

THE
Christian's Helper.

“By love serve one another.”—Gal. v. 13.

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THE MINISTRY OF JUDE.

JUDE, the brother of James, is the least voluminous of all the New Testament writers. In this he may be compared with Obadiah in the Old Testament. Obadiah had a prophetic vision, and tells us about it. It had respect both to the final overthrow of Edom, the persistent enemy of Israel, and to the return to their land in the future of God's ancient people. His place in the sacred canon, arranged as the minor prophets are in a moral order, comes fitly after Amos, who had foretold the possession by Israel of the remnant of Edom (ix. 12).

Obadiah then appears in the light of an appendix to the prediction of the herdman of Tekoa, in common in that respect with Jonah, the prophet of Gath-hepher. For, whilst the former treats of Edom, the book of Jonah illustrates divine mercy shown to Gentiles, two subjects touched on in that verse in Amos already referred to.

Jude is an appendix to no one, though like Obadiah he writes of judgment, but of judgment on the corrupters of God's House by apostasy, and not on the destroyers of God's heritage in Israel. Jude's place is generally the last of the *General Epistles*, so called, in whatever part of the New Testament volume these writings are found.*

Of his ministry this short letter is all with which we are acquainted. Where he chiefly laboured, as well as the place in which he wrote this letter, seem unknown. His wish,

* In the Uncial MSS., the Codex Sinaiticus excepted, the General Epistles follow immediately after the Acts, preceding those written by Paul.

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however, for the welfare of Christians is no secret. This letter sufficiently demonstrates that. How earnestly did he desire all of them to be kept in the true path, for apostasy was beginning even then to show itself. Hence he was stirred up to write as he has done.

In common with Peter, he writes of coming judgment. But, whilst the son of Jonas impresses on his readers the certainty of Divine judgment overtaking *sinner*s, Jude treats of the end of *apostates*. Again, both in their ministry refer to past judicial dealings on the part of God, sins and apostasy having already called down unsparing judgment on the guilty. Hence instances quoted by each of them are warnings, that neither impenitent sinners nor apostates can hope to escape the wrath of the Almighty. The instances recalled to the reader's remembrance are taken from Old Testament history. Yet the special objects of these two New Testament writers are ever kept by them in view. Jude did not copy from Peter, nor did Peter from Jude.

A few remarks will make this plain. Peter tells us of the angels who *sinned* (2 Peter ii. 4). Jude writes of these same as not having kept their *first estate* (or principality), and as having left their own (or proper) habitation. The son of Jonas also reminds all of the ungodliness of the men of Sodom and of Gomorrah (2 Peter ii. 6). Jude tells his readers that they went after strange flesh. Apostasy characterised these two classes. Peter, for his third example, adduces the sinners dealt with at the flood. Now these were not apostates. So Jude, in keeping with his special line of ministry, brings to the front for his third example, the conduct of the children of Israel in the wilderness, who, brought out of Egypt to go to Canaan, turned back in heart to Egypt. This was apostasy in spirit. The reader then, we trust, will readily perceive the difference

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between Peter and Jude, and their real independence of each other.

Turning now particularly to Jude, it is plain that he cherished no such vain delusion as is sometimes propounded, viz., that men and manners are so improving, that a millenium of peace and happiness will be ushered in by the present preaching of the gospel of the grace of God converting the whole world. What Paul had foretold, Jude certainly endorsed, viz., that evil men and seducers (or imposters) will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. iii. 13). So the outlook, whether Paul, or Peter, or John, or Jude wrote of it, is anything but encouraging to such dreams. What, then, should become true Christians in such circumstances as Jude depicts is a very important matter. To this he addresses himself.

To Christians in every place, to Christians in every age he writes, first telling them in what light he could view, and we may say in what light the Spirit of God regards them. As regards the Father, they were "beloved" by Him (as we should here read, not "sanctified"). Next they were kept, or preserved, for Jesus Christ. And they were also called ones. Of present blessing and of future joy he would remind them: present blessing, as sharing in the Father's love; future joy, as kept for the Lord Jesus Christ. Then exhortations follow, for they were to be *contenders* (3), *builders* (20), and *saviours* (23).

And first of *contenders* he writes, pressing on Christians the common duty of contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (3). For the faith already revealed they were to contend, and not for mere dogma, or some ideas, or a system of doctrines elaborated by some human brain; but for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Many an one might like always to sail on the calm

unruffled waters of some Pacific Ocean ;—no conflict around, no contention called for, no appearance of opposing forces, or adverse currents. Such a fair voyage, just floating on the water, might be the dream of some. No earnest Christian, however, could look for that. He is called to be a soldier (1 Tim. vi. 12). He is meant to be a labourer (1 Cor. xv. 58). He professes to be a trader (Luke xix. 12-19). To find himself at times confronted with opposition, or in circumstances of difficulty, he must expect, nor must he be dismayed at it. For to contend for the faith each and all are called—but the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Nothing more catholic than this can there be. It is not zeal for a sect, or earnestness in a cause, which has its limits short of the extent of the Church of God. Nor is it fighting for some mysticism, some esoteric teaching known to an initiated and select few, of which Jude writes. For *the* faith, the common property of each and all, every saint should care about. Now to carry out this one must study the Word of God ; for there, and there only, shall we find in it fulness, and each part in due proportion to all the rest, the revelation of *the* faith which should be precious to every child of God. Creeds, articles, confessions drawn up by men, all come short of the fulness of the faith. Else why supplement the creed by articles ? Why adopt a confession instead of articles ? Why seek, as some in these days, to amend a confession ?

Peace without contention many may desire. But that cannot be till the great enemy is bound ; so any who are looking for that now are clearly not in the current of the Divine mind. There *was* conflict ; there *will be* conflict as long as the Church remains on earth. Hence the Christian is, and should be, *practically*, a soldier. To contend for

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the faith is his duty, and forms, as we see, part of his instructions.

But again we would point out, and trust the reader will bear with us in doing so, that it is for *the faith once for all delivered to the saints*. Were this, and had this always been, kept in view, many a controversy might never have arisen, and many a division of the one flock would never have been heard of. Nevertheless, what Jude insisted upon would from his day downwards have been needed. To war a good warfare was appointed Timothy (1 Tim. i. 18), who, whilst doing that, was to avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called (1 Tim. vi. 20). There may be, as there evidently were in the apostle's day, wranglings and janglings. On such Paul frowned, and Christians entering upon them he sternly forbade (1 Tim i. 4; vi. 3-5. 2 Tim. ii. 14-16, 23. Titus iii. 9). Yet no one more earnestly contended for the faith than he did at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-14), and subsequently when writing to the Galatians.

Now the contending, to which Jude exhorted, was called for by the condition of things within, and not by opposition from without. Certain men had crept in unawares amongst the Christians of that day, who were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and denying our only Lord (or Master) and Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 4). Ungodly men they were. Privily had they crept in. Evidently their real character had not been previously discerned. The faithful had been taken unawares. Was God likewise? The condemnation of these men was already the subject of a Divine revelation. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, thus distinguishing him from the son of Cain, had prophesied of this. Long, long ago had God foreseen what would take place in Christian times and in the Christian assembly.

But the prediction, uttered before the flood, only finds a place in the Sacred Volume after the beginning of the Christian dispensation. Interesting to us is this, as evidence that things are written in that Book, when in season, and not before.

Enoch prophesied of judgment on *men*. But when Moses wrote, and put on record facts about Enoch, God had taken up Israel as a nation for Himself, and was not dealing directly with men as such. Hence that prophecy would have been out of character with the dispensation which had just commenced. But when Christian times had begun, and the gospel was going out to men as men, the elect nation no longer occupying the foreground as before, Enoch's prophecy could come in as neither out of date nor out of character with the new dispensation. So what had been passed over by Moses, though not forgotten by God, comes in most appropriately when quoted by Jude.

Now Jude, though warning of apostasy and announcing the judgment that will overtake apostates, adds nothing to the revelation already vouchsafed. The common faith already delivered was enough, and they clearly were acquainted with it. For how contend for that of which one has never heard? But what they had was sufficient. And Jude, we would repeat, addresses all saints. No one, then, in that day could divest himself of responsibility in this matter if really a member of that wonderfully blessed company, viz., those beloved of God the Father.

But now another exhortation was called for reminding Christians of that which was requisite for each one in order to contend successfully for the faith. The faith was a holy faith, and each one was to build up himself or herself upon it. A *builder*, then, each one was to be (20). With the faith they were to be personally and practically acquainted.

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Establishment in it was called for, if they would uphold it. A creed, a form of confession, was not enough. Each one was to test its sufficiency, building up himself on it. Now, to countenance the practices of those who had crept in was clearly to act quite at variance with it. And not less, to use the language so common in our day, would the keeping quiet for peace sake be wholly inconsistent with true Christian profession.

Again, the building up in the faith was to be a process going on; not something done once for all. And learning, as they thus would, more about the faith, they would become more and more satisfied as to its sufficiency, and would also become more and more impressed with its real importance. So the practical denial of it on the part of others in outward Christian fellowship would not be a matter of indifference; nor would the introduction of ungodly ways among those who partook of the love-feasts (12) be viewed without concern.

Further, *prayer* in the Holy Ghost was to characterise them likewise. The true spirit of *dependence*, and the need of divine guidance—these they were to cultivate. The former would be expressed by prayer. How often was the Lord found in prayer? The latter would be found by seeking for the Spirit's leading in that exercise. Then, too, they were to keep themselves in the love of God. What can so keep the spirit fresh and the person ready for service?

And lastly, they were to be looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life. This hope was to be kept in view, and the heart to be reminded that it was all of mercy. No room for self-confidence, no ground for boasting, or exalting themselves above others. All was of grace and mercy. Is it not so still? Moreover, all that

the saints needed in Jude's day, of which he had just reminded them, we require still; remembering that God has provided us with a full revelation for our pathway here. The faith once for all delivered unto the saints can fully furnish us unto every good work.

Not only, however, were they to consider themselves. Care was to be manifested for others and, in exercising that, they would act the part of *saviours* (23). To this attention is now directed, and the way to discharge that service is pointed out. But here there is an uncertainty about the text of Jude's instructions, though none about the general tenour of them.

Discrimination in dealing with individuals was pressed on the saints. Wise, how wise was that! Then, hatred of the garment spotted by the flesh was insisted upon by the brother of James. And into three classes, most probably, he divided those with whom the faithful saints of Christ would have to do. Following the Revised Version, the passage runs thus:—"On some have mercy who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating," etc. Others would present the passage as follows:—"Some convict (or correct) when they are disputing; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and some compassionate in fear," etc. (22, 23). The importance of discriminating in different cases cannot be too strongly pressed. In all movements there are the leaders and the led. Any compromise with the evil here denounced was to be resisted, and its advocates to be firmly opposed. Compassion, however, on behalf of those entangled with the ungodliness was to be manifested, and their liberation, if possible, attempted; ever remembering the need of watchfulness over one's self, as we each have in us a nature which cannot be improved, and which, if it acts,

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can draw us into the same evil. Now, if Jude's directions were followed out, the Divine nature would be displayed, for holiness would be maintained and true Christian love be exemplified. But how could any successfully engage in this unless, whilst contending for the faith, they are also building up themselves on it? Unless that is the case we shall be neither good soldiers nor efficient saviours.

Jude's ministry, then, was one essentially hortatory in character, and was called forth by the state of things among the saints. The maintenance of the faith by earnestly contending for it he puts in the foreground. Then what each must be doing on his own behalf is adduced, else how extricate those entangled by the teaching and by the seduction of the ungodly men who had crept in unawares? Shutting the door against all thought of development of the faith, he insisted on the sufficiency of the revelation vouchsafed to meet the germs of apostasy which were working in the assembly. Then he closes with a doxology different from any that we meet with elsewhere in Scripture, in which we are fittingly reminded of the need of upholding grace, whilst opposing the error that there was, and would continue to be, abroad; for the evil men denounced are viewed as only dealt with by the coming of the Lord out of heaven: "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy. To the only God (*wise* should be omitted) our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen." The soldier must be kept; the one who would be a saviour must be upheld. What Jude could have written about the common salvation we shall never know on this side of the grave. We see, however, that he had discernment as to the

character of ministry needed, and he exercised it accordingly. The state of Christians (1 Cor. iii. 1, Heb. v. 11-12), or the character of things in the assembly, may call for special ministry suited for souls. It betokens wisdom from above to discern that, and grace received to minister it.

C. E. S.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. ii. 8—iii. 5.)

WE enter now upon a brief examination of the second Cantic. Just a cursory study will show that its first subject is that of deliverance; for the Spouse anticipates the moment of freedom and liberty, when Jehovah shall truly be her strength and her song; and in language begotten of warm desire it is here expressed. The day of Jacob's trouble is to be sanctified to the house of Judah. By trial she shall be purged. By grace she shall again be brought consciously into relationship with the One for whose praise she was formed, but from whom she has so shamefully wandered (Jer. iii. 1). Awakened affection knows the blessedness unbounded of being with the Well-beloved. His voice she seemed to hear re-echoing in her soul, and her eyes are opened to beholding Him approaching.

Awaking out of her reverie, as it were, a sound is heard and she exclaims, "*The voice of my Beloved!*" The heart almost o'erleaps itself at the sound of the voice of a friend. The pulse quickens as the accents fall upon the ear; and though the person be not seen, yet there instantly arises a vision of the one to whom the voice belongs. The expectant heart of the Spouse immediately perceives her Lord

The Song of Songs.

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approaching, not tardily, but with alacrity, with the swiftness and sureness of a young roe or hart. Yea, with the speed that love imparts He bounds over every intervening obstacle, hastening to reach her "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." There are no obstacles love like His cannot surmount, and every hindrance is behind Him and His breathings of love are heard.

"The voice of *my Beloved*," she says, recognizing it intuitively though the Speaker was not then seen. No other voice would have so aroused her. The voice of the stranger would not have attracted. To His voice her heart responds. Expectation quickens the hearing, and when we are truly desirous towards Christ how quickly the accents of His voice are caught. Alas! that like the Spouse we can, and do, so quickly lapse into indifference.

"*My Beloved*" are her words. She claims Him as her own; and sure it is that if our hearts aspire to Him and are not faithless our moments shall pass in one continued enjoyment of His matchless love and grace.

And now He stands without. Behind the wall she discerns Him; she beholds Him looking through the window as He showed Himself with the sparkle of love on His countenance; and through the lattice she discovers Him glancing. Imagery, do you say? True, but how sweetly effective; for to only realise the nearness of Christ is more than worlds can bestow; and it shows the active character of her King's love.

