood. It was God who also made that known. Dating from that eventful time, we learn, as years rolled by, more of this blessed subject, viz., the efficacy of blood in sacrifice. It shelters from Divine judgment. It cleanses from all sin (1 John i. 7). It gives boldness to enter the holiest (Heb. x. 19). By it souls are redeemed (1 Peter i. 19).

To the first lesson on the subject, that of shelter from Divine judgment, we would here direct attention. The four hundred years of God's forbearance with the Amorites was fast running out (Gen. xv. 13-16). Four hundred and thirty years since Abraham started forth from Ur of the Chaldees had almost completed their course (Exod. xii. 41), when God announced to Moses, and through him to Israel, the way of security for them from the visit of the destroying angel. Noah had been preserved alive with his immediate family in the ark, which God had instructed him to make. Lot and his two daughters were brought in safety out of Sodom by the two angels sent to destroy it (Gen. xix. 22).

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Now, not one family merely, nor individuals simply, but a whole nation—men, women, and children, were to be kept safe in the midst of a scene of wide-spread woe.

How should that be effected? How could there be discrimination to shield some, whilst inflicting the threatened blow on others? God provided for this, and made known His mind about it. The blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled on the door-posts and on the upper lintel of an Israelite's house, and outside of it, would secure all within from the entrance of the angel of death to smite the first born in that house. And so effectually did the angel carry out his mission, that there was not a house of an Egyptian in which there was not one dead (Exod. xii. 30). A wail of sorrow was heard throughout the land. A night that was surely never forgotten by Pharoah or his princes, who were thus reached in governmental dealing by the smiting of their first-born. From the first-born of Pharoah who sat on the throne, to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle, were cut off in one sweep that night.

Many in Egypt had died in the past. Many an Israelite, too, had succumbed to death. Jacob had expired in the presence of Joseph and his other sons. The rest of the patriarchs, Joseph amongst them, had been gathered to their fathers. The exactions of death in the past had been inexorable, no one had been able to insure himself against such a visitation. Of the unrolled mummies in Egypt in our day, permitted to gaze on the faces of the Pharoahs in the age of Moses, we become acquainted with their features, but as dead, not as living men. When death had approached them, whether by the violence of men, or by natural decay, it claimed its victim, and the individual, whoever he might be, passed off this scene. The physicians embalmed the body,

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thus preserving it from decay, but as a lifeless, soulless tenement of what once was a living man.

But now a new thing was to be known, and all Israel were to be conscious of it. The blood of the Paschal lamb, if sprinkled on the door-posts outside would ensure the preservation in life of each first-born one within. Their doors shut, and they feeding on the lamb within, the angel would pass over their houses, the Lord thus safeguarding His people. Hence this rite was called the *Passover* (Exod. xii. 11); for that is the meaning of the word *pesach* in the original (13).

But who ever before heard of the blood of a lamb preserving anybody alive? Who would have thought, as they saw one disporting itself among the flock, that there was such virtue in its blood. In truth there was no intrinsic virtue in its blood. Why then was it appointed for that night's service? Killed on the fourteenth of Abib in the evening, and its blood put on the door-posts outside, the angel of death passing through the land on the fifteenth; for they reckoned their days in accordance with Genesis i. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, from sunset to sunset; they were to await his passage in perfect confidence of heart.

No intrinsic virtue in that blood? None. Why then was the lamb chosen by God? No Israelite at that time, and probably not even Moses, divined the meaning of its selection. Intelligence on their part as to its selection was not called for. Obedience to the Divine command was all that was incumbent on them—the obedience of faith. The full directions communicated by Moses they were implicitly to observe, then to await in peace, but in confidence the issue. Their doors all shut, and none venturing out till the morning, they could see nothing of that which was taking place elsewhere. Obedience and faith, these were to characterise

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them. Obedience in doing what was told them. Faith in believing the Lord's promise, "When I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exod. xii. 13).

But the lamb, why was it appointed? Living, as we do, after the crucifixion, all to us is clear. God saw in it that which Israel could not. He viewed it as a type of Him who was to die. A secret then it was which Israel could not divine. God was looking forward to that solemn hour when He would be fully glorified in the obedience of His only begotten Son to death, the death of the cross. For Israel the blood of the lamb was a new idea, as men might say. There was truth in that. God's resources are various. It is for His people to learn what they are, and when revealed, unhesitatingly to give ear to them. So for us. Christ crucified was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but," adds the Apostle, "to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). The Messiah, a crucified Man, executed according to law! Preposterous, thought the Jew. A crucified Man who did not save Himself a Saviour of others! Too foolish to think of, said the unbelieving Greek. True it was that no precedent could be quoted in favour of the Apostolic message—yet it was true. And faith in the tidings and obedience to the preaching (2 Cor. v. 19-21) resulted in everlasting salvation to the individual in the early days of Christianity. So it is still.

To return. Ages rolled by ere the true sacrifice, God's Lamb, appeared. David in the Psalms had written of His death, resurrection, ascension, and of His return to reign (Ps. xxii., xvi., xl., cx., xxiv., lxxii.). Isaiah had foretold His coming, "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah

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liii. 7). To John the Baptist, however, was it given first to point Him out, as walking here amongst men—he “seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29). Now was it plain why the Paschal lamb had been appointed fifteen centuries previous; and why its blood, then put on the door posts, sheltered from death the first-born inside. The Eternal One, with whom a thousand years is as one day, does not hurry the development of His purposes. But “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. iv. 4). The Lamb of God was a man. The Baptist saw Him walking (John i. 29-36), and proclaimed Him as the Lamb, though on neither of these occasions did any word, that we read of, pass between them. How he knew Him the Baptist has declared. He saw the Holy Ghost coming down as a dove and resting upon Him. A man, yet God; for He would baptise with the Holy Ghost. Born of a woman, yet perfectly holy; for the Spirit of God, as a dove, could rest upon Him.

John spoke of His death, yet never lived to see it. He spoke of that which was future. It was a prophetic testimony. For the word used by John translated, and rightly, *Lamb*, has reference to sacrifice. It differs from the word translated Lamb in Revelation. Peter, too, writes of the Lord in reference to His death. Having companied with Him all the time of His ministry among men, and having eaten and drank in His presence after the resurrection, he speaks of His death as a past event, and tells of blessing resulting from it. “For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb

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without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained (or, foreknown indeed) before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times (better, at the end of the times) for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 18-21).

Redemption by blood, the blood of Christ, was for Peter, and is for us present blessing. And by the blood of God's Lamb far more is enjoyed than Israel knew, or shared in on that eventful night. Shelter from judgment they experienced, but not redemption in any sense could the blood of the Paschal lamb provide. Christians, however, through redemption by the blood of Christ, have forgiveness of sins (Ephes. i. 7), and share in justification likewise (Rom. iii. 24). These are present and abiding blessings, for that which results from redemption, whether by power or by blood, never changes, nor passes away.

The first lesson about the blood of the sacrifice was, as we have seen, that of shelter from impending governmental judgment. The last lesson about the subject speaks of the blood of Christ, and assures us of redemption, with its attendant blessings, and tells us of entrance into the holiest by His blood (Heb. x. 19). The blood of the Paschal lamb was first shed in Egypt, and yearly was the victim to be slain. The blood of God's Lamb was shed on the cross, and that once for all. God's Lamb, we say, echoing the words of the Baptist, who thus connects the sacrifice of Old Testament times with the last efficacious sacrifice that ever can be offered—the sacrifice of Christ. But though last, it had been first thought of. Two milleniums of years rolled by since Adam walked in the garden, ere the Passover was instituted by God in Egypt. Fifteen hundred more of years rolled by between that event and the appearance before the

Baptist of the Lamb of God. Yet God's appointment of that sacrifice was no after thought of the Divine mind. Before the foundation of the world was it appointed, and the Lamb chosen. What interest to God must the blood of the Paschal lamb have been, looking forward to the death of His Son, and looking backward to its appointment ere time began !

C. E. S.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SOME questions have lately arisen concerning the subject which heads this paper, and some are disposed to think that when a man is born of God, he at once must be regarded *as forgiven, as saved, and as having received the Holy Spirit.*

All are agreed that no sinner is saved who has not been the subject of the new birth. To be born of God has always been needed since the fall in Eden. All being spiritually dead, not one could there be found whose heart really responded to God and whose desires went out after Him, unless he had been quickened by the Spirit of God. The new birth is a truth for the earth, needed in Old Testament times, and each one whose blessed privilege it is to form a part of the assembly of God must have experienced it. The different companies of faithful ones found on earth during the time that intervenes between the first resurrection and the Lord's coming with His saints, will individually have been the subjects of it, and every loyal subject of the King during His millennial reign will likewise have been born again.

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Let us ponder this fact : for 4,000 years and more, from the fall of Adam and Eve, right on through the ages until the day of Pentecost, no new-born soul received the indwelling Spirit. Yet each one, we can say, with New Testament teaching before us, was a child of God and possessed eternal life, but had not the knowledge of either. Saints they were, but knew nothing of being perfected for ever. They did not know the forgiveness of their sins as now preached in the Gospel ; nor were they able to speak of soul salvation. These are blessings belonging to Christian times, as also is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, then, the reception of the Holy Spirit was in no way connected with the new birth. Each new-born soul was acted on by the Spirit, and on some persons He came, and on some remained, but indwelt not one. Would any insist that in Christian times every blessing goes with quickening ? We reply that the burden of proof lies with you. The Lord, when on earth, gave eternal life to those who believed on Him, but He did not give the Holy Spirit. That was a blessing then in the future, which none could share in until Jesus was glorified.