And for what purpose had He appeared? To give an invitation all savoured with love. To her He speaks directly through the lattice. "*Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.*" So she hears. Away from Egypt's bondage, as it were; away from the servitude of the iron-house; away from the dark regions of winter's reign into the

warmth and joy of a never-ending summer—away, but with Him.

Tribulation had run its course, and now He appears to invite, and so to emancipate and deliver. She must respond—“*Rise up.*” Winter’s night of sorrow and dreariness was to be succeeded by the ushering in of the day of sunshine, joy and gladness. And the Well-Beloved backs up His invite with cogent reasons; for if unbelief can find excuses to justify itself, love can provide reasons to drive home its argument. “For, behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give forth a good smell” (verses 11-12). Everything was inviting! There could be no reason for hesitation or fear. Ought it not to have sufficed that her King invited? And being in His company would be a time of fruitfulness and ravishing joy, her spikenard flowing freely to His delight.

We know that in the history of Jehovah’s dealings with His people they are to be allured into the wilderness and there He will speak to her heart, the valley of Achor (trouble) becoming a door of hope, and from thence she will receive her vineyards (Hos. ii.), and there she is to sing as in the day when she came up out of Egypt. Here we are taught of His incomparable way of making known His faithful love to her with the assurance of what she is to Him. He calls her to have communion with Himself, and repeats His invite, “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

Fellowship with Jesus! Is it not joy unspeakable? The darkness has passed. “Arise,” He says, and

Faith, love, and joy begin to stir
And spread their odours high,

The Song of Songs.

when His voice is heard; for by His love He creates answering love. Fellowship here is but the prelude to the full joy that must follow; for as winter gives place to summer, and the groan and sigh are succeeded by the song, so shall partial joy give place to full bliss, and longing desire shall be superseded by complete satisfaction. Our souls can heed His invitation, and in the secret of His presence we can pour forth our sonnets of gratitude and offer that praise which glorifies.

But the heart hears more. His address of endearing importunate love continues pleading, as it were, for a sight of her countenance, and a word from her lips, so wondrous is Divine love. "O, My dove," He entreats, thinking of her as a bird, shy, gentle and unassuming, hid away in the covert of cliff and rock, "let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice," assigning as the reason for this request that her voice was sweet, her countenance comely. Yes, to *Him*; but immeasurably deep must the love be that gives expression to such an utterance. We could better understand such desires flowing from her heart; for without controversy *His voice is sweet, His countenance is comely*, radiant with loveliness. But more even than this shall yet be, for in the day of full assurance Jehovah will joy over her with singing, and will rest in His love (Zeph. iii.) Dear saint of God, not less is His love towards us now; and already conscious of it—the death of Christ, the great convincing proof—let us store our minds with His heart-breathings, that in the time of coldness and declension our souls may be responsive and true.

The coveting of undisturbed communion is but the natural desire, surely, of the heart that has heard such strains. But many are the hindrances that arise and check it. The Spouse does covet, and utters either as a prayer or a

command that the little foxes that spoil the vines might be taken away. The words, though spoken in a general way, imply a very particular desire. The little foxes, cunning and harmful, often devastated a vineyard; and how often have little sins, little failures, little faults, been productive of robbing souls of the continuance of communion? Take away, we pray, every wayward thought, every worldly wish, every dangerous error, every untrue doctrine that looks so broad and progressive, for these things hinder and destroy fruitfulness. Numerous are the little foxes; and remembering that the grapes are tender, let us join the Spouse and ardently desire their removal. The fruits of grace and displays of worldliness do not flourish together. Far from us, then, may all that tends to rob us of the priceless boon of communion be put away.

Now, in an ecstasy of delight she gives expression to that precious, that cheering word which has been reiterated by thousands of adoring hearts, "*My beloved is mine, and I am His.*" More is to follow, but she has learnt, as it were, her first lesson. She will yet learn that it is her high privilege to reverse those words, and dwell upon the fact that *she* is fully His for ever. Here we have the foundation of her peace and the source of her joy. Upon this foundation shall be erected an abiding edifice, and from this source shall flow a stream of unalloyed joy.

Nor is it a small thing she claims, though true. And the soul that by faith has appropriated Christ can also say so, and rejoice as it sings—

“Fade, fade each earthly joy,
Jesus is mine.”

“Christ in you the hope of glory” is the present portion of the believer; and do we not know from experience that our spiritual temperature is low because our apprehension

The Song of Songs.

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of Him is feeble. Thoughts of self reign (little foxes these) where thoughts of Christ should be. "Abide in Me, and I in you" are our Lord's words, and truly "the Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian's delight when his heart is in its best state. Christ is, indeed, ours—our Saviour, and we are His—His ransomed, for He died to possess us.

"The gift unspeakable is given,
The grace of God has made Him mine;
And now, before both earth and heaven,
Lord I will own that I am Thine."

The voice of her Beloved she had heard. Anticipatively she had seen Him coming, skipping upon the hills. His gracious invite reached her heart. Responsively her heart expresses the fact that the Beloved was hers, and she His, adding, "He feedeth among the lilies."

So she sees, and yearningly her heart desires Him to be actually present, and that earnest petition is breathed which tells of a blessed prospect and an early answer. The day would dawn, the shadows flee away, and at the first streak of twilight her Beloved would be there to welcome her. Over the mountains of division (Bether) she asks Him to come with the speed of a roe. The morning cometh, and deepening shadows remind of this, so look up. Many a hill seems oftentimes to be betwixt us and Christ, yet over them all He bounds to meet the yearnings of the heart, and to satisfy with His good things.

But during the night, the season when the heart is educated in the ethics of His love, it is no uncommon experience to find a time of rest and bliss and satisfaction, when the heart rejoices in the conscious nearness of Christ, succeeded by depression and a deep sense of loss. And so with the Spouse. "By night on my bed I sought Him

whom my soul loveth." The love remained; the joy had fled. There was no distance as to union with her King. She retained the sense of what He was to her, but had lost what is so inconceivably precious—the abiding perception of His nearness. A kind of sloth often seems to overtake the heart that has been richly endowed with blessing. Many, very many of God's saints have been similarly afflicted.

But the loss is felt, and what a mercy that it is. To find Him whom she sought, practical energy combines with active love. Consequently she arises from off her bed and puts her resolve to "rise now and go about the city" into action. "I sought Him, but I found Him not," is her mournful refrain at first; for this treasure is more easily lost than recovered—lost through sloth, recovered through diligence. And it is well; for we more zealously guard what has cost some pains to obtain. She loved, but lost. She loved and sought. She loved, and sought, and found; for diligence shall be rewarded.

In the city, found by the watchmen, those appointed to care for its order and government, she enquires of them, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" Of their answer we have no intimation, and passing from them her ardent longing is quieted. It may be that the broadways and streets were not the places to find Him. Soon the Object of her quest is discovered. Oh, delighted heart! "I found *Him* whom my soul loveth," and retaining Him, she brings Him into her mother's house—which mother is Israel—and there into the most secret chamber—her mother's chamber; for nothing but Christ consciously and fully enjoyed, we repeat, will satisfy the cravings of a heart set upon Him.

For we must notice that it is not knowledge of Him she seeks; it is Himself she requires. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord sets the soul afire, and

Acceptable Service.

17

then the energies are bent on winning Him who is already possessed.

Shall we grow cold and indifferent because assured of His love, and slothfully rest in that? Jesus is the One whom our souls love. Let us aim at continuing in His love, for "the love of Jesus is another name for heaven." Nothing must displace Him in our hearts. He is the Object for our hearts, the Object of our hope, and our all in all.

And once again, at the close of this little song, the Spouse utters her charge, "O, ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes or by the hinds of the field, stir not up nor awake love until He please." And until the day dawn may our fervent desire be that nought occurs to break or mar our enjoyment of Christ, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

H. F.

ACCEPTABLE SERVICE.

THERE is no waste in the services of the heart or the hand that worships God, be they as prodigal as they may. "All things come of Thee," says David to the Lord, "and of Thine own have we given Thee."

The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and the fulness of the earth. But Pharoah treated Israel's proposal to worship God as idleness, and the disciples challenge the spending of three hundred pence on the body of Jesus as waste. But to give the Lord His own, the honour or the sacrifice, the love of the heart, the labour of the hands, or the substance of the house is neither idleness nor waste. It is chief work to render to God.

But here I would linger for a moment or two.

Renouncing Egypt is not idleness, nor is the breaking of a box of ointment on the head of Jesus waste ; though we thus see that a certain kind of reckoning among the children of men, and even at times (and that too frequent) among the saints of God, would charge these things as such. Advantages in life are surrendered, opportunities of worldly promise are not used, because the heart has understood the path of companionship with a rejected Lord.

But this is "idleness" and "waste" many will say : the advantages might have been retained by the possessor, or the opportunities might have been sought and reached, and then used for the Lord. But such persons know not. Station, and the human earthly influence that attaches to it, is commended by them, and treated almost as "a gift to be used for profit, and edification and blessing." But a rejected Christ, a Christ cast out by men, if known spiritually by the soul, would teach another lesson.

This station in life, these worldly advantages, these opportunities so commended, are the very Egypt which Moses renounced. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The treasures of Egypt were not rich in his esteem, because he could not use them for the Lord. And he went outside of them, and the Lord met him there, and used him afterwards, not to accredit Egypt and its treasures, but to deliver His people out of it.

All this renunciation, however, must be made in the understanding and faith of a rejected Lord ; it will otherwise want all its fine and genuine and proper character. If it be made on a mere religious principle, as that of working out a righteousness or a title for ourselves, it may well be said to be something worse than idleness or waste. It then betrays an advantage which Satan has got over us, rather

than any advantage we have got over the world. But if it be indeed made in the faith and love of a rejected Master, and in the sense and intelligence of His relation to this present evil world, it is worship.

To serve man at the expense of God's truth and principles is not Christianity, though persons who do so will be called "benefactors." Christianity considers the glory of God, as well as the blessing of man; but as far as we lose sight of this, so far shall we be tempted to call many things waste and idleness which are really holy, intelligent, consistent, and devoted service to Jesus. Indeed, it is so. The Lord's vindication of the woman who poured her treasure on the head of Jesus tells me so (Matt. xxvi.). We are to own God's glory in what we do, though man may refuse to sanction what does not advance the good order of the world, or provide for the good of our neighbour. But Jesus would know God's claims in this self-seeking world, while He recognised (very surely, as we may know) His neighbour's claim upon Himself.—*From Moral Glory.*

"FRET NOT THYSELF."

"Fret not thyself," though evil works do thrive;
 Be still and wait, thy God is over all.
 All may *seem* going wrong, but trust and work,
 "Do good," trust God, nor for thine own way strive.
 Delight in Him, He will thine interests guard;
 He hears thy cry, He knows thy heart's desire;
 Roll all thy way on Him, cease thine own plans,
 Then He will work. Is aught for Him too hard?
 "Fret not thyself," it tendeth but to ill,
 Thy planning never yet wrought good for thee;
 And thinkest thou His purpose will not stand?
 Without thy fretting He'll His word fulfil.

Be silent before Him, rest in His love,
Wait patiently for Him, 'tis not in vain ;
It may seem long to thy impatient soul,
But soon His love and wisdom thou shalt prove.

His way is perfect wisdom, perfect love,
He waiteth but to bless, and thou shalt yet,
E'en here, give thanks for all that seems most wrong,
And praise for ever in the courts above.

R.

OUR GOD.

Our God is God to-day, and hence we need not fear ;
The journey may be rough, but He is ever near ;
His watchful eye sees all, His love is firm and true,
Let tempest rage, He says, " I will take care of you."

" I will take care of you, for I am God to-day
My child, then do not fear, for I know all the way ;
Be still, trust Me, and wait, I never go to sleep ;
Omnipotent I am, so I can safely keep."

" Yes, I am God to-day, I ever am the same,
And Father, call Me now, say, Hallowed be Thy Name ;
Care you for Me, dear one, I always care for you ;
Rest in My love, lie still, none can My will undo."

Yes, God is God to-day, just as He was of old ;
His wisdom, goodness, grace—not half to us is told ;
We'll sing, we'll shout, and say, " Praise Him, praise
Him, adore ;
For God is ours to-day, and shall be evermore."

E. R. W.

THE DAY OF PRESENTATION.

Col. i. 22.

How God delights, may we not reverently say, to tell His people of the future. The description of the land of Canaan given to Israel in the wilderness (Exod. xxxiii. 3), a land "flowing with milk and honey," evidenced this. That the description of it which none of the people, not even Moses had seen, was indeed true, the twelve spies declared on their return from its inspection. The future too of the nation, as finally to be blessed by God, the prophets one after another have predicted. We read their glowing descriptions, which yet await accomplishment. But all will come to pass as has been foretold, for not one word of God will fall to the ground till all is fulfilled.

The future then of blessing for His people is ever before the mind of God, as if present to the eye, so the Holy Spirit, who knows the things of God (1 Cor. ii. 12), reveals at the right moment, and in the right way, all that is suited for them to know. We, indeed, travel along a road previously untrodden by our feet. We cannot always foresee what may befall us on the morrow, and as to our future beyond earth—who of men, if left to their own imaginations, could accurately divine? The wild Indian can conceive nothing better than a continuation there in those pursuits with which in this life he is familiar. The Mahometan pictures to himself a paradise, where his earthly pleasures will be continued without alloy. Man, apart from divine revelation, cannot rise in his thoughts beyond experiences of this life.

But that will not really satisfy an immortal soul. Certainty

as to its future it desires. Where shall we find that? Amid all the literature of ancient and modern times, if heaped together, there is just one book, and only one, which speaks with authority about it. That book is God's Book, which we call the Bible, *i.e. the Book*. It tells with certainty of the future.

It lifts the veil, as it were, which hides from us the other world, where all the unclothed, or disembodied, now are; and shows us how different is the present condition of the saints in that world from that of the lost of the human race. The two classes, found together whilst on earth, are there seen separated, and that for ever (Luke xvi.). Then that same Book lifts the veil, and shows us things in heaven; heavenly saints no longer unclothed, but in glorified bodies, and seated around the throne of God (Rev. iv., v.). Again it lifts the veil, and presents to us a scene to be witnessed also in the future, heaven opened, and a vast, but most orderly arranged company, coming forth from it. This time it is not some merely of heavenly saints, but all of them. Riding on white horses, and each one of them clothed in pure white linen, they are following a rider on a white horse, and together form His train, who then comes as King of kings and Lord of lords, to assert effectively the divine claims over earth, by dealing first in unsparing judgment with the apostate powers who will contest His right to absolute supremacy and universal dominion. But apart from these pictorial illustrations the same Book teaches us authoritatively by doctrinal statements of that which God in His counsels has purposed for all those who believe on His Son, redeemed as they are, and reconciled through His great grace.