The new birth exists in all dispensations, but the indwelling Spirit is a distinctively Christian blessing, and is bestowed on those who receive the forgiveness of sins, or in other words, believe the gospel of their salvation (see Acts ii. 38, and Eph. i. 13). That the Son of Man had *power* on earth to forgive sins the blessed Lord affirmed, and proved it by doing what only one who had Divine power at His disposal could have effected. He was God as well as man. Not until the night before the Lord suffered, and then in connection with the supper, do we find the blessed truth taught that His blood was shed for the remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28). Not until after His resurrection is the

commission given to proclaim remission of sins among all nations (Luke xxiv. 47). Not until after the Holy Ghost had come on the day of Pentecost did any one preach it, and then not one word is said about the new birth. Each one who believed the preaching of Peter was undoubtedly the subject of it, but it was the remission of sins he proclaimed with the promise of the Holy Ghost.

Jeremiah had foretold the making of the New Covenant by Jehovah with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, one striking feature of which was "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (chap. xxxi. 34). That Covenant is still future as Hebrews viii. informs us. The blood upon which it will be founded has been shed, and the forgiveness of sins can be known now by either Jew or Gentile, on believing God's glad tidings in the Gospel of His grace, and he who does so receives the Holy Spirit, *Who* is the earnest of the future inheritance, and by *Whom* he is sealed unto the day of redemption. He is also the Spirit of Adoption, enabling the believer to cry "Abba Father." He witnesses also to the spirit of each one that he is a child of God, and by Him there is the shedding abroad the love of God in the heart.

That Spirit, too, is the Spirit of God's Son, *Who* gives, where received, the conscious joy of relationship to God our Father (*Gal.* iv. 6.). Christians have not only birth relationship which the indwelling Spirit witnesses to, but the status and position of a Son in contrast to that of a servant, and the reception of the Holy Spirit is the proof of it. It will not be disputed by any that when God quickens a soul by His Spirit through the Word, He surely means to save that soul. Life is not bestowed for anything short of salvation; but the question arises, Is it what is wrought in a man that saves (and there must be faith for life), or is it not entirely

by the precious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the atonement He has accomplished? Most certainly it is the latter, but not without faith. Quickening is in view of death, and as spiritually dead are sinners regarded, when the new birth is insisted on. But forgiveness, justification, and standing before a Holy God are not connected with that line of truth, but with our condition as alive in sin and guilty before God. Repentance toward God is demanded, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is insisted on.

The Gospel preached at the first was that of the remission of sins, and where faith was found there the Holy Spirit was given. A man received the forgiveness of his sins, and he *knew* it. There was no mystery about it at all. He was saved and *knew* it, and in consequence was sealed by the Spirit. "Oh," says someone, "you are making it a question of intelligence." We reply, "Yes." A man *must understand* that he is a sinner, and know his need; he must also understand that Christ died for sinners, and believe the good news of forgiveness. That we presume, supposes some intelligence, but surely not more than any person, not an imbecile, possesses. Many a half-witted person has known that much. A man is not quickened without faith, and consequently must have some understanding. No more intelligence is necessary in the one than in the other. It is a question, not of the amount of intelligence a person has, but of what has been received by faith.

The Prodigal in Luke xv. aptly illustrates what we are advancing. He had wandered from his home and turned his back upon his father, and was verily guilty, and as such needed forgiveness. He was also dead to his father, dead in trespasses and sins, and this is precisely what the father twice affirms, first to the servants and then to the elder son. To the former, he says, "This my son was *dead*, and is *alive*

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again, he was lost, and is found" (v. 24); to the latter, he replies, "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Did the prodigal begin to live after he had been forgiven and feasted? Who would dare say that? No—WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, that was, when he lived, his repentance deepening surely as step by step he drew nearer to that father he had so shamefully treated, evidenced the fact that he was alive. Was he forgiven? No. Was he saved? No; and could not be until he met his father. The imprinted kiss told of forgiveness, and all that follows blessedly witnessed to it. It was not a question of what was in his father's heart, but of his knowledge thereof, of his becoming acquainted with it; so until he met his father he had not received forgiveness.

Then we have the case of Cornelius, a quickened soul without the shadow of a doubt—his life proved it and Divine testimony confirmed it. A holy angel having been sent to tell him that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God, and yet he was not saved, as is clearly shown by being told to send for Peter, "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Peter obeyed, and had no sooner reached in his discourse the good news that through *His name* whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins, when at once the Holy Ghost is poured out. He fell on each of that company. All believed the message, were forgiven, and immediately sealed. Then, again, there is the case of the Disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus (Acts xix.). Believers they were and certainly had life, but had not received the Holy Spirit, had not even heard that He had come. To John's baptism they had submitted. There had been a real work of God in them as in the case of Cornelius and his friends, but the giving of the Spirit stands connected

with believing truths which neither had ever heard. Paul, we may be sure, put these before them, and they also received the Holy Ghost. It will be said these are exceptional cases. It is freely admitted. But this at least is clear, they block the road to all who contend that the receiving the Holy Ghost is and must be connected with the new birth.

The Gospel as preached at the first dealt with men not as dead but as guilty. Consciences were bombarded and with solemn power responsibility to God was pressed home, and remission of sins through faith in Christ was declared; and where believed the Holy Ghost was given. We therefore know the truth to present to souls, which, if received in faith, will secure for them this wonderful blessing. Let us do it and not keep saying: "Oh, they have it all at the new birth." No Scripture says so, neither should we. And besides it practically reduces the indwelling of the Holy Ghost to what is of no real value. According to this view souls may have the Holy Ghost and not be able to cry "Abba Father"—not know that they are children of God, although he is said to witness to their spirit that they are such. He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart. Living in Doubting Castle, filled with fear and uncertainty, is not Christian experience, and does not tell of the indwelling Spirit. Numbers are in that state to-day. They need the Gospel. It is ours to proclaim it and not vainly try to make them think that they have what they have not.

E. R. W.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. i. 14; Chap. ii. 1-7.)

No ONE figure, then, can be found to adequately express or fully set forth the Beloved. Simile and metaphor must be used over and over again ere the heart has satisfactorily given utterance to its meaning. "My Beloved is unto me a cluster of camphire (or henna flowers) in the vineyards of Engedi" (ver. 14). Engedi is said to be "a wild ravine on the western shore of the Dead Sea." Vineyards abounded as the words of the bride intimate. There the henna flowers luxuriated, and by the Orientals they were highly prized for their beautiful fragrance, as also for their connection with love and marriage. So to a *cluster*, and they *grew* in clusters, large and fragrant, of these flowers, does she liken her Beloved. Were they beautiful? So was He. Were they odoriferous? So was He, indeed, for His fragrance surrounded her. Were they pleasant? He charmed her more than all else. Myrrh to preserve and henna flowers to charm, were to her but reminders of the all-excelling powers of the Well-Beloved to keep her and to please her.

Nature's treasures possess secrets; and though, when yielded up, they only imperfectly declare the perfections of Christ, yet, nevertheless, let natural beauties remind us of Divine excellencies; let nature's voice point us to spiritual truths; let us read sermons on Christ in what we find so near to us, and are so intimately acquainted with. How often would the weary heart be refreshed if sun, and star, and flower were heard directing to Christ; if what they so loudly declare were only duly interpreted into spiritual language. Truly, they are at their best, only faintly emblematic of Him; but in them the spouse saw the One her

soul loved. In them let us see Christ, and may quickened affections more perfectly translate what they so dimly foreshadow.

The King was precious to her. She was likewise precious to Him. And so love's response meets with the response of love again. "Behold, thou art fair, my love," He whispers; and that she may not fear to fully believe it, He thrills her heart by repeating it: "Behold, thou art fair," adding, "thou hast dove's eyes" (ver. 15). He therein read her love, her simplicity, her chastity, her dependence. The gentle gaze of the dove, so pure and unassuming, speaks of undivided affection. It is said of that meek bird that "when she hath chosen a match she keepeth herself unto him only," and that if she could no more look upon her mate then she pined and died. Does not the Bridegroom seem to say: You cannot do without Me. I only can satisfy your heart. Upon Me you must rely; to Me you must look.

And from the heart's recesses re-echo love's message, "Behold, *Thou* art fair, My Beloved." Her fairness was the reflection of His own. She lacked beauty and was black without Him. But more, He was pleasant—"yea, pleasant." She could doubtless sing:—

"Cheered with Thy converse, I can trace
The desert with delight;
Through all the gloom, *one smile of Thine*,
Can dissipate the night."

Peace, happiness, satisfaction, were all found in Him. His love knew no decay, no coldness; and communion with Him was as fresh and sweet as ever. "Our bed is green," is her declaration. How many thoughts His words had awakened. He had spoken; she had replied; and now, as in fellowship together, she can say, "Our bed," "our house," "our galleries."

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Nearer, then, she could not be brought, *and*, of course, His unending love would bring her into a right regal place, a house of cedar, with walking places of fir. All bore out the character of His love, and whether in the secret place, or in the larger sphere, the house, or in the galleries around were the reminders of what was unfading and undecaying. *He* was pleasant. *His* love was everlasting. Fellowship with Him was bliss indeed; and as the house supported by unrotting cedar beams, and galleries formed of firs must last, so all that He was and all that He had done would endure—time could not spoil it.

Now, re-read all this. Is not our Lord's love as fresh, as undimmed, as undivided, as when first we knew Him? That can know no waning with age, no diminishing through carking care. Who shall separate us from it? Who shall hinder fellowship with Him? Communion with Him can be enjoyed in the private chamber, in the assembly of the saints, or in passing through the world, when the life lived is that lived by the faith of the Son of God. For us, all that He is, and all that He has done rests upon a foundation that time's touch cannot be impressed upon, and is supported by that which age cannot corrupt.

So, happy and secure, the spouse sings exultingly "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys." Would He chide her for such a bold statement? Nay, His word, "Thou art fair, my love," forbids the thought. What is sweeter than the rose? What more lovely than the lily? We know not with certainty what flowers are here referred to, but they were doubtless of unsurpassed brilliancy and beauty. Be the former the rose, or as some suppose, the crocus, it was of *Sharon*, the richest and best of Palestine's meadows, and whilst many varieties of lilies flourished in that land, the most fragrant bloomed in the valleys; and *what* a blending

of loveliness and humility there is in these emblems foreshadowed.

The language of grace is very bold, but not unjustified. It speaks not of what man sees, but as Christ judges. The exquisite fragrance and beauty of the fairest and sweetest flower is not to be compared to the excellency and odour of a redeemed soul to Christ. That to Him is beyond comparison. He perceives the excellency. He smells the sweet odour. In her was beauty undefined and humility unlimited, but all, all the work of grace. And so this self-praise, as we may say, sung into His ear, was a recommendation, for she exulted in, and read aright, the breathings of His love and anticipated the moment of her perfection.

Fear not, then, O believer, to tell into the ear of the Lord Jesus what you assuredly know you are to Him. On the couch, in the house, or walking the open places, tell over with rejoicing of soul, ever and anon, what His grace has wrought. Recall the words found in Eph. v., where we learn what Christ is doing for His church "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (verse 27), and know that He now labours on each individual saint to this end. He has taken us from off the dunghill to set us upon the throne of glory, and in that day, when in the full setting of the glory of grace, the comparison of rose and lily to that beauty shall be of as little merit as is the reflection to the glory itself.

And yet another responsive note proceeds from the lips of the King, for without doubt it is the Beloved that speaks. "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (ii. 2). This forceful contrast requires little explanation to make its meaning apparent. The lily is a

thing of beauty and delicacy, the more clearly discerned because of its hard surroundings. The thorns bespeak barrenness, harshness and worthlessness, fit only for the burning. The lily entrances, and delights, and soothes; the thorns repel, and pierce, and lacerate. Well, "so is my love among the daughters." To Him she was incomparable.

"A lily among thorns—a life in death." All others were, in comparison with her, worthless. She was the only one for Him, the object to be loved and admired. This is love's judgment; for here we have again the testimony of His affection, and in the next verse her response. Grace has wrought a wondrous transformation, and looking upon her who once was black, but nowauteous, the communication of His heart is uttered. "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

And what will *she* say? Love is not dumb, but there was such a fulness in Him that she finds it difficult to express it all. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." It matters little what tree is intended if we perceive the meaning of the spouse. It has been variously rendered as the citron-apple, the orange, and by some the pomegranate; but the point is this, that it is not only a tree which yields a cool shade and protection from the heat, but also refreshing nourishment for her panting soul. To her, then,

"Jesus was the tree of trees

Among a thousand groves."

It is said of the citron-apple that it is always fruitful. You will find on one tree at the same time blossoms, unripe and ripe fruit, so that the fruitage is continual. How well this accords with her thought of Him is easily perceivable. There was but *one* for Him. There was but *One* for her. All the yearnings of her heart found their satisfaction in Him.

And hence, she says, "I delighted in His shadow, and sat down." Truly she was all-enamoured with Him. She seems to rush, as it were, into that delightful shade. Such a refuge it was, and such rest did she find there, that

"No mortal tongue can speak the bliss
That in His shade is given."

There scorching beams could not come to mar her beauty; but there the fruitful bows she could grasp, and, plucking the fruit and eating thereof, she would ease the panting of her soul. Indeed, she partook of the luscious fruit and found it "*sweet to her taste.*"

And is not this the testimony of the soul when in communion with Christ? Oh, what can we testify about Him? Has His love our preference? Are our souls ravished with it? She, the spouse, fed on His fruit, and with comfort and joy sat under His shade. Do we do likewise?

Beloved, we know that Christ is laden with fruit—full of grace and truth. Whether we think of His *doings* whilst He was here flourishing as the fruitful tree in the midst of this great forest, bleak and barren, or whether we listen to His *words* when He spoke of life and deliverance, or of judgment, all demands our soul's adoration, and upon this we have to feed. However viewed, the sight of Christ is glorious. As He stands in all His endearing characters and relations to believers the sight is soul-absorbing. We can view Him undertaking our cause; becoming like unto those He would call brethren; suffering, bleeding, dying in our stead. We can behold Him risen for our justifying; ascending into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us: and there ever-living to intercede for us. Have you found Him? Then sit down—sit down delighted, and feed upon these precious truths, for they *must* be sweet to your taste.

But more. She finds herself transported into "the house of wine," where His love would produce its most precious things, and joy would overflow; for there, as she looks up, she sees the banner, with *love* written on it, floating over her. In the very abode of love she proves to the full that

"With love He marched, with love He led,
With love He armed my breast;
With love He drew, with love He fed,
With love He crowned the feast."

Such a sense of love was overwhelming, and so she calls for the restoring cordials that would sustain her. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of (or wounded with) love. Her cry is "More, more." What she desired, and would be strawed about with, that she might partake to the full, was the fruit of the apple tree she loved. Her words have been thus quaintly paraphrased:

"New feasts of love I seek, to free
And give love-sickness ease;
How can I loathe what sickens me,
So sweet is my disease?
More of the joy that makes me faint,
Would give me present ease;
If more should kill me, I'm content
To die of that disease."

But the "loved one" is content to live with it, and she rests satisfied in an ecstasy of joy, feeling that "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." Fulness of communion, this blissful repose foreshadows. And she would not have it disturbed. She was fearful lest someone should break in and bring it to an end by an untimely intrusion. Consequently, she charges the daughters of Jerusalem, "by the roes or by the hinds of

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the fields " that they do nothing to awaken her love until He consented.

The graceful gazelles were creatures of innocence and beauty and of great sensitiveness. They were easily put to flight. They dreaded scrutiny, and loved the secret glades of the forests. How beautiful her charge then! Genuine love and fellowship is retiring and shy. It is enjoyed in secret, but a little unwatchfulness will mar its beauty. The bride coveted its continuance, and utters her charge that none intrude and cause her joy to depart.

Do we covet intercourse with our Lord Jesus? Then we can well imitate the bride. Fellowship can be easily broken. Then let us be very watchful over ourselves, as well as careful not to allow others to deprive us of its continued enjoyment. We must aim at maintaining communion, and can well say:

" Begone sin, Satan, *earthly toys*,
Far be ye from my heart,
Approach not to disturb my joys,
Nor cause my Lord depart."

And here ends what we can call the first canticle. It begins with the desire to have the kisses of his mouth, it ends with the charge to her friends not to disturb the unrivalled joy, the hallowed quiet, the sanctified bliss of communion.

H. F.

VISIONS OF THE LORD JESUS AFTER THE ASCENSION.

WE read of but three people privileged to see the Lord Jesus after His Ascension. These three were Stephen, Paul and John.

Stephen saw Him standing on the right hand of God when he, without one earthly friend by his side, witnessed of his faith before the Sanhedrin. Had he seen the Lord when He was upon earth? Who of us can say? But it is not unlikely that his first and last sight of Christ ere he died was through the opened heavens, through which he saw right up to the throne of God. His judges, before whom he was standing, cut to the heart by his bold denunciation of their sin in betraying and murdering the Lord Jesus, the Just One, gnashed on him with their teeth. Old men, as some of them must have been, though with younger ones as Saul amongst them, the enmity of the natural heart against God was not only felt, but was manifested in such a determined manner. There was no concealment of vexation, nor any disguising of their feelings. They gnashed on him with their teeth, the historian tells us, ready, as the sequel showed, to hurry their victim to immediate execution (Acts vii. 54, 57-59).

The ordinary practice of judicial procedure seems to have been forgotten. No sentence of condemnation in due form was pronounced. The High Priest who presided did not restrain the violence of the assembly, nor, that we read of, did he even attempt it. From their tribunal they would hurry Stephen, as they thought, to everlasting condemnation

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at the hands of God. They could, and did hasten his departure, and whither? To be with Christ.