A few words on the distinction between redemption and reconciliation may here not be out of place. Redemption

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implies a change of condition. Reconciliation involves a change of feeling. A slave could be redeemed, an enemy could be reconciled. Redemption for saints now includes forgiveness of sins (Ephes. i. 7; Col. i. 14), and justification likewise (Rom. iii. 24), and it is effected by the blood of Christ. Formerly unpardoned, their condition is changed. They are pardoned. And they are reckoned righteous, who before were not so. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is effected through death—the death of God's Son (Rom. v. 10; Col. i. 21, 22). The wonderful story of divine love in the gift of God's Son to die for us removes the enmity of the heart and draws it to God and to the Lord Jesus. Redemption by blood meets the need of the guilty one. Reconciliation by the death of God's Son removes the enmity of the sinner. Both these are wanted, and by God both are provided. What should we have done had not He worked in grace.

And whilst these blessings are things for the present, now to be known by the individual, we have a revelation also as to the future: for our God will not rest satisfied till all that He wills for His saints shall be brought about. They shall be presented before Him holy, unblameable, and un-reproveable (Col. i. 22). Who could ever have surmised this for any born in sin? What book, but the Bible, has ever suggested such blessings for any of the human race? And to whom was this written? and of whom was it written, holding out such an expectation, and revealing likewise how any could make sure of it? It was written to those who were formerly idolaters, Gentiles too, and uncircumcised as to their flesh. And as to their minds alienated, and enemies by wicked works.

In that company, all converted, and addressed as the saints and faithful in Christ in Colosse, some were free

men and masters, owning, too, slaves; others were slaves, and subject as such, some of them at least, to heathen masters. For Christianity, whilst recognising social conditions, in no way interfered with them. So Philemon, who lived at Colosse, was to receive back Onesimus his slave, the Apostle Paul leaving to him to set free Onesimus, as an act of grace on his part, for surely the aged prisoner for Christ counted on that (Phil. 16, 20, 21).

Of these slaves, their very bodies were viewed as the property of their masters, chattels indeed in the eyes of men, but saints of God, children of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, members, too, of His Body, fruit of the travail of His soul, and on whose behalf He had died. What a list of privileges could they enumerate all belonging to them, but to all of which their masters, if heathen, were utter strangers. Slaves of men, with no prospect, perchance, of any amelioration of their lot on this side the grave, what a cheer such a future as is sketched out, must have been, a light indeed in the gloom of their earthly existence. The day of their presentation before God would dawn, when, as holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable they would stand in His presence. The frown of his earthly master, or some sharp rebuke, not to say a cuff or some worse illtreatment, hard indeed to bear when conscious of its being undeserved, would all seem lighter and easier to be endured, as he remembered the future before him, that presentation day, when he would as a child and son of God appear before the Most High.

But not only slaves, but others could find those words fraught with rich consolation. Any individual saint of God, remembering his past life and ways, and bowed down by the sense of his utter unworthiness, what a lifting up it would be, and shall we not say *can* he enjoy, when grasping the assurance that one so vile as he has been, can look forward

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to being presented before God *holy*, which certainly he was not, and unblameable, *i.e.* without blemish, the precious blood of Christ cleansing him from all sin (1 John i. 7).

To take another example. Suppose a saint troubled with a morbid conscience, dwelling on failures since his conversion, and fearing, therefore, at times, as to his future, what relief may he find in that one word *unreproveable*. Writing bitter things against himself, he can learn from that word in what light he will appear by and by—appear, we say, and that not before his fellows on earth, but before the whole Court of heaven, when the day of presentation shall come, and all Christians be openly in the presence of their God.

To the Colossians was this in its fulness made known. Writing to the Ephesians (i. 4) he tells them of their calling, viz., to be holy and without blame, or blemish, before God in love. Addressing the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 8) he expresses his conviction that they should be unreproveable (R.v.) in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. But addressing the Colossians, who had never seen his face “in the flesh” (Col. ii. 1), he combines what he had said to those of the other two assemblies, as he writes: “to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in His sight.” Interesting is this to us, who, like the Colossians, have never seen Paul’s face in the flesh. The Gospel had reached them through Epaphras, and was bearing fruit in them, hence the Apostle could speak of their future in the day of the Lord. The Gospel has reached us by other instruments, servants of Christ, and in whomsoever its real fruit is produced, what is predicated of the Colossians can be equally predicated of true saints in this day.

Let us mark the terms, “holy, and unblameable,” *i.e.*, without blemish. These are characteristic of the Lord Jesus. He is holy, and Peter writes of Him as a Lamb without

blemish and without spot (1 Peter i. 19). To be presented answering to what the Lord is, such is the expectation of real Christians. Would the enemy, as described in Zechariah iii., desire to be their adversary (R. v.) ready to recall past falls on their part? That one word "unreproveable" can assure all true believers that nothing will be allowed by God to call in question the justification of each one before him. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34).

But here a word comes in, a very needful word. Is all this unconditional, so that the believer may live as he likes? No. There is a condition, and that condition is revealed. So the Apostle proceeds: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven: whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. i. 23). Continuance in *the* faith is insisted upon, the keeping hold of the Christian revelation, connected with which is the hope of the Gospel, *i.e.*, everlasting life with completeness, and salvation and glory with Christ (Col. i. 5; Gal. v. 5; Thess. v. 8; Titus iii. 7; Heb. vi. 19; 1 Peter i. 3-5). The faith kept through grace, and the future set before us embraced as a hope, the saints can look forward to the day of presentation without fear, assured as to his future, and giving thanks about it now, as he will surely for ever, when presented holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in God's sight.

We do not forget whilst writing of this of another presentation, which concerns the *Church*. What Colossians treats of in i. 21, 22, concerns Christians as *saints*. These are presented to God. Christ will present the Church to Himself (Ephes. v. 27). But this last is outside our subject at this time, so we will conclude with the doxology in Jude

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24, 25: "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless, *i.e.* without blemish, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power before all time, and now and for ever." Amen (Jude 24, 25).

C. E. S.

GOD AND HIS SERVANT MOSES.

THINGS had assumed a dark and gloomy aspect for the children of Israel at the time that Ex. ii. begins with. In subjection to the Egyptians, their lives made bitter with hard service, and, made to serve with rigour, it looked as if God had forgotten them. No outward sign was there of any interference on His part. Pharaoh and the Egyptians had the upper hand, and a cruel use of their power they made. But God had foreseen it, and had revealed it to Abraham in Gen. xv. Thus there existed enough to sustain faith amidst it all; for He had said, "They shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (verses 13 and 14). Many long years had still to run ere this promise could be fulfilled.

"And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi." There was nothing unusual in that: a commonplace circumstance. Of the greatest importance to the pair in question, but surely not to the nation of Israel. To Israel's God it was of importance. That marriage was to bring upon the scene the

chosen deliverer of His people. Pharaoh may give orders for all male children to be killed, but God would instil the fear of Him into the hearts of those women who were to execute the dreadful deed, and thus it was that Moses was kept alive. That goodly child, born with those qualities, those characteristics, which would best suit for the work to which God would eventually call him, had been formed in the womb by Him. God was ahead of the parents, and knew what they did not. He watched over that little babe when a mother's fond love could not avail to save him, and ordered the footsteps of Pharaoh's daughter to the river's brink at the critical moment; for there, in an ark of bulrushes, lay that little helpless infant. The child wept—a very usual thing—but the child wept at the right moment. God was in that cry. The tender feelings of a woman's heart were wrought on. God was in that too. How perfectly He controls all to accomplish His purposes! The mother becomes the nurse, and her heart is comforted. God was in that likewise.

Adopted by the King's daughter and brought up as her son in the court of Pharaoh, he received an education suited to his position. God was in that also. He needed no college training after God called him; for all his environment and upbringing had been ordered by God ere Moses knew to whom he owed so much. God was first. He wanted a servant. He formed him, and in due time wrought in his soul, quickening by His Spirit, and thus Moses was born anew. This is amply proved by that fact disclosed to us in Heb. xi. 24: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the

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treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." A fine instance of faith was this, for the providence of God had put into his possession the treasures of Egypt—just those things men naturally love to have; but faith in God led Moses to refuse them all. Do we think of what he gave up and wonder at his folly? Moses thought of his *gains*. "*Greater riches* than the treasures of Egypt" he went in for. The unseen was present to his gaze, and the visible waned from his vision. Happy Moses!

Having espoused the cause of his suffering brethren, and seeing one day an Egyptian smiting one of them, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. On the next day he sees two Hebrews striving together, and he reproved the one who was in the wrong, but was met with the question, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday" (chap. i. 14). The thing, then, was known, and Pharaoh, when he heard it, sought to slay Moses, who, filled with fear, fled to the land of Midian, and remained away for forty years. Of what avail was all his learning there? His occupation was that of a shepherd. It looked as if the sacrifice that he had made was in vain. His well-meant effort for his brethren's deliverance had failed, and even they had rejected his intervention; for Stephen, in Acts vii., says: "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." His life threatened by Egypt's king, his brethren ignorant and rejecting his well-meant efforts, he himself in exile, he had met with a kindly welcome from the prince or priest of Midian, who had given him Zipporah, his daughter, to wife, and an occupation feeding sheep. A husband and then a father!

Why not forget the past? If he did so, who could blame him? But God did not forget. Was Moses wrong when he thought that God, by his hand, would deliver the children of Israel? It had seemed so, but it was not. His earnest efforts were doomed to fail, not because they were bad, nor from want of love to the people either. His heart was right, but he was too soon, too eager to be up and doing—much zeal, but little knowledge, at least of what God's mind was just then. The time God had spoken of to Abraham had not run its course, nor had God spoken to him and told him what to do.

What time for meditation was his during his exile from Egypt? Wasted time it seemed. Ah! how little do we know the ways of our God. A great future was in store for Moses, but God must be the Caller, the Guide, and Director. Will Moses be ready when God's time comes? We shall see. "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Ex. iii.). The bush may be a figure of the children of Israel, and

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the fire may speak of the trial they were passing through in Egypt; but the bush was not consumed, nor could the Israelites be consumed either. God was there, and He calls to Moses; but Moses must tread the divine presence with unshod feet. He becomes afraid; he could not look upon God. Moses must learn; and his first lesson is that he is not fitted to be in God's presence.

“And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey: unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” This is, as far as we know, the first time that God had appeared to Moses, and no such communication had ever been received by any man before. Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had each received revelations from God suited to their need; but that addressed to Moses reveals a depth of interest—may we not say a tender, compassionate interest—never made manifest before. “I have seen; I have heard; and I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them.”

The Almighty God could have dispensed with human instrumentality if He had chosen to do so. One word from Him would have shattered all the power and pride of Egypt, but He did not do so. He would in grace deign to

use a man, and that man was Moses. Was he ready? Forty years before he was so, but not now. "And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Was it deep humility, or had his interest in his brethren seriously declined, or had his spirit become soured by the rejection he had experienced? Who can tell? But this at least is clear: he was not ready, and hence if God will use Moses He has first to deal with his state of heart and mind. "And He said, Certainly I will be with thee." Surely this is enough? But, no! the servant's difficulties are not removed; for Moses said unto God, "Behold when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?" How could Moses tell what they would say? "Certainly I will be with thee" would ensure success. How the hesitation of Moses serves to bring out the patient goodness of God, and his want of heart serves to disclose the loving interest and the settled purpose to deliver the children of Israel.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM, THAT I AM; and He said: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (v. 14). What a revelation was that! But what was this self-existent One, the I AM, to Moses and to the people to whom he is sent? The next verse will tell us. "And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." Then in verse 18 we have the emphatic announcement, "*And*

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they shall hearken to thy voice." Moses had received his call, and had been definitely instructed for his mission, and God had pledged Himself to be with him. He had been privileged to learn the deep interest that God was taking in the children of Israel. His name had been revealed, and lastly success was guaranteed. "They shall hearken to thy voice." Moreover, God would break the power of Egypt, and they should spoil the Egyptians. Surely Moses is ready now? But, no. He speaks; and what for? To flatly deny the truth of what God had said. "And Moses answered and said, But behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (iv. 1).

Is it not humiliating to read of so much hesitation and evident unwillingness on the part of Moses, and he a true man and to be highly honoured by the Almighty God. What is man? we may well say, and hide our heads for shame. But what is God? Do we not marvel at His patience, at His condescension, at His painstaking goodness? Little room is there for any servant to boast in anything he may have done; for God has to find and make ready His servant, and to bear with all sorts of failure and unbelief. How good He is! "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." Then in verse 6: "And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous as snow. And He said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he

put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom; and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land."

What has Moses gained by his unbelief—"But behold they will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice"? The power to work three miraculous signs to convince the children of Israel. And now he will require them. He has added to his labour. Is it not getting manifest that the objections raised had a double motive behind them, and that the larger of the two was, *I do not want to go*? How often in our day are all sorts of difficulties raised and endless arguments used to show the impossibility of doing what God has enjoined in His Word. Could we look to the bottom of it, we should see only an endeavour to cover the lack of unreserved submission to the divine will. The more difficult the duty, the more the true subject to God ardently desires to be obedient and faithful. Moses had gained power, and flesh likes that. Who would have thought that he owed its possession to unbelief on his part, but to patient goodness on God's? Do not let us be occupied with outward signs of divine approval. Our business is not success nor numbers, but simply to obey. Something to see for ourselves, something to show to others, is desired; and failing that, we must give up or be less particular. And whose rights are relinquished? Whose interests suffers? God's and Christ's. But who must suffer in the long run?

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We shall, for God can and will accomplish His purposes, but we shall lose greatly. Ah! what will the judgment seat of Christ reveal. May we ever keep in mind that we shall be manifested there.

The origin of all may be traced to two things; for behind the unwillingness of Moses and of Israel's misery there was the work of the serpent and the evil of sin; but God could overthrow the former and cleanse from the latter. And this is foreshadowed in the rod becoming a serpent, and then laid hold of, again becoming a rod; and the hand of Moses taken out of his bosom covered with leprosy, and then again made quite clean. In verse 10 Moses again speaks, and he says, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?" What was this but as good as saying, I know better what is needed for this work than you do. It was sitting in judgment upon God, and it was so regarded by God, as His reply shows. God had borne with much, but this He would not allow. In the imperative He speaks, "Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send" (If I must go I must, but I would not go if I could avoid it). Hence we read, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses: and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold he cometh forth to meet thee, and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart."

We have well-nigh reached the end of Moses's difficulties, but not the end of God's patient and considerate goodness.