Did he quail before them as they thus displayed malignity of spirit? Stephen, turning from them all, and looking up steadfastly into heaven, saw what none of them could see—"the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (vii., 55). He saw Jesus, writes the historian Luke. That One who had been on earth in humiliation, and had suffered on the cross, he saw in the glory of God. How different are God's thoughts from those of men. Unfit to live here the Jews had affirmed; a blasphemer, said Caiaphas; a traitor as they declared He was when they accused Him before Pilate. He whom they had crucified Stephen saw in the glory of God. And the faithful confessor, as he declared what he beheld, let it be known by all in that company that Jesus, the crucified One, is the Son of Man. The very words of his testimony have been preserved: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (56). The Son of Man he proclaimed Him. That speaks of power and of coming glory (Ps. viii.). Now there must surely have been some among Stephen's judges who well knew the significance of that title.

One brief view this was of the Lord Jesus in glory ere Stephen passed away to be with Christ, waiting there with all other unclothed saints till the Lord shall come into the air, the prelude to His having all enemies put under His feet (Ps. viii. 6; cx. 1). Stephen's life of testimony here would shortly close; but ere it did he was permitted that sight of the Lord Jesus so confirmatory of his faith, so comforting to his soul. God was not an unconcerned spectator of that meeting of the Sanhedrin, nor was the Lord Jesus unmindful of the faith and of the confession of

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His disciple. That sight of Christ, how encouraging must it have been to his soul. The confessor, now about to be a martyr, might stand alone before his judges. How many in that have had to follow him? But Divine approbation all Christians believe rested on Stephen, and not on the Sanhedrin. "Thy martyr Stephen," so Paul described him when addressing the Lord on a subsequent occasion in the Temple at Jerusalem (Acts xxii. 20). The Lord's faithful witness he was, and that sight was vouchsafed him in confirmation and for the strengthening of his faith.

The historian passes on. Saul was consenting to his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned him (Acts vii. 58; viii. 1). He must have heard the dying martyr first commending his spirit to the Lord Jesus, and then praying for his murderers. But he evidently heard it all unmoved. No reflections on that which he had witnessed were aroused, no qualms of conscience troubled him. Exceeding mad against the Christians, after pursuing a course of relentless persecution in Jerusalem, he desired to repeat it in Damascus, and started off armed with official letters for that purpose. Who could stop him in his career, and frustrate his purpose? Like sheep for the slaughter seemed the Christians. The Lord, however, appeared to him as he neared Damascus, addressed him by his name, and converted him. So, entering the city that he desired to reach, led by the hand, for he could not see, he trod the streets, not as a relentless persecutor of Christians, but as a chosen vessel for the Master's work. Twice more, but now each time in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus appeared to him (Acts xxii. 17, 18; xxiii. 11), first to direct him as to his work, and next to encourage him in his loneliness.

Now, in each of these appearances of the Lord, we see His care for His people manifested. Stephen was to be

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especially encouraged at the near approach of death. Paul in his prison at Jerusalem (xxiii.) was to be comforted; for, though he had gone up thither against the distinct declaration of the Spirit through disciples at Tyre (Acts xxi. 4), he learnt that night from the Lord that he should be privileged to bear witness for his Master in Rome. Then, too, over His persecuted saints the Lord had thrown His shield by converting the persecutor. And when about to use him for the special work for which he was designated, the Lord appeared to him in the Temple at Jerusalem and commanded him to leave that city for work among the uncircumcised. The Lord on high was caring for His saints. He had not forgotten them. How could He forget predestined members of His body? Nor was He indifferent as to the extension of the work, by bringing other sheep into the light through the missionary labours of Paul and Barnabas and others. And now we turn to consider visions vouchsafed to John the Apostle when in exile at Patmos. The Lord's care for His people will in various ways be further illustrated.

In the first chapter of Revelation we read of it. All the Apostles probably had left earth save John, the son of Zebedee. He, too, in time would leave it. Then the presence and personal service of an Apostle down here would be wholly of the past. What would become of the movement? The Lord was in heaven, cast out by men. Then, when all the Apostles should be in Paradise, were Christians to be disheartened, and the community to break up? To correct any thought of despondency, how timely, how gracious was it of the Lord to show Himself as He did to His servant John! The Apostle in banishment at Patmos.—all seemed against the Church. The world might rejoice as the enemy seemed to triumph. Who would now care for the assemblies in Proconsular Asia? That vision

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vouchsafed to John (Rev. i. 10-20) supplied the answer. The Lord was in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which symbolised the seven churches. He had not left them. He was walking in their midst and noting everything about them. He had an interest in those who bore His name on earth. He has an interest still. John learnt that the assemblies, from which he was separated by exile, were under the eye and in the thoughts of Christ. What a comfort for the Lord's faithful servant! Would any in our day despond, as one or another of labourers in the Word are removed? Should not this vision encourage such? The Lord *walketh* in the midst of the candlesticks, and the word of ministry for John's day will be found in measure a word of ministry suited for this day.

The next vision of the Lord is found in chapter v. Seen there in the midst of the throne as a Lamb which had been slain (6), two circles of created beings surround the throne, viz., the twenty-four elders, and ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, these last being all outside the company of the elders. We understand about the angels, the elect ones, kept when the others fell, ministers we learn of our God to do His will, and ministering, too, as He sends them, to the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). But the elders, who are they? Adorned with crowns of gold, and enthroned around the throne of God, kings and priests to God, they are all the saints who have been on earth from Abel to the rapture of 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, which is here viewed as having taken place. Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Ephes. i. 7), they owe, under God, all to His death. And when in the vision He takes the book to open its seals, privileged to worship Him, they fall down before Him, and utter forth their praise (Rev. v. 9, 10).

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What calls it forth? Not His power as displayed in creating; not His might in dealing with opponents; but His death on the cross, the shedding of His precious blood—these are the subjects which occupy them all. Had angels been nearest the throne, we might have thought it was their place, for they have not sinned. But it is those purchased by His blood who are seen nearer than the angels. And these first raise a note of praise. Is He unwilling to receive it? Does the One on the Throne forbid it? Not a word of that. The appearance of the Lamb in the midst of the throne calls forth from the elders a strain of worship peculiar to them. In iv. 10, 11, they fall down before Him that sits on the throne, they worship Him, and casting their crowns before Him offer their tribute of praise. But the appearance of the Lamb, with the marks of His passion never erased, calls forth a *new* song, making mention of that which He has suffered for them, and what He has done for saints still on earth. For we read in verse 10, “and hast made *them* unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign on the earth,” referring, we believe, to those whose prayers are in the golden vials in the hands of the elders.

In the vision of chapter i. the Lord is seen as Son of man. In this vision He is seen as a Divine Person. Equal to Him who sits on the throne, He receives the worship of saints and of angels, and both companies are wholly occupied with Him. God cannot give His glory to another. Yet here the crucified One is worshipped in the very presence of Him who is on the Throne. God then He must be, and is. Next the angels praise Him in language the same as that in which they praise God in chapter vii. 12, with one exception. To the Lamb they speak of *riches* (v. 12), to God on the throne of *thanksgiving* (vii. 12).

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Suited surely is that difference. Remembering that He is a Man, riches may well be ascribed to Him. To God thanksgiving is proper. But this difference cannot for one moment detract from the thought of His Deity. So after the elders and the angels have each praised Him as becomes them, intelligent creatures as they are, creation lifts up its voice, and joins together to praise God and the Lamb (v. 13). Then the four living creatures, supporters of the throne, speak just one word, "Amen." A significant acquiescence in all that has gone on. The Lamb, then, is Divine—God and Man in one Person. The faith of Christians, therefore, should be strengthened as the teaching of this vision is seized and remembered. So, ere we are around the throne, the truth of the person of Christ is manifestly declared. Perfect God and perfect man. A man in chapter i., God in chapter v. Who reading this chapter in simplicity of heart can doubt it? And the proper place for the elders in heaven is nearest to the Throne. It is God's appointment for them.

Proceeding further in the Book we are reminded that there will be saints on earth after the rapture. In them, too, the Lord will manifest interest. Of these John had various proofs, as the Revelation of Jesus Christ was in vision unrolled before him. So we are next to see the Lord taking up the cause of His saints when in trial on earth in a coming day. Passing through bitter conflict, to which many a Christian is a stranger, they will not be left just to shift for themselves. The Lord will care for them, though they will not be members of His Body. But saints of God, born of the Spirit, having Christ as their life, partakers of the Divine nature, they will be precious to the Lord, and the Blood of the Lamb will be precious to them. As yet they will not (Rev. viii.) have seen Him, though He will

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surely see them: and, standing as an angel before the golden altar in heaven, He will present their prayers to God perfumed with the sweet incense of His merits. An answer then must come. It does. Judgment will be poured out on earth as set forth in the blowing of the seven trumpets. (viii. 2—xi. 18).

We have said that the Lord appears in the garb of an angel. Does this surprise any reader? Of old, Jehovah appeared to one and another as an angel. Manohah thus saw Him. (Judges xiii., 8-22). *With Jacob, too, He wrestled. (Gen. xxxii., 24-30). When Christian times are over, and God again takes up His earthly people, we can understand that it will be quite in character for the Lord afresh to be found in the garb of an angel ministering on their behalf at the golden altar on high. And the effect of His gracious intercession will be seen as each trumpet is blown, though the saints on earth may then have no understanding about it. The savour of His merits will never lose their sweetness, nor fail in their efficacy. Time can make no change in that.

Later on, in the development of events, the Lord again appears in angelic form, and announces that there shall be no longer delay; for in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as He hath announced the glad tidings to His servants the prophets (x., 7.). Glad tidings indeed, for God will then begin that open and final dealing with the great apostate power, which will have made awful havoc among His saints. Fitting is it that this announcement should come from Him, who will bruise Satan's head, as

* The English reader may see this confirmed in Revised Version of verse 16 of that chapter.

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foretold in the first day of the devil's apparent triumph over the purposes of God. (Gen. iii., 15). How that announcement in Revelation speaks of the Lord's interest in the accomplishment of God's counsels, and in the deliverance of God's earthly saints. And will they not be aware of this utterance, an encouragement whilst all on earth seems dead against them? In their darkest hour, in the multitude of their thoughts within them, this comfort can delight their soul. The end is near. For with the vials being poured out, the apostates may be too much occupied with their pains to carry on active persecution against the saints. It looks like it, till the three unclean spirits rouse them to attempt to fight against Christ. (xvi.)

A question the disciples had asked of the Lord just previous to His ascension, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" His answer was, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." (Acts i., 6, 7). But now in Revelation x., He can announce the near approach of that season, when God's forbearance with the world will cease, and when He will begin to deal openly with His enemies.

What forbearance has there been? The Son, the Heir cast out of the vineyard and killed. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to Him rejected. The mystery of lawlessness working for upwards of eighteen centuries, to be followed by the display of open apostacy. Forbearance indeed has there been. Martyrdoms, how many have already stained earth with blood? Many, how many will there yet be, when the restraining power of the presence of the Spirit will no longer be exercised down here. (Rev. vi., 9; xi., 7; xv., 2-4). Welcome sound will the announcement of the Angel be in those days. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost

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Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi., 10), had been the loud cry of the martyred ones seen under the altar. The answer was now given by Him who stood on the earth and on the sea, His position proclaiming His right and His power over both. There should be, He could say, no longer delay.

Welcome, how welcome, will those glad tidings be to the proscribed, hunted, and persecuted ones upon earth. No one allowed to buy or to sell, where the second beast or the Antechrist will have sway, unless having the mark of the first beast on his person (Rev. xiii., 17). What tyranny will that be! For a time permitted and endured, an end to it will come. God will finally deal with it all, when the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone (xix., 20). Very near in the counsels of God will that awful event then be.

What care, then, and what thought will the Lord Jesus whilst in glory have displayed for His own Ministering at the altar, their prayers will not pass unheeded, for He will present them to God. Not a sigh, not a groan from earth but what will enter into His ears; and when the seventh trumpet shall have sounded, open dealing on the part of God with the enemies will begin. God will avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, and He is long-suffering over them. Here in Revelation (x., 6), the Lord Jesus announces it as at hand.

In angelic guise have we now read of Him. The next vision presents Him as the Lamb, and His faithful ones from amongst the Jews standing with Him on Mount Zion. (xiv., 1). He had presented their prayers to God (viii.). Now these are preserved alive to the millenium, their trials from the apostate power all past. What the snare had been to the faithful amongst the Jews during the sway of

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Antechrist, Asaph in Ps. lxxiii. 12-14, prophetically describes, "Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." God's two witnesses at length slain by the beast (Rev. xi.), men on earth will be saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who can make war with him? A faithful remnant of Jews, however, will then be preserved alive on earth through all the time of Jacob's trouble. And now when their trials are viewed as over, they stand on Mount Zion, yet not alone. Faithful to the true Messiah, whilst He was still absent from earth, they are now seen with Him, and on Mount Zion, the seat of royalty and power in that day. The Son of Man will be with them, and not ashamed of those who have been faithful confessors of their God. In the present dispensation Christians can count on the Lord's presence if gathered unto His Name (Matt. xviii., 20). In a coming day the remnant must wait God's time for the Lord's return to be with them. For this in Isaiah lxiv. is the prayer prophetically provided, which we take it, in Rev. xiv., is regarded as answered. In the Psalms (xvi., 4), we read of the Lord as saying, "As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight" (xvi., 3). True was that when He was here in humiliation. True, ever since spiritually. And it will again in principle be illustrated, when He shall stand on Mount Zion with that faithful company, part of the meek of the earth.

But this scene in Rev. xiv., is anticipative. So we are next permitted to see in xix., 11-21, the return of the Lord out of heaven to reign. What His interest in His saints has been during His session at the right hand of God we have endeavoured briefly to trace. In the midst of Christians

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in Christian times, He will be after the rapture has taken place occupied with saints afresh, called out on earth to witness for Him. And now with all His heavenly saints He is seen in xix., coming out of heaven. Serving God, and confessing Him, in the past, all of them will see Him and come with Him when He comes to reign. Crucified Himself through weakness, and many of His saints having experienced the persecuting power of man, unable in themselves to resist it, they will see Him using only one weapon in the coming conflict—the sword which will proceed out of His mouth. He contends, and He only, with the organised and determined attempt to keep Him out of His Kingdom, and contends successfully, the two leaders on earth, the beast and the false prophet, being taken and cast alive into the lake of fire, and all their host slain by Him. A victory such as never has been known will He get that day, His power being displayed as omnipotent. How that may intensify thankfulness in the hearts of all saints, that He, who can wield such power, could yet consent to die by the hand of His creatures. And surely, as we think of it in prospect, it may call forth praise from our hearts, for the love that He, who is omnipotent, has shown by dying for us on the Cross. Love then, love ever since, love too to saints in a coming day, and love, which will not be satisfied till we see Him in the glory given to Him of His Father, we then gazing on Him with wonder and never-ending delight.

True are the words of Bernard of Clairvaux, and with them we will conclude:—

“The love of Jesus what it is,
None but His loved ones know.”

C. E. S.

THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID.

MANY years had passed away since David became king over all Israel. More than the usual sorrows of life had fallen to his share. Many of these, however, owed their bitterness, if not their origin, to his own unfaithfulness. What deep distress, what agonizing grief this can cause. Those only can understand whose lot it is to pass that way. That God can and will bring good out of all is blessedly true, but that is God and not man. Nor does it alter that solemn word, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 7-8). Much of trial and of persecution, too, had David encountered in his early manhood, but in this for the most part he shines, having the testimony of an approving conscience and the good cheer of God's manifest interposition on his behalf again and again. Very sweet to his spirit must this have been. In this, too, one and another heartily identified themselves with him, risking even their lives for his sake. Comfort there was in all this most surely. He had his seasons of joy and of triumph.

It was a proud moment for him when all the tribes of Israel owned him as their king. It was a far more joyous one when Jehovah sent his servant, Nathan the prophet, to announce to David what was in the heart of Jehovah for Israel and for David's house in the then far distant future. This we shall find recorded in 2 Samuel vii. 8-17. Touchingly beautiful are the manifested effects of the divine communication upon the heart of David. He just goes in and sits before the Lord. What can David say? He speaks of himself, but not to boast. "Who am I? and what is my house?" How small and how unworthy!

Precious lessons! learnt nowhere but in God's holy presence. But God had spoken and left the impress of His own goodness and tenderness and faithful love on every uttered word. Happy David! Then again in chap. xxii. we read, "And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." Having proved the divine goodness he joyously utters a song. "Worthy to be praised," he has found Him to be. In the hour of danger and distress his overcharged heart had cried out to God for deliverance, and now that all his enemies are vanquished his heart overflows with praise, and this is as it should be.

In chap. xxiii we have recorded his last words "David the son of Jesse said." And who is he? and what has he affirmed of himself? "Seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. xviii. 23). He had not inherited either wealth or rank from his father, David being the youngest of eight sons. Last words are interesting to those who love the speaker, but they have no general interest in the case of a poor man who is lightly esteemed. Yet David's last words are recorded by the pen of inspiration, and contain matter for instruction and encouragement for saints ever since they were uttered; for, no matter how lowly his position may have been, nor how poor as regards this world's wealth, he had been raised up on high, he was the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel. Thus he furnishes us with a threefold reason for engaging our attention. A man may be born into a high position and so degrade himself by evil practices as to sink into obscurity, or if remembered only to be abhorred. Not so with David. He had been raised up on high. Moreover, he was the Lord's anointed and the sweet

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Psalmist of Israel. From his pen numbers of divinely inspired songs had been given to cheer, to instruct and to encourage God's saints right down through the ages. He had discoursed in the major and in the minor keys. He had soared high in joyous utterances and had gone down into the depths of sorrow, much of which he by personal experience knew. But the Spirit of God in using David's pen had gone too high for David, and too low. The joys and the sorrows of Christ the Son of David, he had portrayed with a vividness that has endeared his memory to millions. We forget the failures of the man and thank God for the use He made of His servant David.

So to his last words we may well turn our attention—"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Thus the divine mind was made known to David. Had he answered to these requirements? Alas! no. What would such an one prove to be to those over whom he ruled. "And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (verse 4). A twofold illustration have we, the former beautifully describing the *cause* of fruitfulness and joy, the latter the *effect*—"As tender grass springing out of the earth *by* clear shining after rain."