“And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace” (v. 18). May we not conclude that God had disposed the heart of Jethro to look with favour upon the sudden proposal of his son-in-law. He raised no objection at all. Go in peace, was all he had to say. But was there peace in the mind of Moses, or was there some latent fear that he was embarking upon an undertaking that might put his life in danger? He who knew all things could read the heart of His servant, and saw beneath the various objections raised a lingering dread of physical danger to himself; and most graciously He sought to remove it. “And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life” (v. 19). There was then no ground for fear as regards the past. Aaron, too, would meet him on the road, and God could tell to Moses the very feeling Aaron would experience in his heart when they met; and in v. 27 we read: “And the Lord said unto Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went and met him in the mount of God and kissed him.” Aaron obeyed; he raised no difficulties, but to him God disclosed nothing of what He was about to do.

God had forged a link between Himself and Moses, and Aaron must learn all from his brother. “And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.” And together they go. Moses has a companion in his work, a sort of human prop to lean on manward; and Aaron with a ready tongue has to learn from and to lean on Moses Godward. And here we must stop. All this painstaking goodness to produce one servant, and he has to pass away, and then

again another and another, and still God's work goes on; each servant different from all before him, fitting into the niche for which the Master has designed him, but not one good for anything until he has learned that all blessing comes from God—that God is all, and that the servant is a mere nothing, dependent, always dependent, yet greatly honoured by being called to work for and to do his Master's will. Conscious nearness to God will slay all our self-importance and ravish our souls with His goodness.

E. R. W.

NOTES AND PARAGRAPHS.

I.—CHRONIC SELF-OCCUPATION.

FROM God's first dealing with the soul till the last, *self* is the great snare. Occupation with our state, with our progress, with our experience, or with our service is the work of the enemy of our souls. Now there is one, and only *one*, cure for this spiritual complaint—so common to God's people, young and old. For either occasional or chronic self-occupation, CHRIST is the alone remedy. It is not a disease you can fight against or stamp out. All such cases are simply met. For the anxious one—CHRIST ON THE CROSS; for the saved one—CHRIST ON THE THRONE. Turn the mental gaze from self to Christ.

2.—WHAT CHRIST IS TO US.

Christ is a Substitute for our sins (1 Peter ii. 24); Christ is a High Priest for our infirmities (Heb. iv. 15); Christ is an Advocate for our failures (1 John ii. 1); Christ is a Food for our daily need (John vi.); Christ is a Light for all life's

darkness (John viii.); Christ is a Hope—for Him we wait (Phil. iii. 20).

Christ in life and death was our *yesterday*. Christ on the throne and at God's right hand is our *to-day*. Christ in the air, raising the sleeping and changing the living, is our *to-morrow*. "Jesus Christ the same *yesterday* (our past), and *to-day* (our present), and *for ever*" (our future). Thus Christ is essential to our very existence as Christians. He is the sum of our lives, the joy of our hearts, and the spring of our service. Heaven, with all its grandeur, would be a desolation without Jesus. He is its centre of interest, and its joy moreover (Rev. v.).

W. S.

(*To be continued.*)

TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN.

THE pall of darkness oft o'erspreads the soul,
The dirge then sung is unbelief's sad strain;
Depart ye doubts! dispel ye darkening clouds!
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

Christ's everlasting love's a refuge sure;
His worth and glory, the heart's sweet refrain;
His faithfulness abides for e'er secure—
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

Fears, doubts, distress, shall now oppress no more,
The Lord's beloved in safety shall remain,
Nor fear the worldling's frown, nor Satan's roar—
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

Poetry.

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By faith the heart doth rise in upward flight,
Yearning to see the face once marred with pain,
Desire intense to enter into light—
Yet still, to live is Christ, to die is gain.

No mists of earth shall dim that wondrous sight,
As, sons of light, we enter glory's reign,
The Morning Star behold in radiant might,
Lustred with love divine. Yes, this is gain.

As morning sun doth roll away the night,
So Christ shall soon remove creation's pain ;
He comes, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light :
Awake ! Await ! and yet to die is gain.

To live is Christ ! His throne we soon shall share,
Though trial's transient breeze sweeps o'er our way ;
To die is gain ! transcendent bliss and rare,
With Christ, no pain, but one long joyous day.

H. F.

“REMEMBER ME.”

“REMEMBER ME !” words with deep meaning fraught ;
His last request when gathered with “ His Own. ’
Bringing before our hearts that sad dark night
E'er He was nailed to the bitter Cross.
“Remember Me !” How could they e'er forget ?
His words, His ways, were graven on their hearts

Poetry.

In characters indelible and clear;
 Ah! well He knew the human heart, and mind,
 Of treachery and change so capable;
 So He a precious feast there institutes,
 Bidding them each partake of bread, and wine,
 Those fitting emblems of the sacrifice
 He was about to offer unto God
 To make atonement for His people's sin.

Forgetful of Himself, and that dread hour,
 So near in all its untold agony,
 He seeks to comfort those His followers,
 Unfolding precious truth to their sad hearts.
 That—"Often as they took in days to come
 Those blest memorials of His dying love,
 To do so in remembrance of Him,"
 Till He should come again to take them home
 To dwell with Him for evermore on high.

Time has not changed that living blessed Lord;
 Still is the promise true for all "His own"—
 "Where two or three are gathered in My name,
 There am I ever present in the midst;"
 Still pleads that loving Voice—"Remember Me,
 Who by the many am despised, forgot;
 I who from cruel suffering did not shrink,
 Gave up My life for those who loved Me not."
 We would "walk softly," Lord rememb'ring Thee,
 Seeking to follow in Thy lowly steps
 Until the need for all *remembrance* o'er,
 We see Thee in Thine unveiled loveliness.

A. S.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY LATE C. E. STUART, OF READING.

ROMANS vi. 17, takes in, of course every *responsible* one of Adam's race, and is brought to bear on saints. "Sold, under sin," I take it to be the result of the creature's will. "Dead in sin" is the fallen creature's condition from birth. He is born in that state. Man's will must be in exercise to become a slave to sin—but he is born dead. He must yield himself to it to obey it. He is by nature a child of wrath.

We are risen with Christ. Rom. viii. 11, is not called resurrection with Christ, nor resurrection even, though it involves it—but quickening, because it includes the change which will pass over those who do not die as well as those who have died—confounds the condition of the soul, death and life, with discipleship which should be made good in daily walk—the profession being proved to be real.

——'s great mistake is, it appears to me, the teaching what was absolutely true, as if it had been dispensationally true. Eternal life, and life in the Son for saints, are true really for all time, but dispensationally you could not affirm them of saints before the Cross. There are statements in his writings with which I do not agree, but that is the case with us all, and one must leave a latitude, within limits, for differences of that kind. It appears to me that on some

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points he gets clearer as he goes on. We are all learners, or should be certainly.

There are more with us than with them (2 Kings vi. 16). It is the trying of our faith which is going on, more precious than that of gold, which perisheth, though it be tried with fire. If that stands the test it will be to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter i. 6, 7). May the Lord keep us and encourage us likewise. What a storehouse of comfort the Word is at such a time, when we find ourselves, as it were, in the company of God's saints in different ages in the past, and know how He delivered them (2 Tim. iii. 10). It is the sifting time, to see who has learnt really what he professes to have, and who can stand.

I see no difficulty in Rom. vii. 14. Rom. vi. 16, tells us how we become a slave to sin; vii. 14, speaks of the fact, which the man, there described, discovered, but says nothing of how he came into that state. One must give both verses their place. The former tells us a fact, that the one described was sold under sin. The latter suggests how that came about, and is in harmony with vii. 15. Had one denied that a person needed freedom from the dominion of sin I could understand an objection being raised to my teaching, but having taught that pretty plainly I do not see what bad doctrine can be laid to my account on that score.

As to *slave to sin*, I pointed out in my long letter to —, that it is a consequence of what man is, not a *primary* condition. A man becomes a slave to it by yielding (Rom. vi. 16). Man's will must be in exercise to become a slave to sin, but he is born dead. He must yield himself to it to obey it. One is not then by nature a bond slave to sin, though by nature one is a child of wrath, and has that

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within which if yielded to, makes one become a bond slave. It was just with —— and ——, I conclude, a desire to find fault somewhere, that made them start that have, but it is a stuffed one, not a live one. How often did —— teach what were the two conditions in which the sinner is found. How little have these people really profited by what he taught.

John xix. 34, was the *proof* that from Him when dead, what met our need—propitiation and life—could flow forth. Therefore He is a divine person. But that was not the life given up. He *gave* it up. But the *soldier* pierced His side.

I believe that Leviticus xvi. 24, speaks of the high priest's *ordinary* pontifical garments, not those of glory and beauty, nor the linen garments.

Offering was the act of the offerer.

Offering up was putting the victim on the altar when dead. That was priestly work.

He entered in *once for all*—having found *once for all* is the point. He found eternal redemption by the one entrance, so did not go in again.

Discipline is binding on all as being, to speak correctly, members of one *assembly*, for it is the assembly, not the body as such, which then acts. This is manifest, since the *Body* could not put away from its midst (1 Cor. v. 21). The authority to act at all in binding or loosing, is Matt. xviii. 18, a word addressed to the whole company of disciples and not to a local assembly. “Whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.” Why the assembly is capable thus to act, Matt. xviii. 20, tells us. But it is the assembly as a whole which is there viewed I take it as thus acting, as it is the disciples as a whole which are viewed as

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receiving (John xx.), though the local assembly in each case is that which initiates the matter.

Christ speaks for Philadelphia. Laodicea speaks for itself. May the first be what we covet.

The twenty-four elders, I believe, can *only* comprise Old Testament saints and Christians, for Rev. xx. 4, tells us of the three classes of heavenly saints, the two last classes being marked as distinct from the elders, as J. N. D. and the Revised Version show. This settles that question beyond controversy.

Psalm xlv. 8, refers to the King.

“*Whereby* they have made thee glad” is a translation which now I think would generally be discarded.

The Revised Version reads:—“Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad (or delighted thee).”

Some would translate:—“Out of the ivory palaces of Armenia have they delighted thee,” referring to the spices. The question is what does the word translated in A.V. strictly mean? Either *stringed instruments*, or Armenia.

——’s paper has things in it which will not stand examination. His quotation from Heb. v. is misleading. He stops short of the real point, apparently not understanding the argument, that the One who said “Thou art My son,” says also, “Thou art a priest for ever.” Priesthood in incarnation before death will not do. Consecration required death. Though it is a man who is Priest: God declared Him Priest. Christ took not that honour on Himself. When was He declared Priest? In Psalm cx. Then the application of John xvii. to priesthood

is all wrong. The priest has to do with *God*. In John xvii. it is the Son with the *Father*. John xii. 32, speaks of the Lord's death and its future result. As regards earth, He will draw all men unto Himself.

THE PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES.

Deut. xviii. 15—19.

“FOR had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me” (Jno. v. 46). Such is the declaration of the Son of God in His controversy with the Jews after healing the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. Words of authority are here from the highest source for accrediting Moses as a writer used of God to foreshadow the One who should come into the world, and to bear testimony to Jesus the Messiah, the One who, above all others, was to be *heard*.

And amongst the many allusions to Jesus in the writings of Moses, we have in the Scripture which heads this paper a very direct, solemn, searching, and yet withal a very precious reference to Him the great Prophet that should come. Jehovah spoke and gave the promise of what He would do—“I will raise them up a Prophet.”

On Mount Sinai in Horeb the law had been given. There the mighty thunderings and terrible lightning flashes told of the irresistible might and all-excelling glory and majesty belonging to the God of Israel. Such a display of awful grandeur created a quaking in the camp (Ex. xix. 16), and necessarily tended to bar approach to that Mount. Who could come near to such a holy Lord God? And so we are informed of the desire of the people: they wanted not to

hear *that* voice again—"Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." Death, they felt, would supervene if God were thus again to speak. Terror was aroused in their hearts by the voice of their God sounding forth from the midst of Sinai's thunderings and fire, the fit accompaniments of divine majesty. They were a people under law, responsible according to their own electing to fulfil all the commands of Jehovah: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. xix. 8), they had said. Ignorant of themselves they must have been. Ignorant of their God and little realising that His requirements must be according to the holiness of His nature, they had undertaken to obey.

Jehovah spoke, and the people desired to hear Him no more in that way. Would He listen to their request? He would, but would not keep silence, and graciously the promise is given of a Prophet like unto Moses, and in His mouth He would put His words, and would require if they received not His words. To raise up a Prophet—how gracious! for it told of immeasurable grace to them. To require His words of rejectors—how exceedingly solemn. The more august the messenger, the greater the responsibility incurred in refusing the message.

The decree had gone forth. Jehovah Himself would perform it: "I will raise them up a Prophet." Not an angelic being, but a man was to bring the words of Jehovah. "From among *their brethren, like unto thee* (Moses)," intimates this. And we have the testimony of Peter in Acts iii. that this was fulfilled in the raising up of Jesus, His Servant, when on that very eventful and interesting occasion in the Temple, after healing the lame man at the Gate Beautiful, the glad tidings were fearlessly

proclaimed by that servant. And that to which Peter referred was not to the resurrection of Jesus, but to His incarnation.

Jesus, then, was the Prophet raised up. Of that One it was stated: "*He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him,*" and in turning to the public ministry of our blessed Lord how often do we hear Him reiterating over and over again that He was the sent One (Jno. iv. 34; v. 30; vii. 28), and that He spake the words given Him (Jno. viii. 26-28). So pregnant and forceful were His words that many said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet" (vii. 40). His works also led to the same testimony; for on beholding His miracle they testified, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world" (Jno. vi.). Evidently they were quite cognisant with the prophetic utterance, even if the faith and expectation necessary to truly perceive who He was, and to truly receive His message were not present.

To those who receive Him there is unbounded grace, more overawing to the heart than Sinai's tremendous display of power and majesty, in the words of the Son of the Father as He says, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me" (Jno. xvii. 8). Such would ever bless the Father for the ability to recognise the gift of grace and love from Him in the Person of the Son, and for the apprehension of the deity of Christ and His voluntary surrender of glory—found here as the Virgin's Son—in knowing that *He came out from the Father*.

Divine estimates cannot be compared with human ones. The latter are misjudgments almost always, and fall short of the truth; whilst the former seem to exceed it. But perfect knowledge was with Jesus, and hence His words are

the declarations of an infallible authority. Very much depends upon the acceptance of His words. "I have given them Thy words, and they have received them." Such is the verdict of Jesus uttered in His Father's ear. Inexpressibly sweet it is to read divine estimations, and we record another which fell from the lips of the One who came speaking His Father's words, for it is as the very dropping of the honeycomb: "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." Thus is the Father's appreciation shown. No one but the Reader of hearts could have predicated this of the disciples. The Father's secrets were known to Him and Jesus declared them. "Unto Him ye shall hearken" declared Jehovah by Moses. We do well, then, to listen.