Cause and effect of the new order of things obtaining are thus traced to the One who shall rule on earth, administering justice in the fear of God. David doubtless remembered instances in which he had failed to carry out the mind of God, and how he had also by his own sin given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. And now that old age is upon him and all the glamour of this

world's glory fading away, conscience will surely be at work. Sadly must he review his past life. But what of his house? Does it give ground for cheer? Is there one among his many sons who is equal to what is required? There are men of Belial to be dealt with. These, ordinary mortals cannot cope with. A ruler who is himself just, who rules in the fear of God and who has the strength of iron in him to thrust away the wicked, can do so. Can David find one of his sons equal to this? Let us hear what he has said: "Although my house be not so with God"—*not so*. Are we not reminded of Rom. iii.: "There is none that doeth good, no not one."

To whom, then, can the aged monarch turn! To God. He cannot rest upon any promise of blessing which depended on the condition of good conduct on his part or on that of his house, but he can rest on God's word. "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow." Whatever David's personal failures may have been, whatever his house may be, God would keep His promise. No outward sign may be visible; long years may intervene ere God's promises receive their accomplishment, but faith can trust Him and say, "This is all my salvation and all my desire."

Let the reader turn to Psalm lxxii., at the close of which he will find it stated "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." And well they may be. For it had been given to him to look far away into the future and see the King upon His throne, and that King was king David's son, perfectly fulfilling the mind of God, and Himself the fulfilment of the promises upon which David rested when he uttered his last words. God is faithful. May we ever remember it.

E. R. W.

CONSIDER.

WHEN strife was imminent through the zeal of our blessed Lord's following, a report being current that He made more disciples than John, that was a signal, so to speak, to enter on fresh fields beyond the borders of Judæa. The spot was not reached without weariness to Him who went there, and how simple the commencement of this fresh work—with one individual. The way was not any more promising in some respects, viewing the situation as depicted by Him who never erred, than the jealousy of the Pharisees upon which His back had been turned. He was charged with being a Jew, and a foe, or at least as having no dealings with Samaritans, and that they had their mountain to worship in. These would appear high barriers in the way of progress in the work. But there was love in exercise to serve—and He served perfectly! May we learn of Him. Wondrous grace that He should ask a favour of one who was a sinner when He had the water of life to give.

We know in a measure only how racial and religious differences obstruct the way of zealous, earnest men in our day from getting ready access to God's creatures in other lands and of other tongues. But when divine love is the motive power actuating the servant to lay down his life if so be he may make known to others the goodness of God, that light shines for all, that whosoever will may take of the water of life, difficulties are surmounted.

No one established in grace would hesitate, in a spirit of holy joy, from stepping forth as the Lord directed, to commend the gospel so glorifying to Him and so blessed for His poor ruined creatures to hear; for Jew and barbarian, Greek and Egyptian, need the water of life—it is God's gift—and the invite is "Come." How painful to meet with apologists for God's glad tidings. Those entrusted with them,

who serve Him, and submit to God to guide to fields white to harvest must needs in such a day seek more grace to defend the precious gospel that is not from man or simply for man but from God, and concerns His Son, who is to have a people taken out from among Gentiles for His Name.

What redeemed creature's heart fails to respond as the precious page records the wonderful mission of God's grace to the guilty and the godless. What poor failing servants, on hearing evil report and dark reproach hurled at God Himself, would not brighten up as we learn of how our Apostle, directed by the Spirit, views the situation. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings: for it is God's power to salvation, to every one that believes, both to Jew first, and to Greek: for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith to faith: according as it is written, *But the just shall live by faith.*" Again, what drooping heart viewing dark surroundings, awful unbelief, contentions of the disobedient to the truth, solemn gain-sayings of murmurers and complainers who walk after their lust and speak with the same low object, for the sake of profit—yet toiler with the Word—the precious Seed—our Apostle again says: "The word of the truth of the glad tidings, which are come to you as in all the world, and are producing fruit and growing, even as also among you, from the day ye heard and knew indeed the grace of God in truth" (Col. i., new trans.). What blessed results even here can be pointed to, flowing from God working in grace, having such material as Gentiles, dead in trespasses and sins, upon whom to show His mercy. If infidelity has grown, if the dark clouds have gathered over apostate Christendom, nothing of this can hinder that morning without clouds for those who have believed, to whom Christ is precious.

(To be continued.)

AN OLD TRAVELLER'S MUSINGS.

"AN old traveller *ought* to be a good one; accustomed to all the vicissitudes of hill and dale, comfort and discomfort, storm and sunshine, rough and smooth. But, truly, the longer I journey, the more difficult does it appear to me in every sense of the word to be a *good traveller*. To *take* everything in a right spirit; to *do* everything in a right spirit; to *act* as one who can pass over the ground but once; to be diligent in doing all the work that lies in the way, and yet not entangled or hindered by that work; to make *proper* use of fellow travellers, neither holding them too cheap, nor prizing them too highly; to *run* and yet with patience; to have eyes all around, and yet no eye but for Jesus; to be quite content, yet pressing on; to be quite alive and quite *dead*. Is all this easy? I trow not; the way appears to me to narrow and to steepen as I proceed; not a hope of reaching the end dawns, but as I know myself to be leaning on the Beloved; in His strength I feel as if already at home; looking off from Him, I see a bottomless pit on either side, into which I know not whether head or feet would first plunge, but, probably, the fall would be simultaneous.

But really one's head runs round, as we say, with the swarms of creatures in the narrow way, running hither and thither, and no one knows whither; some catching butterflies on the very edge of a precipice; some springing up to see what's in the moon, or to ask her how long she is to last; others digging into the earth, to consult those who mutter and peep, to ask how and when it was made; they have made lighters of some leaves of the Bible, just to put a little spark to their farthing rushlight; and now they are groping down into the bowels of the earth, till the foul air

extinguishes, or time burns out the taper; and I have to go so very, very near to their deep holes, and one and another says, "Do look in, it can do you no harm to look, they are eminently holy, learned men." O my soul, come not thou into their secret!—*Extracted.*

"I KNOW THY SORROWS."

Exodus iii. 7.

HE KNOWS! Who knows? The blessed Son of God
Who once this scene of woe and sorrow trod;
He knows your sorrow, well He knows your pain;
On Him your burden roll, He will sustain.

Are you discouraged in your work of love?
Where least expected nought but failure prove?
He looked for fruit where miracles He wrought,
But disappointment finding, murmured not.

Do you oft weary in the conflict sore?
And your own lack of faith and love deplore?
He knows your weakness, sees the deadly fight,
And in His time will put the foe to flight.

Are those you love torn from your fond embrace?
And none on earth can fill the empty place!
He feels your sorrow, touched with all your grief,
And in His heart of love you'll find relief.

Ah! there are sorrows that He only knows!
To none on earth could you your grief disclose;
How precious then His sympathy you find!
No human friend could ever be so kind.

Then lift your tearful eyes the grief above,
Trust in His perfect wisdom, perfect love;
Let these sweet words cheer you in all your woes,
He knows, your Lord and Master fully knows.

S. B.

THREE PROMISES.

IN THIS, the last number of the *Christian's Helper* for the year 1902, we would call attention to *three* promises made by the Lord Jesus Christ on the night before His cross. Two of them are only recorded by John. The third has been preserved in its fulness only in the Gospel of Matthew.

The eleven alone with Him in the upper room, Judas Iscariot having gone out (John xiii. 30); the Lord was teaching the disciples of their immediate and of their distant future. He would go away. Their Master, their Teacher, their Guide, their Lord, would shortly depart, to be no more with them in person in flesh, as He had been. What would become of them? A hostile world without, and an enemy ever watchful to attack them (Luke xxii. 31), who would guide them by the way? Who would teach them? Left as they would be to work for the Lord in His absence, how could they face the world in conflict? How meet and overcome the intellectual, the learned of the age? A provision for all that there should be, fruit of the intercession of the Son with the Father. "I will pray the Father," He promised, "and He shall give you another Comforter (or advocate), that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17).

A Divine Person would come to dwell on earth after the ascension, who would be with the disciples, and also be in

them. The Father would not leave them uncared for. The Son would not depart and think no more about them. He would pray the Father to send them another Comforter. Two designations have we here of Him that was to come. In relation to the disciples He would be *another* Comforter, or Advocate. In Himself He was, and is the Spirit of truth. Lower down in the chapter the Lord names Him as the Holy Ghost (26).

The promise was that He would pray the Father. The result would be the coming and abiding presence of the Holy Ghost. He promised, too, that He would send Him (xv. 26; xvi. 7). For whilst in chapter xiv. the coming of the Comforter who would minister blessing to the disciples, is promised as from the Father, in xv., xvi., He would come, sent also by Christ, to bear witness of Him to the world. The Father would provide for His children. The Son, rejected by the world, would send the Spirit of truth to convict it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (xvi. 8).

The Lord ascended to heaven. The eleven, to whom He had given the promise of the Spirit's coming, saw Him ascend, gazing upward till a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts i. 9). Days passed, but they saw Him no more. Those sudden appearances from time to time after His resurrection were no longer repeated. He was not here. He had gone to His Father.