But as it is most blessed to listen and receive His words, so it is most perilous to refuse His message. Great is the responsibility of those who do so. Shall not an earthly monarch feel rightly offended when a message from him is despised and rejected, though delivered by the mouth of an ambassador only? And shall not the offence become thrice-obnoxious when the messenger is an only son? Assuredly, assuredly! and hence we understand how divine majesty is outraged when the words of Christ are deliberately trampled upon. Those sentences, "*And whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him,*" seem to glitter with divine vengeance, sounding the knell of fleshly boasts and pretensions, and pointing to death and judgment, just as the reception of His words, and in this the reception of the Sender, tell of grace and coming glory.

Terribly solemn is the position of the one who refuses to listen, and it is well to press this in a day when the words of that great Prophet are lightly heeded or altogether scorned.

And still weightier becomes the weighty words of Scripture when read in the light of this declaration. We will turn to just two.

In Hebrews i. we have one of the most glorious unfoldings that Holy writ contains of the Person of Christ, and therein it is conclusively shown and proved that He is both God and Man, and so as the latter necessarily and incomparably greater than angels. Angels were used in the dispensation of old; Christ is the very revelation of the invisible God, the full expression of His heart. In Him God has spoken. Now what follows from that? If One so august has spoken both by word and act, then obviously the only conclusion is—and this for the saints of God—that, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.” There is the danger of letting them slip. Constantly, then, must heart and conscience be challenged, and whatever would weaken the force of *His words* must be absolutely, unreservedly rejected. Serious consequences are involved, serious loss is entailed, when “the things which we have heard” are let slip or neglected, for we may grow indifferent. Play not with fire—it burns; touch not the reasoning evolved from infidel minds—it defiles; dwell much upon “the great salvation,” which was first spoken of by the Lord.

“*I will require it of him,*” is the intensely solemn avowal of Jehovah, and with this before the soul, how the words of Christ in John xii. 46-50, must burn into the very conscience.

Christ spoke for God, or as we have it in another portion, God was in Christ; and this we are likewise taught here, as He says, “For I have not spoken from Myself, but the Father which sent Me He gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak,” and with joy indeed had the Son spoken the command of the Father,

knowing it to be life everlasting. But grace and mercy refused eventually ends in unquenchable fire. Christ was come a Saviour into the world, and in His unutterable love He forbears not to point out that the rejection of Himself and His message would be required, and the tidings spurned now would rise in the last day in judgment against the rejectors : “ The words that I have spoken the same shall judge Him in the last day.” Alas ! how the depravity of man is incontrovertibly proved by the fact that he refuses the words of eternal life ; and the sorrow, the agony of it all is increased when it is remembered that the very command given in love and mercy, but in hardness of unbelief refused and spurned, will consign the rejectors to the lake of fire. Well may the yearning heart cry with all pathos, “ Why will ye die.” Ponder the solemn fact. Think of the despair beyond all imagining when that message is heard again at the last great tribunal, not then offering life, not in accents of grace speaking, but in tones of justice and judgment is heard clenching all the evidence, the closing witness, as it were, for the prosecution, pointing to the cup of guilt now overflowing. Truly God says of the rejector of Christ’s words, “ I will require it of him.”

The Prophet like unto Moses has been raised up, and all —saints and sinners, living and dead, will have to do with Him ; for He is the Giver of life, and the Executor of judgment (John v. 26, 27). Blessed are they, who through mercy infinite, have heard the Father’s message through Him, and may it be the portion of such to make much of Him, and to have Him exalted more and more in their affections.

It is becoming, or perhaps more truly, it is come to be fashionable whilst speaking of the unexampled beauty and greatness of the life of Christ, to make a show of learning by

professing unbelief in divine communications. May such be led to remember that no amount of assertion will silence the witness that shall rise against them in the form of the message which once rang through the recesses of their souls with a voice divine. Christ declared, "The word that I have spoken shall judge him in the last day," and Jehovah avowed, "I will require it."

H. F.

HEBREWS XI.

It is needful for us that we remember the word in Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (chap. iii. 16): "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," etc.

We need daily to be under the power of Scriptures which address us as to our responsibilities, as well as the portions which set forth the absoluteness of the grace of God in saving us from wrath through Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews in this light is of immense value to the child of God. It is a portion of the Word which speaks to us on our profession of Christ. This profession is assumed to be real until proved otherwise.

The Apostle does not isolate himself from the need of the exhortations found in his epistle, but places himself among those he is exhorting not to neglect the "great salvation" (chap. ii. 3). How serious if we neglect it! There is no escape from judgment and condemnation.

Again the word of exhortation sounds upon the ear, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (chap. iv. 11). Now, to "fall" in Hebrews is not the same as the Christian

being overcome by sin. It is giving up profession of Christ, which, alas! is not an uncommon case; and if God in His infinite mercy does not deliver it will end in perdition (chap. x. 39). This character of teaching, which is undeniably the bearing of many parts of the Epistle to the Hebrews and other portions of the Word of God, in no way trenches on the blessed assurance that the sheep have received eternal life, and that they will never perish. The firmer we are held by this blessed fact, the steadier we will pass on through the wilderness, and our ear will be (as a consequence of a growing sense of the need of the mercy of God to us) more open to the exhortation of the Word, and we will run with endurance the race set before us. We shall desire to *win*. Therefore we must *run*. We run with our title all clear and complete. Our title is the blood of Christ shed on the Cross when the Saviour laid down His life. God's estimate of it received by faith is how we are in the possession of "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Scriptures which present the fulness of grace to sinners on the one hand, and those which set forth the exercises and activities connected with our responsibilities as saints of God on the other, run side by side. We do not seem in the race when either are neglected. They do not contradict one another.

To maintain the need of watchfulness against danger on the way "lest we fail of the grace of God," is assuredly as much the teaching of the Word as those portions which speak of the fulness of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

The *sheep* possess eternal life—the *believer* is saved; but as many, many have gone side by side with us and then given up, and have been found and are to be found "in the

way of the ungodly," our safety that we do not also "for awhile believe" (Luke viii. 13) is in the daily keeping of God, who acts through faith in our souls (1 Peter i. 5).

Now, in this eleventh chapter we are presented by God with a lovely selection of the fruits of faith from His garden, placed together as He only could gather them from the lives of His saints. We have brought under our gaze and for our encouragement a numerous company who attest to us the power of faith.

In verse 3 the child of God is seen as having an immense advantage over the mere man of science. The Creator has told us that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Thus He by whom all things were created, and for whose pleasure they are and were created, has communicated to us in His written Word concerning His glory as the Creator and Maker of all things.

But into that scene which God pronounced "very good," sin has come. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." A breach took place between God and His creature man that instant, and faith only has the secret how that breach can be repaired. The Offended must work in a world of sin. He could not rest. He must work. Man sought to kill the Son of God because He worked on the Sabbath Day. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," is the blessed answer to all the cavilling of the transgressor.

In *Abel* we see the distance owned, which had come in by sin. In bringing the firstlings of his flock, he owns it is impossible by the labours of his hands to procure what would remove the cause of the distance. By faith he has learned what will remove it. He offers "a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and receives from God the testimony that he is righteous, God testifying of his gifts.

Here we have so far the same gospel in essence, which is witnessed now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, consequent upon the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God.

Enoch follows as setting forth the work of a believer. "Enoch walked with God," and again we read "Enoch walked with God three hundred years and begat sons and daughters." Who can make a "walk with God" true of any child for a day or an hour? God alone. Here is one of the same fallen race as ourselves, and we find God writing of him that "he walked with God three hundred years!" "The glory all belongs to God." It was in evil days he so walked—the last days of a dispensation over which judgment was hanging, on which judgment came, because of the corruption and violence which prevailed on every hand. Of himself we read, "he was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God."

What a testimony to receive from God! It may well exercise the heart. It is preserved to us for this purpose. God is acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He knows the motives of our conduct.

D. S.

(To be continued.)

NOTES AND PARAGRAPHS.

3.—GOD REIGNS.

Only grasp the fact that God is, that God reigns, and at once a moral revolution is effected in the soul. To be taken out of our littleness, to be lifted out of the world of our petty

Notes and Paragraphs.

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interests and transported into the greatness of God gives strength to the heart and buoyancy to the spirit. Amidst the babel of sounds the soul can be calm as the eye rests on the grandest sight in the universe—JEHOVAH ON THE THRONE. Amidst the din of ecclesiastical strife, wearing out the spirit, and driving one almost to hopeless despair, we turn to the fact that JEHOVAH REIGNS, then peace, perfect, unbroken peace is ours. The world, yea the universe, the governments, the Church, the falling autumn leaf, and each one of us—all, all are under the governing hand of God. His eye is of infinite range, His hand is one of infinite power, and He holds in His mighty grasp every atom of matter, while every being in heaven and earth has its history shaped and controlled by One who holds the reins and never vacates the throne. Take courage and be strong, therefore. The passions of men, like the tumultuous waves of the angry Galilean Sea, can be instantly stilled at the voice of divine command; only let God speak, and at once the wildest hurricane is hushed. Weak and trembling saint, "Fear not," God is for thee and with thee! Amidst increasing troubles and enemies you may safely lie down, for God will watch your slumbers. But be sure you walk with Him, and be equally sure to place all your interests in His hands, and remember that His love is equal to His power.

Are political troubles, and wars, and a growing social iniquity filling men's minds with fear? Well, be it so. We know the end of it all. Increasing evil in the Church and world is prophetically foretold. But as we see it rise and increase as the years and days roll on, we are immensely gladdened in the contemplation of the triumph of good, of righteousness, yea, of God Himself, and we almost hear the coming strains of victory sung in Heaven, "The kingdoms

of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). God is on the throne and rules; mount you, therefore, on the steps of that throne and fear is banished. Gather up your weaknesses and lay them on His throne, and build up yourself in the magnificent and consoling truth that God is supreme, that God reigns.

4.—THE WILDERNESS.

In Egypt we witness the *power* of God; in Judea we behold the *love* of God; while in the wilderness the *grace* of God is shown out. Shelter from Divine judgment by the blood of the Lamb (Exod. xii.) and redemption by the mighty arm of Jehovah (xiv.) were the assured blessings of the saved host ere they set foot in the unknown and untrodden wilderness. They entered on their pilgrim journeys after singing that magnificent song (Exod. xv.) in which was celebrated their past and future—grace and glory. If we speak of the scene of testing and trial as the *desert*, it is intimated that there are no natural resources—God was their one and only Resource. If we think of it as a *wilderness*, there is no path through it—God was their one and only Guide. God *was* in the midst of His people. God *is* in the midst of His people to-day. What an answer to every co-operate and personal need! God, too, is *for us*! What is difficulty in presence of infinite grace? What is feebleness in light of omnipotent power? What is sorrow in view of eternal love? Do not put your difficulties between you and God, but put God between you and all trial and difficulty.

5.—OUR PAST AND PRESENT CONTRASTED.

There are three characteristics of our former condition as unsaved: (1) We were in Adam, or of that race of which he is head, and thus exposed to all the dire consequences resulting from such a condition. (2) We were in the flesh,

which is both a weak and a sinful condition. Its weakness is witnessed in Rom. vii. in a quickened man, and its evil in Gal. v. in its native wickedness. Any in the flesh *now* cannot please God. Old Testament saints could and did please God, as Heb. xi. proves, but now that the truth of the nature has been revealed, and the power of the Spirit to repress the working of the old man has been unfolded, no one in this Dispensation can, if in the flesh, please God. When in the flesh our thoughts, our actions, our mode of being were governed by self and not by Christ. (3) Then the unseen power by which we moved and acted was Satanic—the spirit that now worketh in the children of unbelief (Eph. ii. 2). We could, in our former condition as unsaved, only do Satan's bidding. We were his slaves.

These three things, therefore, characterised our old state: our relation to Adam, and hence exposed to all the consequences of such a connection; our state of being—in the flesh, and thus self dominating the life; the power in which we were held and directed—the evil spirit in us.

Now all is changed; the contrast is complete. Our new relation is with Christ risen and glorified, and hence we share in His position as Head of a new spiritual race in which neither sex nor national distinctions are found (Gal. iii. 28). We are in Christ. In the Spirit defines our new condition—one in which we bear fruit to God. Then the power by which we are now directed and controlled is the Holy Ghost. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

6.—THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW.

Both terms are found in Col. iii. and Eph. iv. Two things are said of the old man. God has crucified it (Rom. vi. 6), and we have put it off (Eph. iv. 22). But what is the old man? It is not a person but a nature; "*our* old

man "clearly distinguishes the person from the nature. The old man is practically the old nature in each one of us, but viewed by Paul in Eph. and Col. in its outward expression and character, and hence what we have put off at conversion, as you throw aside an old worn-out garment. The old nature or man crucified signifies God's hatred to it. He has dealt with it judicially, but it is not dead, although we are, as being in Christ, dead to it.

The new man has been put on—that is the life and character of Jesus here on earth. He is the pattern of it. If we want to see a beautified exhibition of the new man, what it is in its perfection, we contemplate the life of Jesus, *that* is what we ought to be. The main characteristics of the new man are stated in Gal. v.: "But' the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." These traits of the new man are as much in request now as ever.

May God in the power of His Spirit enable each beloved Christian reader to put on Christ, *i.e.*, his moral character and ways.

W. S.

SLEEP.

"So He giveth His belovèd sleep ;"

Loosed is the silver chord,

The golden bowl is broken at His touch,

The spirit with the Lord.

"So He giveth His belovèd sleep ;"

He hath but called "His own"

Unto Himself. He gavè the precious gift

He now hath taken Home.

Poetry.

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“ So He giveth His belovèd sleep ; ”
Blessed be His name for aye,
He who so loveth us, makes no mistakes,
Right is indeed His way.

“ So He giveth His belovèd sleep ; ”
Sundered awhile below
To reunite within the Father's House,
Partings no more to know.

“ So He giveth His belovèd sleep ; ”
Dreamless, and sweet ; until
That Resurrection morning, when His voice
Shall His own word fulfil.

A. S.

COMFORTED OF GOD.

Choose for me Lord, my willing spirit cries,
But—shrinks the feeble flesh: the trembling heart
Surveys the choice with sorrowful surprise ;
Appalled it pleads, “ Father, is this my part ? ”
“ Father, not this ! ”

Dost thou refuse, who said'st “ Thy will be done,”
Who prayed to know His path who did My will
Always ? And when I only have begun
To show His painful steps—so faithless still ;
Thou say'st, “ Not this ! ”

His path on earth was ever paved with grief,
For sin was there. But tenderness and grace,
And love that longed to minister relief
Were His for all who sought that path to trace ;
Remember this.