Had He forgotten His disciples? Would He leave them to battle with the World as best they might? Multitudes of the Jews from all quarters were now assembled at Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost. A time of rejoicing it was according to the law (Deut. xvi. 11). But the disciples were in prayer. All as yet on earth remained unchanged since the ascension. The Lord was in heaven. The disciples

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were a little company on earth gathered in that upper room, and apart from their countrymen; and as yet no divine person called the Comforter or Advocate had come. Night closed on the city, and on the earth. The day of Pentecost had begun. How would it end? The sun rose the following morning, and the priest would be at the altar preparing for that day's service of a feast unto the Lord. Suddenly there was heard a sound in the city as of a rushing, mighty wind, which filled, not the Temple on Mount Moriah, but the house in which the disciples were sitting, of which now no record has been preserved to mark definitely its site. The Lord's promise was thus fulfilled. He had prayed the Father, and the other Comforter had come. He, too, had sent Him to bear testimony for Himself, and for the truth on the earth.

Faithful is He that promised, the disciples could say. And Peter told the crowd that had hastily come together on the report of that which had taken place, that the Lord Jesus was ascended, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth that which they saw and heard (Acts ii. 33). The Crucified One was in heaven, and had sent the Spirit—the Spirit of truth.

The Comforter the Lord had called Him. The term means one who takes up the cause of another—an advocate. Bereft of Christ's personal presence the disciples would not be alone and uncared for in this world. *Another* Comforter, or Advocate would they have, because the Lord Jesus, though in heaven, would still interest Himself in them. He is the Advocate (same word in the original as comforter) on high with the Father for the children if they sin; and the Holy Ghost is the advocate on earth interceding for the saints according to God (Rom. viii.). Two Advocates therefore we have. What grace! The Son on high, the Holy

Ghost on earth ; two Persons of the Godhead actively concerned for all true Christians.

But the Lord also called Him the Spirit of truth. Truth then would not fail, because the Lord should depart. The Spirit would teach. He does teach. The multitude on the day of Pentecost felt that, as three thousand converts were added to the Christian community. An Advocate, and a Divine Teacher, that would He be. He came. The Lord's promise was fulfilled. But is it exhausted? No. The Spirit is here still. He came to abide as long as Christians are found upon earth. "He will abide with you for ever," had been promised, and we are witnesses of the continuance of His presence. So we can understand the classing together, in Rev. xxii. 17, of the Spirit and the Bride, the two united in asking the Lord to come. Till that event takes place, He will be on earth in the Church of God. Thus we in this the twentieth century of our era share in the fulfilment of that promise made by the Lord on the night before His cross.

The second promise to which we would call attention is found in that same chapter of the Gospel of John (xiv. 2, 3). The Lord's words relative to it are these : "In My Father's house are many mansions (or abodes) : if it were not so I would have told you ; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Whilst then the Holy Ghost abides on earth with saints of this dispensation, the Lord has gone to prepare their home in the Father's house. Thus present blessing and future bliss are assured us on the authority of the Lord's words. For the disciples who looked for Messiah's reign on earth, when their nation would be blest, this second promise should have turned their

thoughts from earth to heaven. Heaven was to be their home, the Father's house their abode, and their place in it to be prepared by the Son, who will come to receive them to Himself. Who would have thought of that? Who would have looked for such favour? All of grace indeed. And surely each one who enters that house will say it, as he surveys the place made ready by the Son, tokens surrounding the saint of the Lord's love and thoughtfulness.

Well—this of course is future. The promise was made centuries ago, yet awaits its fulfilment. What time has passed in this interval! What scenes have been witnessed on earth! What efforts have been put forth by the enemy to mar the work of God, and to ensnare saints finally to fall! Has the Lord forgotten His promise? The last chapter of the inspired Scriptures show us that He has not. "Surely I come quickly," are His last words in the volume. We can close it with that promise sounding in our ears. He will come. His promise, given on the night before His cross, cannot fail of accomplishment. How it speaks of His love: "I will come again to receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." His heavenly people shall be with Him. He knew the hearts of the eleven that night. He knew their sorrow in the prospect of His departure—He would comfort them, and surely encourage all His saints from that day to this. They shall be *with* Him in the brightest and most blessed place in the whole universe—the Father's house.

A Divine Teacher abiding on earth as long as Christians are here. A home on high made ready by Christ—of these blessings the disciples heard that night when shut in with the Lord. But more did the Lord unfold within its walls. And this leads us to the *third* promise recorded, as we have said, in its fulness only by Matthew (xxvi. 29): "I will not drink

henceforth of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." *With you.* This addition, only met with in Matthew, is precious to us. It tells of the joy the Lord will share with His people. He rejoicing and they rejoicing together in the Father's kingdom. The sound of weeping and of gnashing of teeth will pervade the prison house of the lost. Joy in its fulness, and surely unending, will be witnessed in the Father's house and kingdom. For we are taught in Matt. xiii. 43, that the Father's kingdom is the heavenly part of it. Till then the fulness of joy cannot be known. But the saints will know it, and participate in it. For them to rejoice we can all understand. But for the Lord to rejoice with them, who would have supposed that? His joy in having his saints with Him on high, and all the blessed results to flow from His death accomplished and abiding; His saints rejoicing as they enter into all that by His sacrifice He has procured for them; these thoughts He communicated in that room.

Providing for His people on earth by the presence and ministry of the Spirit; He coming to receive them to Himself, to be in the Father's house as their home; and rejoicing with them in the Father's kingdom, of all this He spoke to the disciples that night. What a prospect for them and for us! What grace on the part of the Lord to desire His saints to be with Him in His own home, and then to drink the wine new with them in the Father's kingdom! We read of it now. We shall know and enjoy it by and by.

C. E. S.

ROMANS VIII. 1—4.

THESE four verses cover an extensive field, but previous to unfolding the subject, which is mainly the theme of the chapter, *i.e.*, the being "in Christ" with all its blessed consequences in glory, the Spirit of God gives us in verses 1—4 the conclusions which have resulted from what is presented to us in chap. v. 12 to end of vii. Hoping that it may be to edification I go back to beginning of chap. v., where the ground traversed in chaps. i. to v. 11 is again surveyed, and peace *with* God is concluded to be the portion of the believer. The *guilt* of man, whether he is found among Gentiles or Jews, has been completely proved, and the verdict is recorded "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (iii. 23). We then have the blessed action of grace, which provides for the need such sinners as are described in chaps. i. 18 to iii. 18 are seen to be in. Light has discovered the true state of all. The Jew, with all his advantages not one whit better than the Gentile who is without God and without hope in the world. "God is Light"—He has lifted the curtain and shown what He saw was and is there. But "God is Love," and the sinner confessing his sins may now draw near to God, and instead of finding that he is repelled and his exclusion for ever called for, he finds the blood of Christ on, and before the throne. The blood of Jesus gives him a solid foundation to stand on before God. All else, whether it be tried by king or peasant, will give way, but God is consistent with His own character, since the sacrifice has been offered, in justifying the sinner that believes in Jesus. We are *receivers* of this grace.

The character of those for whom Christ suffered from God, is further emphasised. They are described as "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies."

The children of Israel were exposed to the God of judgment as truly as the Egyptians. There was no difference. God had to put a difference, and how great it was! They were directed to kill a lamb and sprinkle the blood on the lintel and door posts of their houses, and when God would pass through the land, He would pass over every dwelling where He saw the blood. How complete their shelter from judgment! They deserved judgment—they believed they deserved it, and they believed likewise that the blood would protect from it. How blessedly sheltered! It must be perfect, for it is the refuge of God's providing. They are safe—as safe as God could make them. O, the peace flowing from the knowledge that my shelter—my hiding-place—is that which God has opened to me, and which I enter into and possess even now by faith. "Our title made out in words of the living God."

The first general division of the Epistle ends as we know at the eleventh verse of chap. v., leaving the soul joying in the God who has reconciled it to himself.

Verse 12 takes up the question of *sin*—its entrance into the world through one man, and the consequence—death. The results of Adam's disobedience to all his race; and also the results of Christ's obedience to all who are connected with Him. By the one offence of Adam the many were landed in death. The one offence opened the way to condemnation. The ruin was complete. Death reigned and became the portal to the second death.

On the other hand, if the sin of the first man landed all in death, and all were on the way to condemnation, the mighty grace of God is "much more" extensive in its bearing (20). It is unto all—"justification of life" is set forth for all—it becomes the condition of all now who have embraced Christ as their Saviour. This state of justification is a present

thing. The state of condemnation is what all who have not believed are going on to. The sinner is judged already, but thank God not yet condemned. He may be saved from that. He need never enter into it. Sin has reigned unto death, and now grace has reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. As one remarked, "The sinner in his sins is going on to judgment without mercy, but believing in the Lord Jesus Christ his portion is mercy, through judgment having been borne by the Lamb of God's providing."

The results as already remarked to those "in Adam" or "in Christ" are detailed in the last ten verses of chap. v., but how we individually are brought into this wonderful blessing described as being "in Christ," and therefore *now* free from *condemnation*, is not told us until we reach chap. viii.; the first verse of that chapter states the fact for all those who are "in Christ."

Then two important points are taken up in verses two and three :

1st—How are we freed from the power of sin which is still in us? and

2nd—How are we delivered from the law? We find the first dealt with in chapter vi., and the second in chapter vii.