And is the road I lead thee rough and dark ?

Then stay thyself on My almighty arm—

If stormy tempests toss thy fragile bark,

The hollow of My hand is safe from harm ;

Thou knowest this.

“I rule the raging of the mighty sea,

I count the numbers of the distant spheres,

Are counted, too, thy very hairs by Me,

I measure out My children's groans and tears ”—

I measure this.

My purpose is to bless. No alien power

Can thwart or hinder what My love has planned,

And they whose patience waits Me hour by hour

Shall learn how love as ever guides my hand—

Love guides in this.

It may be now the last half-hour of toil,

Wilt thou then faint just ere the field is won ?

After the conflict fail to take the spoil ?

Or, weary lay ere yet the race is won ?

Surely not this.

Then, Father, hold my hand. Firm ! Let me feel

Thy grasp of strength—and ever let me hear

Those words of love which aye in woe or weal

Sustain the heart and banish every fear—

So—I'll meet this.

And help me to go softly all my days,

No confidence in flesh or human strength—

And teach me still His meek and lowly ways,

Till in His likeness I awake at length,

And thank Thee then for this.

H. S.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Ch. iii. 6—iv. 4.)

CONTINUING our simple meditations we now enter, as it were, the sanctuary, the abode of love, the place of intimacy and communion ; for in this sweet canticle (ch. iii. 6—v. 1) we have an overflowing abundance of love's language, delight, and joy. We are first introduced to the glorious spectacle of the spouse emerging from out of the wilderness, suitably accompanied, carefully guarded ; and on the other side the King is seen crowned. In the day of the gladness of His heart love must exceed, and meeting, He declares that she is indeed in His eyes beautiful, and precious to Him.

“ *Who is this ?* ” is the exclamation. In the wilderness a procession appears. A palanquin is seen, surrounded with the marks of royalty and majesty. No king, however, is within it, for the word used is a feminine one ; but this is the King's provision for bringing His spouse safely across the barren sands of the wilderness. And as this gorgeous equipage wended its way along, the pillar of smoke that marked its course was redolent with the sweet savour of myrrh and frankincense, and every powdered perfume of the spice merchant—figures which are eloquent of all the virtues of death and life, whether in general or particular, of great David's Greater Son.

The King made provision for bringing His own unto Himself, and He would, of course, do this in a way worthy of the love He bore her. Consequently our attention is directed to the litter upon which she is borne, and emphasis is laid upon the fact that it is “ Solomon's own.” There are charges committed to His servants, they have their duties to fulfil, responsibilities to perform ; but there are things which

the King commits to no one, for His love is jealous, and He only could adequately provide for her home-coming, so to speak, according to the dictates of that affection.

Some have seen in this litter, or palanquin, the ceremonies of the law, whilst others perceive that thereby is meant the Gospel as the means employed to bring her to Himself. But we enquire not into these things now—they bear their own refutation. Fancy's flight leads to strange conclusions! Christ, in the excellency of His love, and here we are on safe ground, provides for the comfort and security of His earthly bride whilst she is being brought from the wilderness to stand by His side as queen arrayed in gold of Ophir (Ps. xlv). And surely every provision would strike home to her heart convincingly of the certainty of the love of the Beloved, as the magnificence of them would loudly proclaim to her heart that His delight in her was full indeed.

“Behold his litter, Solomon's own.” Forsaken had she been? No more should she be termed Forsaken, neither her land Desolate. And why? The answer is provided: “For the Lord delighteth in thee” (Isa. lxii. 4). His provisions accord entirely with that.

All dangers are anticipated, so not only is the couch provided, but the mighty of Israel are there: “Three score valiant men are about it, of the mighty of Israel.” Amalek may appear with his hosts, but routed they shall be. The desert robbers, ever alert to find some unprotected traveller, shall find no opportunity here. The mighty ones are *about* this litter; they surround it; no part is unguarded. And these valiant defenders are veterans, expert in war. How keen-sighted is love—perfected love! Not to the care of novices does He commit His dearest object. Experts in war are the guardians of the spouse. And they feel, and how rightly, their responsibility. They are watchful, for

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dangers are near: "Every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." A momentous charge was theirs! and so they are found always ready. One moment of unwatchfulness, a little of ease and indulgence, and much havoc might be wrought. "Because of fear in the night"—that is just the season of special difficulty. Dangers abound so fear increases, not the fear of cowardice, but that fear that causes the sword to be drawn ready for use.

We turn aside and see this great sight, and, for ourselves, ponder that love which beseechingly says, "Feed My lambs;" that love that raises up chief men and guides, men who hazard their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xv. 26); men who are expert in the use of the sword, and who, conscious of the hazardous nature of the way, hold it drawn, as it were, and are valiant for the truth, earnestly contending for the faith. Let us think of the love that provided the three score mighty men, and bless the Giver of gifts to His church for the edification of its members. Paul in bonds rejoiced that the Word of God was not bound (2 Tim. ii.); and would pray, though in bonds, for the power to speak boldly (Eph. vi. 20): for the truth of God is a priceless heritage. Sober and vigilant, then, must the servants of Christ be, that, holding fast the faithful Word, and being skilful in the use of it, they may both preserve others and be preserved (1 Tim. iv. 6). But we digress.

Next we have a glowing description of the glorious chariot, or palanquin, made by Solomon, He only knowing what would meet His requirements. He comes forth crowned, the true Prince of Peace, not lowly, but with glory and power, the true bridal day having nearly come. In the construction of this palanquin He uses the unrotting fragrant wood of Lebanon, silver for the pillars to hold up the canopy, gold for its base, purple for its seat, and the midst is

paved with love from (not for) the daughters of Jerusalem. This last we can well understand as we remember that when Jerusalem is happy then shall the land rejoice; for all shall be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, and be delighted with the brightness of her glory (Isa. lxvi.). So they have an interest, a deep abiding interest, in *the* King and His spouse. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem," says Isaiah, "and be glad with her all ye that love her" (lxvi. 10). "The upright love Thee," is the declaration of chapter i., and hence their heart's affections find expression towards both King and spouse, and fills the interior with the sweet incense of love.

Many thoughts cluster round this royal carriage, and we might speak of the fragrant wood, reminding us of the incorruptibility of Christ's humanity; of those pillars of silver suggesting that divine grace forms the props that uphold the canopy that shelters her; of that gold of which the floor is composed, foreshadowing that divine righteousness must be the base of all blessing; and of that seat of purple, a truly royal seat, yet the mind reverts to that blessed truth that security and rest are obtained by the blood-shedding of the Holy Victim, and that only on such a ground could she be found in association with Christ.

But in the midst of all, One forms the central figure and commands attention. The daughters of Zion received the word to go forth and behold King Solomon crowned. The day of His espousals, of victory and triumph, having come, Christ, the One here prefigured, issues forth to meet His queen. "*Behold King Solomon.*" The One once pierced, the One once rejected is to be hailed with delight, with glad "hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Already the heart has then given utterance to that confession, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He

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was bruised for our iniquity" (Isa. liii.). Grace will have wrought gloriously in the soul. "Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," and thus prepared for Him, the King comes to receive her unto Himself.

"Come see, believe, admire, adore,
Heaven-glad'ning homage pay."

So the King goes forth, and meeting His spouse, He, once again, in words of deepest meaning, words possessing transforming power, tells with delight of her worth to Him, such is the character of divine love. He contemplates her, and finds there an object suited to His heart, seeing what no one else could see; and then to mark His full admiration He describes minutely her features. True, she has much to learn of herself, but this is His inimitable way of teaching her.

"Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair," are His words of tender affection, words which uttered before (ch. i. 15) have now an added significance, for she knows Him better. It is not that she is yet seen arrayed in glory. That will assuredly follow (Isa. lxi. 10); and then, when openly the beauty of the Lord our God is upon her, shall it be that—

"Whole justified, in perfect dress,
Nor justice stern, nor fiery law
Can in thy robe of righteousness
Discern the smallest spot or flaw."

She was fair—He had made her so; and by His love operative in her heart, would yet produce further conformity to Himself. Oh! think of the mighty affection, the wealth of it, the power of it, that could speak to one who had been so unfaithful, going after many lovers (Jer. iii. 1); but drawn back with the cords of love she learns that she is precious in His sight. Wonders, indeed, love and grace can

work! In this way was the fairness produced. Her confession, "I am black," told of her condition by nature and practice apart from Him, but divine love perceives comeliness: for in that day no lie shall be in her mouth, she shall be blameless (Rev. xiv. 5).

"No artful curls, no pampered hair,
The sorry pride of mortal clay,
Can parallel the heavenly air
Of thy well-ordered walk and way."

Divine love is unchangeable, and so it is no uncommon experience amongst the saints of God to have these words of love pressed home upon the soul with irresistible might by the Spirit in times of depression and despondency. And what an uplifting is effected. Self-occupied the ear grows heavy and the heart wearies; for what can be found there to cause rejoicing? Conscious of what is all too true, sad failure and shortcoming, yet when the voice of Jesus is heard in accents, tender and soothing, "Behold thou art fair," we can but reply, "Thou sayst it Lord!" and the soul o'erleaps itself in praise. Injurious it may be to receive praise after this fashion from man, but when it is the verdict of His all-seeing eye, of the One who knows all things, the effect must be to rejoice the heart, enlighten the eyes, and yet humble to the very dust. And yet another result must follow, for His love must be the living source of all that flows to Him. And here we quote the heart-breathing, illustrative of this, of one who underwent much for her Lord:—

"And am I then to blame?
He's always in my sight;
And, having once inspired the flame,
He always keeps it bright.
For this they smite me and reprove—
Because I cannot cease to love."

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Yes, in His peerless way He keeps the flame bright, exercising the transforming power of His love. How prone are we with our "don't's" to try to reach and educate the heart, and miserably fail. By the positive knowledge of His delight in her the spouse is instructed. Despondent saint, listen for Christ's voice, and in words of love that hath a most vehement flame, you shall hear your Lord's verdict with repetition pronounced, "Behold thou art fair."

And after the general declaration He describes her minutely. From behind the veil that concealed her beauty her eyes shone out radiant with purity, constancy, and love. "Thine eyes are doves' within thy veil" He says, adding emphasis to words expressed before (chap. i. 15). Her abundant tresses are "as a flock of goats that eat of Mount Gilead." The Syrian goats are black with long hair, and Mount Gilead is "a wide tableland tossed about in wild confusion of undulating downs, clothed with rich grass throughout." Hence we read the figurative language as portraying the beauty and luxuriance of what is a woman's glory (1 Cor. xi. 15). She possessed it in full measure.

No mark of beauty escapes love's eye. Her teeth pass in review and are likened to a flock of shorn ewes coming up from the washing. Their whiteness, completeness, regularity, all making for perfect beauty, are conveyed by the terms used. Gratifying to her it must be to thus learn that everything about her appealed to the heart of the One who had chosen her.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech comely." Lips and speech are connected, and, as sanctified, are both beautiful and pleasant. Far otherwise was it when "the poison of asps" were under them. Comely speech is a production of grace, a fruit of redemption, and flows through those lips consecrated to His service. In the holy

jealousy of His immeasurable love He will yet ask her to speak to *Him* when others are having the privilege of listening to her (ch. viii. 13); for sweet to Him are the strains of comely speech.

Her temples are next spoken about, and compared to a piece of pomegranate, delicately-hued, the beauty and freshness of which is partially hid by her veil. Love pierces that obscurity and discerns the full perfection of what is only faintly adumbrated through it. To her, He addresses all this, not about her to others. The seemliness of her telling forth His glories to others it is easy to apprehend; but the love that so labours to acquaint the spouse with the full story of her beauty, forming full assurance within is beyond all knowing. It is the unknowable love of Christ.

And more follows. Love, desist! No, not yet, not until all is told. Avalanche-like, when once started it must go to the very bottom, gathering strength and momentum as it proceeds. Like a mountain torrent it gushes forth, and then rests in a placid lake as though satisfied, quieted. So He proceeds to make mention of her strength and her affection, the one under the figure of a tower, the other by reference to her breasts. The bowed-down neck is slavery and dejection; but though once chained in slavery, cringing and bowing in servitude to man, the tower-like neck now bespeaks liberty and emancipation. The many trophies hung round the tower of David told of mighty victories won, but that upright neck tells of triumphs accomplished by mercy and truth being bound about it (Prov. iii. 3). Spiritual victories are gained and spiritual liberty maintained in this way. The bucklers are shields—"all shields of mighty men"—for that with which we fight is also our defensive weapon. When walking, as freed by truth, such are a source of strength to others also; for strong is the one

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that is wrapped in truth—verily “a tower built for an armoury.” Such do mighty deeds, crucifying the flesh, casting away the attractions of the world, resisting the devil, bringing every thought into subjection to Christ.

(To be continued.)

AN OLD CRITIC AND HOW IT FARED WITH HIM.

WE will at once take the reader into our confidence and tell him the name of the critic we propose to enquire about. It was Job, and he probably lived between the times of Abraham and Moses. It was not the written Word that formed the subject of his criticism. Its authenticity on the one hand, or the correctness of its statements on the other, were not called in question by him. In truth the written Word was in his days non-existent. Very much had been handed down, which the book that bears his name clearly shows, and the amount of knowledge about the works of God was not small.

What then was the subject of criticism by Job? Nothing less than the righteousness of God in His moral government. He was provoked, without doubt, by the arguments of professed friends, who unjustly charged him with being wicked, and deemed his faith and trust in God but the boasting of a hypocrite. Hard, most hard, was this to bear. Still nothing could justify his arraignment of his Maker. There is this to be said by way of excuse for him, that never before had any God-fearing man had such terrible experiences as he had been called on to pass through. Bereft of all he possessed, save his wife, and this coming by no gradual process, but bursting upon him suddenly. Then his health was taken from him and he was afflicted with a loathsome

disease. Can we wonder that when he opened his lips he cursed his day? Job's friends, too, judging from their own experiences in the past, and by the traditions handed down by the ancients, failed to understand how all this could have come upon him unless he was wicked. That God was righteous they knew, and hence they concluded that there had been some actings on Job's part to call for all this from God. So they justified God's dealings with Job by assuming that he was wicked. In this they were in grievous error. Unfair and unjust to Job in order to justify God. Would God sanction that? Did He stand in need of such advocates? Certainly not. But Job, conscious of his uprightness and integrity (Jehovah Himself had declared that he was a perfect and upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil) could not and would not plead guilty to any wickedness of conduct, and hurled back the charges brought against him by his friends with a force and vigour that at length silenced them. Who could condemn him for this?

Well had it been for him if he had stopped at that. But, no. In his determination to maintain his cause he was betrayed into making statements which aspersed the character of God Himself. In chap. xxxii. we are introduced to a new speaker, Elihu by name (verse 2). His wrath was kindled against Job because he justified himself rather than God; and also against his three friends because they could not answer Job, but yet condemned him. In chap. xxxiii. 8, we read: "Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, He findeth occasions against me, He counteth me for His enemy." How far from the truth was this? Was it not a libel upon the character of

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God? Think of the blessed God counting one who feared Him an enemy and treating him as such. Modesty alone would have prevented such utterances. Job's statements were unjust in themselves and highly improper to be said by a feeble creature of the Divine Being. Elihu continues: "Behold in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against Him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters." Is the blessed God to be put on His trial and His judge to be Job? Must He needs give an account of all His matters to him? Not so. Righteous He is and must be; but who has wisdom enough to penetrate into all the secrets that He understands, and to inform Him as to what is wise, and good, and right. Must He in His acting only deal out judgment to those guilty of overt sins? Retributive dealing there often had been and must be, but Elihu tells us more: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from His purpose, and hide pride from man." God's dealings then are often preventive. The tendencies of each one are known to Him, and in mercy He sends trials, it may be to instruct, to prevent, to withdraw man from his purpose, and to hide pride from man. How much misunderstood then may God's dealings be.

God's graciousness is beautifully disclosed in verses 24-28, thus showing how false were Job's assertions. But further charges are made against him by Elihu in chapter xxxiv. 5. "For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment." What is this but saying that God was unrighteous. Deeper still Elihu goes; stronger still become his accusations (verse 7): "What man is like Job,

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who drinketh up scorning like water? which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men." What words for Job to listen to. Can the charges be made good? Were they literally true? We think not. How, then, are we to understand them? Verse 9 supplies the explanation: "For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God." Could a scorner say worse? Surely the workers of iniquity and wicked men would cheer such utterances. It was what their lives affirmed, and so Job's lips and their lives were found in accord, and Elihu's charge is morally true, indisputably so. And all the time Job was a saint of God, a child of God, but out of communion. To what depths of wickedness may we not descend, and into what fatal error may we not fall, when mere reasoning takes the place of faith.

Well does Elihu vindicate the character of God in verses 10-12, and asks pertinent questions in verse 18: "Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly. How much less to Him who regardeth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?" The suitable language for such as Job is indicated in verse 31: "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach Thou me;" and in verse 36, Elihu says: "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands amongst us, and multiplieth his words against God." Again Elihu addresses Job in chap. xxxv. 2: "Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?" Suppose Job a sinner, which he undoubtedly was, what injury could he inflict on the infinite God? Suppose, on the contrary, that Job was righteous, what gain would

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that prove to the Divine Being? How could a man injure the Almighty? Or, how could he enrich the One who owned the Universe? What could be given Him which was not His beforehand? That God has to give, and loves to give, is blessedly true, and it is ours to know and count on it. The question is asked in verse 10: "Where is God my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night; Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" Night is the time for rest, but God can make the heart so glad that singing takes the place of sleeping. It is also the time for weeping—all is still and dark, and the over-charged heart can give way unseen by human eyes to tears. Thank God He loves to give the "Oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He is a teacher, and 'tis men that He would instruct. 'Tis His to show to men "their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth them to depart from iniquity" (xxxvi. 9, 10). Further, "God exalteth by His power," and Elihu asks: "Who teacheth like Him?" Who, indeed? Job is invited to hearken, to stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God (xxxvii. 14). What did Job know of the balancing of the clouds (verse 16). We find disposings in verse 15; balancing, verse 16; quieting, verse 17; and spreading in verse 18; for surely the one who dared to criticise God's ways should be equal to such things. Knowledge and power he should possess if he would set up to teach his fellows the art of picking holes in the character of the Divine Being. In verse 23 we read: "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out: He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear Him: He respecteth not any that are wise of heart." Elihu has done. He came into

view all at once and vanishes as speedily from our gaze. Job is now silenced. There is this difference to be noted between him and the three older men. They condemned Job and wished to silence him. They only provoked him to justify himself, and, as we have seen, to impugn the righteousness of his Maker. Elihu, on the contrary, desired to justify Job, but was compelled to condemn him. He also invited him to speak if he had aught to say in his defence, and Elihu succeeded in silencing him.

There is a whirlwind, and out of it comes a voice. It is the voice of the Creator, who now condescends to speak direct to Job, and He takes the place of a questioner: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (xxxviii. 2). Out of his depth was Job, like all God's critics must needs be. He had talked a lot, had maintained his position with clever, and, to most, with unanswerable arguments, but no clear light had he thrown upon the problems he discoursed upon; all was misty, and cloudy, and darkened. Having sat in judgment upon God's ways he must now prove his competence for the work he has undertaken. He is requested to gird up his loins; for God would demand of him, and he must answer. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Where, indeed? In verse 12 another kind of question is asked: "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days?" Job could not answer questions about what God had done long before he was born. Then how much there was of which he was completely ignorant.

But what had he done since he came into the world? Nothing of any account. Question after question is asked, but there is no answer. Ignorance and incompetence are fully demonstrated. At last in chapter xl. 2, we find these words: "He that reproveth God, let him answer it." And

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what could Job say? "Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." I am vile! A true lesson learnt at last. But God has not done with him yet. In verse 7 we read: "Gird up thy loins like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me. Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?" To entitle himself to act as he had done He should at least be equal with God. "Hast thou an arm like God? and canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" What majesty, and excellency, and glory, and beauty did Job possess? Could he abase the proud? Could he look on such and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place? Could he hide them in the dust together and bind their faces in secret? No. No. Naught of this could Job do. Yet that was but a small part of what God could accomplish. There were creatures of God which Job could not command—all were under His control.

God ceases to speak in chapter xli., and again we hear the voice of Job (xlii. 1): "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, that I knew not." In chapter xl. he owned himself vile, but here he confesses himself a fool. On both grounds then he stands in need of God, and hence says: "Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak; I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Our critic has left

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the seat of judgment, and entered that of a self-condemned man—he has become a suppliant. To such the goodness of God can be shown. Job's detractors are condemned. Sacrifices they must bring and the intercessions of the man they had so unjustly dealt with secured to them deliverance from the judgment they deserved. Job has learned the need of grace for himself and can now show grace to them, and God comes in and crowns it all by blessing Job, giving him twice as much as he had before. No wonder the Apostle James writes: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (chap. v. 11).

He who knows the end from the beginning, knew what was in the heart of Job, undeveloped perhaps, but there; and He knew just what would bring it to the front. In outward conduct Job was irreproachable. Satan had considered him well, and had concluded that self-interest governed him—that he served God, but it was just because God was good to him and prospered him. Satan, questioned by God, says: "Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" (chap. i. 11). God allows Satan to put Job fully to the test, but not to touch him. He did all he could do, and Job stood the test; for we read: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (verse 22). He is still further tried in chap. ii. Satan had done his worst, and then his wife said unto him: "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speaketh as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job sinned not with his lips." Satan was wrong. He could not read Job's heart. God could, and He can make use of Satan (who can only act within the limit assigned to

him) to break down the flesh, to pave the way for deeper and richer blessing. Let us beware of the sin into which Job fell. May it be ours to accept whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, not only without complaint, but with heart delight in Him, certain of the truth of those well-known lines:—

“ He knows, He loves, He cares,
 Nothing this truth can dim;
 He gives His very best to those
 Who leave the choice to Him.”

Critics there are, both higher and lower. May the Lord have mercy upon them and teach them their folly and their sin as He did His servant Job.

E. R. W.

THE GIFTS FOR SERVICE TO THE CHURCH.

THE gifts are given by Christ the Head, for the blessing, according to His heart, of the members of His body (Eph. iv. 11-16).

The *Evangelist* is sent by Him into the world to seek out the sheep and bring them to God. The *Pastor* cares for them when they are brought to His flock—the flock of God. He shepherds them, feeds them and watches over them to shelter them from evil, which would injure their souls. The flock is God's (1 Peter v. 2), not man's. So we never read in Scripture of Paul's flock, or Peter's or John's. There is one *flock* and one Shepherd (John x. 16, R.V.).

The *Teacher* opens the Word to the believer that fruitfulness may result, and that the soul may increase by the knowledge of God (Coloss. i. 10).

It is service to Christ. It is Christ to speak after the manner of men who employs the servants. They have to

learn from their Lord and Master what He has fitted them for, and are called to perform, and how He wishes the work done. How beautiful to read in Mark iii. 14: "He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach." In chap. vi. 7, He sends them forth. The servant has to remember that he is a *servant*, not the Master. He acts in all this according to the knowledge He has of their ability (Matt. xxv. 15).

Be it observed that those saints of God possessing *gifts*, *were never ordained*. *Elders* were ordained by the Apostles. *Deacons* were looked out by the assembly (Acts vi. 3), and the Apostles appointed them to their work. They were not appointed by the assembly.

It is manifest that as the Apostles are gone, and the assembly of God is so broken up and ruined as a vessel on earth there is no continuance of the power to ordain or to appoint—yet work, such as is described in the Epistles, where Elders and Deacons are treated of, may be done. *Gifts* are assured until the end of the church's stay here below. Must we not say that little heed has been taken to the Word of God in these matters. How shall we look very soon when we see our Master?—*A Fragment.*

LIKE HIM.

AND is it possible for us to render a practical answer to-day to this culmination of blessedness? Yes; this also the Word supplies: "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). It would be idle, yea, it would be profane, to profess a deep and devout desire to be changed into His likeness at His coming, and to go on in a careless worldly way during His

absence. He who wants to be like Him, then, authenticates the reality of His desire by following His steps. "For their sakes," said the Lord, "I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Only in the path of holy separation to His name and to His glory can we consistently and adequately express that we covet conformity to Him.

Only by beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face are we transformed into the same image; only, that is, according to the measure or degree in which we see Him now, do we become like Him; but the moment is hastening on when every trace of disparity shall disappear, and we shall exult in the full attainment of His likeness when He shall be manifested as the First-born among many brethren.

How sweet and how comforting it is to every saint whose affections are true and ardent towards his beloved Lord, that we are going to be so speedily, and so certainly, and so perfectly LIKE HIM. How the hope of seeing Him is deepened and quickened in our souls as we think of the tides of glory which will roll in for Christ as each of His saints exchanges His body of humiliation for one of glory! Each, perfectly and for ever, arrayed in all the beauty of our glorified Lord.

Extracted.

JESUS.

Rise up and walk! there's power in the name
 To lift above the sad effects of sin;
 Faith can extract its precious healing balm,
 Leaping and praising we may enter in.

Not to the Temple, as in days of old,
 But to the presence chamber of our God ;
 Leaving our misery and our woes behind,
 No trace of either nor soil of earth's sod.

But oh! that name, how precious and how sweet!
 Of more than magic power to cure all ill ;
 It speaks of love divine, of peace and rest,
 The universe itself with bliss shall fill.

A name to live with even here below,
 Breathing such tender sympathy in grief;
 It tells of sighing, of a groan, and tears,
 E'en to a broken heart it brings relief.

The best of company if left alone,
 We commune through it with the blessed God ;
 Amongst His own it is the chiefest joy,
 A staff to lean on, a protecting rod.

Plaintive or bright it is surpassing sweet,
 No music like it to the well trained ear,
 Major or minor, be it soft or loud ;
 On earth, on high, to us, to God, how dear !

No human tongue can tell out all its worth—
 Himself who bears it doth its truth express ;
 God, very God, became a Man to die,
 Lives now to love, to save—His name we bless !

E. R. W.

ERRATA IN MARCH NO.

- Page 1—Eleventh line from foot should read: "who have died. He confounds the condition of the soul, death and life,"
- Page 43—" *hare* " instead of " *have*," third line from top of page.
- Page 52—" *run* " instead of " *seem*," eleventh line from foot.
- Page 54—" *walk* " of a believer, fifth line from top, *not* " *work*."
- Page 56—" *corporate* " instead of " *co-operate*," eleventh line from foot.
- Page 60—Seventh verse, fourth line, " *lay*," not " *lay*."

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap iv. 5—11.)

THE King continues His minute description of the spouse, and gives vent to the words, "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins." Beauty and satisfaction, full and complete, are here portrayed. In Prov. v. 19, we learn that he who rejoices with the wife of his youth is to let her breasts satisfy at all times, and to be always ravished with her love. How satisfied the King is with His spouse His words here declare. "Like two young roes feeding among the lilies"—beauty amidst the beautiful, and thus uniting the grace and charm of her person with the strength and fulness of her love.

And so perfect is the satisfaction He receives that He seems, in the delight of His heart, to answer the request she uttered (ii. 17). There she urged, "Be thou like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of division." Here He announces, "Until the day break and the shadows flee away I will get me to the mountains of myrrh and the hill of frankincense" (verse 6). For we regard this as a poetical description of the spouse. In chap. iii. 6, she is spoken of as perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. All His virtues and excellences centre in her and are manifested, in measure, by her. So His answer makes known that during the long hours of the night He would be with her. It would be a time of perpetual communion. It surely is a promise of comfort in keeping with the incomprehensible story of what she is to Him. Christ loves to dwell with the simple,

devout, and devoted soul. Of each that aspires after Him, and having His commandments, keep them, Jesus says, "I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (John xiv. 21). And so for such, until glory's day, enjoyment of Him here shall be without a break.

And how suited was she to the heart of her King. He again shows that His estimate had not been lightly, meaninglessly spoken; for He confirms in the most deliberate manner what He had previously addressed to her. "Thou art fair," He had said. "Thou art all fair," he repeats, adding, "There is no spot in thee." He saw what was effected by grace divine, and consequently so testifies. No other heart would have so read. The result of the activities of grace He discerns, and that is indeed fair and lovely in His sight.

And does not such a testimony go far beyond any human conception? for, consider who speaks, and to whom the words are spoken. *He* speaks upon whose word worlds are dependent; He for whom, referring to His glory, all things were made; He who is in very deed the Lord of life and glory. They were spoken to one who was, in herself, conscious of much past failure (i. 6), and who was equally aware that she had no title from herself to any such a testimony. Here is Balaam's prophecy again, uttered anew and, as it were, fulfilled. "I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel (Num. xxiii. 21).