Note it well that the question taken up is *sin*—the root which bears the fruit, *sins*. It is a question then of sin which is in me. How has it been dealt with by God? Scripture (ver. 6, 10) tells me by death.

In the first part of the Epistle the Spirit of God presents the blood of Christ—here it is His death. He has died to sin. These five words require to be pondered over. I need to ask God to teach me what they mean.

Christ has died unto sin once. He has gone out of the world where sin had place, by death. He is done with sin :

“In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (ver. 10), and again in ver. 6, “our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled.”

The soul who is in Christ is spoken of by God as having *died* with Christ to sin (ver. 2, 8). Our relation to sin as *a question for faith* is the same as Christ's. (Let me notice, however, that with Christ sin was a matter altogether outside Him. With us sin is *in* us, as well as around us.) Being the same as Christ's, we are in ver. 11 exhorted to *reckon* ourselves to be *dead* indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us be assured we are not dealing with random words. It will be to our profit that we soberly read and receive these words as we find them. I may not understand what the difference may be between the *fact* that “I have died with Christ, and the condition to be yielded to by me in my path here of being dead indeed unto sin,” but I may be certain the difference is important.

There are two great *facts* in this Epistle—to be received in faith—*i.e.*, because God says so. I desire to make them very prominent:

Christ died for my sins, and so I shall not have to meet them.

Christ died unto sin once, and we died with Him, and Consequently we are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

In the first He was *alone*—in the second I died *with* Him.

We should not require to say that it is not that Christ died twice. Where has the man or woman got to that would venture to utter such a thought. But I find God writing about the death of His Son in these two different ways or bearings, and I, a creature and a fallen creature too, find

my blessedness in the spirit of a little child receiving these words because He has written them. Could I have shared that awful cup of judgment the Holy One of God drank—emptied for me? Not a drop! “He bore all the judgment and left me all the love.”

But it is *a fact* surely that “I died with Him to sin.” The Spirit of God is the power in me to enable me, on the ground of it being a fact, to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have we received in faith the fact? Do we know and believe it to be true because God has said it? And then, where are we as to carrying out the reckoning enjoined, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body?” (2 Cor. iv. 10.) The Apostle Paul could say as his own experience, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (viii. 2), and so gives a full answer to the challenge of vi. 2, “How shall we who have died to sin, live any longer therein?”

We have now to consider what is set forth in verse 3—the question of law.

The doctrine of chap. vii. is stated in the first six verses, and then follows a “breaking down process” the soul has to pass through to reach the deliverance. He has to learn that the possession of life is not in itself power. The soul with a new nature desires to live to God—to bear fruit unto God—but none can be borne as long as it considers it has a relation to the law for that end.

In verse 6 God acquaints us that here likewise *death*, “death with Christ,” is the portal to deliverance. Many experiences doubtless have to be gone through. But they are not the deliverance—they are needful on the way to it,

in order that one may learn how weak one is—how foolish we are—how ignorant. Oh, how we struggle against such lessons, and would fain be something when we are nothing. Nothing but Christ to glory in, any more as saints than as sinners. We found out we were sinners exposed to eternal judgment, and we surrendered to His pleasure. We need to learn our lesson again as saints like Job of old. He had as a saint of God to come down in his own eyes from the dizzy heights that he had climbed to and cover his face in the presence of the glory of Jehovah. How terrible to robe *ourselves* and glory in our attainments. This did not Paul. This Job learned not to do. May we learn it and rejoice in our Lord.

The case supposed in Rom. vii. ends in the soul being brought to cry, “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” God is the deliverer through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The deliverance that the soul was in vain struggling to gain in chap. vii. is secured to us by God doing what the law could not do. God has in the sacrifice of His Son condemned sin in the flesh. *Then* it is my privilege and blessing to condemn it too. God does not condemn *me*, but delivering me by acquainting me with the fact that He has condemned sin which is in me, I may now live to Him who died for me and rose again. The law could righteously condemn *me*, and then I would be cast off for ever, but while God has condemned the thing which is in me, and which troubled me so much, He delivers *me*.

The writer in chap. vii. tells us at verses 5 and 6 that when we were in the flesh the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death—but now we are delivered from the law having died to that (the law) wherein we were held.

To be "in the flesh" is not exclusively an expression denoting an unrenewed state, but it also describes one who has not the Spirit of God dwelling in him (viii. 9). Such an one is not spoken of as being "Christ's" or "in Christ." Gal. iii. 28, 29.

This point is clear if we remember that the operation of the Spirit in new birth is not the subject in Rom. viii., but a further effect, consequent on believing the gospel.

May we know the thing in our souls which the words present to us, and then the meaning of the words will increasingly be plainer.

D. S.

SEPARATION.

"Be ye separate," Word of Divine command
 Given to God's people in the days of old,
 A chosen few, redeemed from bondage sore,
 By mighty power; and called to walk with Him
 Across the wilderness, to Canaan's rest.
 No intercourse with heathen nations round,
 Did God allow His chosen Israel;
 They worshipped idols, which their hands had made,
 The one true God was unto them unknown.
 Clear was the line of separation drawn,
 And Israel crossed it at the dire risk
 Of speedy judgment overtaking them.
 God's Word was plain, obedience He required
 From them on whom He'd set His heart's deep love
 "Be ye separate," Divine command to us—
 A chosen people, bought with Christ's own blood,

Made heirs with Him of glory yet to come ;
 A *narrow* path our weary feet must tread
 Up to that blessed Home prepared for us,
Separate from *all* that so much grieveth Him,
 His Word our guard and guide for every step,
 A Light to light the way that leads to God.
 The separate path may be a lonely one,
 Entailing much the flesh finds hard to bear,
 But all the way He walketh with " His own,"
 Sustaining with the comfort of His love,
 The heart that else would faint and weary grow.
Seeing Him face to face full soon above,
 How rich shall then the compensation be—
 Full gladness, answering the grief and pain,
 The darkness swallowed up in cloudless light,
One evermore the hungering heart to fill—
Christ, only Christ the living One, who died.

A. S.

CONSIDER.

Concluded.

A GREAT deal of stress may be laid upon the unreality of His followers, but it is a question more as to the message than the messenger. It would be too glaring to plead unreality in the blessed Lord who went to Calvary and died for sinners. Would those who excuse themselves on this account act differently had they what is absolutely perfect and infallible? Pharisees, we may remember, reported, "Never man spake like this man," and Judas had in the blessed Lord One who worked and spoke, walked and wrought, and who could sum up thus: "I have glorified

Thee on the earth," yet he failed to glorify God by believing on His Son. What desperate and deceitful hearts we have, yet how this plea of failure of professed followers suits a purpose to indefinitely postpone and put away God's urgent message "commanding all men everywhere to repent,"—marvellous that He should offer such terms to Gentiles as *repentance unto life*. *All being guilty* there would be no difficulty in the *Almighty* carrying out a sentence suited to the offence of His justice and holiness. But what forbearance, goodness, long-suffering, patience, mercy has been displayed. This goodness of His in patiently showing forbearance in sending His gospel, is that thou mightest accept His report of thee and of the doomed world thou art in. If thou ignorest the gracious revelation of God in mercy—God merciful and gracious—terribly hard is the hardness of impenitence, and solemn and awful are the treasurings up of wrath.

Let us remember that it was owing to the unbelief of the Jews we have been turned to, and God in mercy is doing a work among the Gentiles that shall be to His eternal praise. But these are solemn features which showed the setting aside of the Jews, and no one with the facts of Jerusalem trod under foot of the Gentiles, with Jews scattered through the world, without a king, not a nation, can dispute this dealing has taken place; and the other fact that Gentiles have the Scriptures, profess knowledge of the living and true God and the Lord Jesus, attest the facts that marvellous changes have been wrought by the will of God—not the asking of poor creatures who knew not how to ask. Paul, a prisoner in Rome, still expounding, testifying, persuading, not from that well-stored mind but from the law of Moses and the Prophets from early morning to evening. And some were persuaded of the things which were said,

but some disbelieved. . . . "Be it known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the nations; and they also will hear" (Acts xxviii., 28, new trans.). Our Apostle shows us what came of this strife—there was a definite movement from Jews to Gentiles—there was a fall, how severe, of the Jews; Gentiles have arisen out of obscurity of pagan darkness, have been enjoying favours, outward and inward blessings, have the Word of God, the gospel of His grace sounding in their varied tongues, salvation proclaimed in the only Name under heaven, but in these days 3000 souls are not converted at one preaching. A solemn question is often put: "Who hath believed our report?"

Consider how solemnly the position is prophetically sketched by the same infallible pen. "Thou wilt say then, The branches have been broken out in order that I might be grafted in. Right: they have been broken out through unbelief, and thou standest through faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: if God indeed has not spared the natural branches; lest it might be He spare not thee either. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: upon them who have fallen, severity; upon thee goodness of God, if thou shalt abide in goodness, since otherwise thou also wilt be cut away." (Rom. xi., 19—22, new trans.). There is nothing overdrawn in Scripture. We see the glory of God's grace departing, the clouds gathering as in Jude and direction given for earnest rescue work—using discrimination—hating the garment spotted by the flesh. The blessed Lord preserve and enable to do service, solemn and sober work it must be if we believe the precious Word, and know His interest in His own at the close.

W. B.