How was the dross cleared away, the blackness, the wilfulness, the obstinacy! "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." A high encomium indeed is this. No spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing seen in her, but she is the very embodiment of beauty and loveliness to Him. Every spot has been wiped out, every wrinkle removed,

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every flaw righted. Where shall her equal be found? A course of study in the school of culture may give a pleasing exterior, but many a spot remains. Many a flaw may be outwardly righted, but hideous wrinkles are yet to be seen. Here grace effectuates all, working by love; and He who has chosen her for Himself fits her to be the suited companion of His glory. As the moon reflects the glory of the sun, so shall she yet reflect the glory of the King. How patent it is that there was a depth in those words of His, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

And dear believer, we may surely drink in the spirit of these words; for what He will presently accomplish in His earthly spouse He is now working in us. Have you never heard Him say so much to you? Then an ecstasy of joy awaits you when those tender breathings thrill your soul. You may blush as you think of naughty, unchristlike ways, but who would feel like justifying such doings, or excusing them in the presence of such love. Who would not feel like putting them far away, and earnestly desiring to deserve the testimony rendered, attributing all the glory to our great and patient Teacher. Truly Christ has a method all His own for drawing to Himself.

Her company is desired by Him, and so He issues the loving invitation to her to come with Him from Lebanon: "With me from Lebanon, spouse, with me from Lebanon." It need scarcely be said that the emphatic words are the opening words of the phrases. All would understand that love would impart emphasis to "*With me*," and answering affection would appreciate that fact more than any other. Lebanon was a border mountain between the world outside and the promised land, and so we may regard this invite as a desire for her to take possession of what, by title,

already belonged to her. And much she would escape; for behind lay the arid wilderness with its toil, with its scarcity, with its entanglements. But Lebanon was beautiful, and the scenery beheld from it grand. Porter says: "After Egypt's marshy plains, and Sinai's naked cliffs, and the parched desert of dreary Arabia, need we wonder that when Moses looked on Lebanon—its snow-crowned peaks towering to heaven, its sides all waving with foliage—he should have thus breathed forth to God the desire of his heart: 'I pray Thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon?'" (Deut. iii. 25.) And looking from Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, peaks in the Anti-Lebanus range, the land would lay spread out below, and with Him she was to enter it, leaving behind the haunts of the lions and the leopards. "*With me,*" He urges. What weight that should have with her, and those words are intensified by the acknowledgment that, though from such spots, she was, nevertheless, spotlessly fair.

But why should He be so anxious for her to accompany Him? Why so solicitous for her presence? He proceeds to acquaint her: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister spouse." Omit the little word "*my*" in italics, and we have the two titles, expressive of a double relationship, brought together. Now, speaking reverently, we can say that He was deeply in love with her, enchained with bonds of beauty. In a tenderly endearing way He speaks, and by His words calls her attention to the relationships which *He* acknowledges—*she* makes no claim. By natural tie she was His "sister;" by grace she was His "spouse;" for she stood in that relationship by His own choice. How closely He seeks to bind her to Himself.

She had captured His heart, so to speak. "Thou hast

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unhearted me" is His declaration. It is passing strange, such love! The force of the expression we can gather as we remember what He went through to obtain her, and by those means the truth was impressed indelibly upon her soul that many waters could not quench His love. He endured the cross, despising the shame to possess her. It is the picture of treasure hid in a field, to obtain which the discoverer sells all that he has; for, of course, his heart is bent upon having that. Is it true that the test of love is what it is willing to do for its object? Then unfathomably deep was His indeed!

But here it is of her worth and beauty that He speaks. And this divine Encomiast gives utterance to words of truth not flattery. It could not possibly be otherwise, though we may fail to comprehend their fulness. Notwithstanding, "Drink abundantly;" for here there is refreshment for the soul. It is the forth-telling of the discoveries of grace. Of such praises it must be said that

"Love gave them energy—love gave them birth."

Do the words seem to express too much? Do they appear to you, cold heart, to savour of extravagance? If so, we are again taught that they do not over-reach the mark; for their deliberate repetition confirms the first utterance, and the addition, "with *one* of thine eyes, with *one* chain of thy neck," shows that more could be added.

"One glance of thy believing eye,
One golden chain of thy fair neck,
Part of thy form has ravished me;
How must the whole my heart affect?"

We surely must learn from this that beauteous in His eyes are the effects of grace. The traits of the Christ-like character are despised by man, but highly prized by Him

who begets them, and we have to please Him. What earnestness and carefulness, then, these breathings should formulate in our hearts—earnestness in seeking the grace that works such wondrous results; carefulness, lest we should by the allowance of unseemly ways hinder the transforming process and mar the manifestations of Christ in our walk. All the forces of nature combine to bring forth fruit to perfection. In this, in one way or another, sun, rain, wind, all help. So the forces of grace and love unite to produce that which is well-pleasing in His sight, and this is consummated for us when we are presented “holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight” (Col. i. 22); and that our practical walk may conform with this hope may we “be diligent that we be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless” (2 Peter iii. 14).

Continuing love's eulogy, the King commends the love of His sister spouse, esteeming it more pleasant and refreshing than wine; He praises her graces which were laden with fragrance, for Him more precious than all spices; her speech He fully appreciates, likening her lips to the droppings of the honeycomb; to Him her thoughts were of value, for He says, “Honey and milk are under thy tongue”; and lastly He commends all that surrounded her—her works, the adornment of a godly woman (1 Tim. ii. 10)—and, as catching the perfume-laden air from Lebanon, He declares, “And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

What volumes of love are here. She had spoken of His love, and yearned for deeper manifestations of it (ch. i. 2); but, think you, she ever expected such an expression as this? It is the truth that “a believer loves Christ above all, and all of Christ,” yet the merit lies, not in their love, but in His; for His love is the cause of theirs. “How fair is

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thy love," He says, thus showing that, when that is displayed of which He is the procuring cause, it is fair and lovely and precious to Him. Would she not own that she loved Him because He first loved her? And with her we can now in spirit unite and bless His name for the fact here recorded that our love, which seems so mean, so petty, so frail, that it will not bear any comparison with His, is yet sweet to Him.

And His words intimate even more; for, luxuriating in it, He emphasises His former remark by this: "How much better is thy love than wine." No earth-born pleasure could afford Him the joy of her heaven-begotten affection. The juice of Eschol's grapes would bear no comparison with the taste of this. Her love was better—how much better—than wine? His love was that to her. Her love was that to Him. Cold-hearted, critical Simon, Pharisee that he was, was indeed surprised that Jesus should allow a woman who was a sinner to touch Him. He neither knew the forgiving love that was better than wine to that poor sin-laden woman, nor the responding love that was so acceptable to the Forgiver. The Pharisee's feast provided no joy for Jesus; but the tears, the kiss, the ointment, the fruit of love, were intensely sweet to Him (Luke vii.).

Let us set no estimate of our own upon our love, but yet let us mark for our hearts' delectation the way the Lord speaks. Estimated by its strength, the love may be as nought; but He reckons according to its character, its sincerity, its unfeignedness, and so first love, that is wholly His, brooking no rival, is to Him incomparable. "What cheering words are these," dear saints of God, who can tell all their sweetness?—that our Lord Jesus prizes the love that flows from redeemed hearts and finds refreshment in that affection.

There is also His word of praise for her graces. The fragrant perfume that was wafted from her to Him told of the inward work that had been accomplished, of the purity and peace that reigned there; and not all the wealth of Arabia's spicery combined could contribute a sweetness comparable to it. That sweet savour is but the reproduction of Christ in the soul; and this, in all its fragrance, rises to the throne above. The love, joy, peace, meekness, long-suffering, and every fruit of the Spirit are esteemed more in heaven than all the virtues upon which men lay a value. Then upon what are we bent? What is the goal before us? Is Christ our goal? Is it to be altogether pleasing to Him that our energies are devoted? Just calmly think of the condescending love. He is gratified when faith is manifested, when love is displayed, when long-suffering is exercised, when tribulation is patiently endured. Of these graces the ointment is compounded that sends forth the rich odour so exquisitely according to His liking.

Her words, too, are extremely pleasant. This we learn from His reference to her lips dropping as the honeycomb, that is, concentrated sweetness. These are not the words of idle, worldly conversation. Ah! how many of such does this kind commendation of His recall; words that we are perfectly sure could not be to Him as the droppings of the honeycomb. The spouse would love to speak of the altogether lovely One; and assuredly the words addressed to Him and about Him would issue from the very depths of the heart. Such words are sweet beyond measure to the Well-Beloved.

Again, let us apply this word. Here is an incentive to cultivate a conversation suited to the ear of Christ. And for this to follow there must be the abundance of Christ in the heart. Then will it well up and delight Him, edifying, too, those who might hear.

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Meditation should precede speech, and it is by dwelling in quiet contemplation on the one glorious theme that a goodly store of spiritual thoughts are laid up, and such are compared to honey and milk. The unspoken word is under the tongue. But the result of having them there is that the drop, drop, drop of the honeycomb follows. The poverty of our speech often proves the lack of meditation, and reveals the barrenness of soul within. Honey for refreshment, and milk for food must, when under the tongue, first sustain and bless the owner, and then in issuing forth effect the double purpose of gratifying the heart of Jesus and ministering grace to the hearers. It may be that we shall read afresh, in the light of those precious sayings of our Lord, that exhortation, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying" (Eph. iv. 29).

"The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." Now if there be first the flowing forth of the perfume of inwrought sanctification, the outward life will accord. The garments are what outwardly characterises an individual—every-day doings of life. What a testimony, then, is this! Odoriferous plants in abundance grew on Lebanon, and emitted a fragrant smell that was often carried a considerable distance on the breeze. To this the King likens the smell of the garments of His spouse. Her actions were perfumed with the breath of heaven. Remember it is His estimation; and, beloved saint of God, how does it appeal to us? Are we satisfied with our doings? Even now there may be the remembrance of actions which sent forth a stinking smell, savouring of the flesh or of Egypt. But He loves confession. It is an action well-pleasing in His sight, and let this truth encourage us—Christ finds in the lives of His saints that which He can praise. Love's language is,

when describing her every-day life, "The smell of thy garments is as the smell of Lebanon" (verse 11). How comes this about? Christ was hers, and the doctrine tells us: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24).

(To be continued.)

CLEANSING FROM DEFILEMENT.

Numbers xix.

SIN in God's sight is a far more serious matter than it often appears to man. God views it in the light of His nature, man generally in the light of the consequences to himself. God judges that to be sin which man would often pass over or excuse; hence, whilst sins committed needed a sacrifice to put them away, a sacrifice was required ere a person could be cleansed, who became unclean by defilement from without. This is the characteristic of that special sin-offering set forth in Numbers xix.

It was an offering for sin (see verses 9-17), yet the one to be sprinkled might have done nothing that he could have avoided, and might, indeed, have only acted aright. That, however, was not the question here, and all reasonings on such grounds must have been silenced at once, for the Holy One of Israel had spoken to Moses and to Aaron, and communicated this ordinance of the law, that none in Israel, whether of the seed of Jacob, or a stranger that sojourned among them, should defile the tabernacle of the Lord. He who is Light was alone competent to say what would defile the sanctuary. Great was the privilege of Israel to have Jehovah's tabernacle in their midst, but

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great was the responsibility resting on all within the camp, because that tabernacle was the sanctuary. Defilement permitted in them would have tarnished the purity of the sanctuary, and compromised the character of Him who was pleased to inhabit it; so, whilst the sin and trespass offerings were needful where sin had been committed, this was absolutely requisite because Jehovah dwelt among them. Thus, in Leviticus we see God providing against the breaking out of sin in those whom He had redeemed out of Egypt, and in Numbers we read of His gracious provision for putting away defilement contracted by contact from without.

In accordance with the laws of the offerings, those for whom the sacrifice was needed brought the victim. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer, without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke." As the ashes were to be kept for the use of any in the camp who might need the water of separation, none could say (the high priest excepted) he would never require it; so all are concerned in the bringing of the animal. And here, as elsewhere, God decides what the animal should be, for it is His holiness that has to be thought of and maintained. Unmixed in colour, unblemished in person, unbroken by the yoke so as to be subservient to man's bidding, such are the characteristics to be sought for, and found, in the victim God could accept—conditions answering to Him who unvaryingly did His Father's will, in whom is no sin, and who, as the faithful and true witness, suffered death at the hand of His creatures.

The heifer was brought to Eleazar, not to Aaron. The high priest could not defile himself for the dead, though the priests could for those of their family (Lev. xxi. 2-11).

Eleazar, therefore, officiates here, and is found with the heifer outside the camp. Slain by some one (not the priest), the priestly work of sprinkling the blood began, after which the whole animal—its flesh, blood, skin, and dung—were set fire to before his eyes. Again the priest came forward, and cast cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Having sprinkled of the blood seven times towards the face of the tabernacle of the congregation, and having cast into the fire the symbols of nature and worldly glory to be consumed with the heifer, his part in the work of preparing the ashes was done. Another person had already set fire to the animal, whilst a third collected the ashes, and laid them up without the camp in a clean place, to be mixed with water for use as often as occasion required.

Very simple was the rite, but very telling. In common with other sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, the blood had a prominent place; but, differing from all other offerings, the blood was sprinkled towards the front of the tabernacle of the congregation. It did not reach the altar, for it was sprinkled outside the camp, though in the direction of the entrance to the tabernacle of the congregation. In common with the offerings at the cleansing of the leper we have mention of cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, but then they were dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain, while here they were consumed with the animal itself. Like the sin offering, whose blood was brought inside the sanctuary, the heifer was burnt outside the camp; but then the inwards were burnt on the altar, here they were consumed with the rest of the heifer, for it was not an act of sin, done even in ignorance, with which the perfect obedience of the Lord was contrasted, that was here to be set forth in its true character, but the terrible nature of sin so contrary to

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the nature of God. And, as on the day of atonement, the priest had to wash his flesh in water after he had concluded the special rites of that day; and both the man who burnt the sin-offering, and he that led the scapegoat away, had to wash their clothes in water and bathe themselves, and after that re-enter the camp; so the priest who sprinkled the blood of the red heifer and the man who burnt her carcase, as well as he who gathered up the ashes, had to wash their clothes in water, and the two first to bathe their flesh as well; but, differing from the special ordinance of the day of atonement, all those who were concerned with the preparation of the ashes of the red heifer, were unclean until the evening. How all this tells of the holiness of God, and the character of sin in His eyes!

An offering for purification for sin as this was, all the rites connected with it took place outside the camp, inside of which was God's dwelling-place on earth. Without the camp was the leper's place till healed in the goodness of God. Without the camp everyone that had any issue, and all that were defiled by the dead, both male and female, were to be put, in accordance with God's command (Numb. v. 2). So here, to mark what sin is in God's sight, without the camp was the heifer killed, and without the camp were the ashes kept. Holy was the sacrifice, else it could not have been a sacrifice fitted for His acceptance; clean were the ashes, and they were to be kept in a clean place, for both the heifer and the ashes spoke of One in whom is no sin: the heifer, of Him who offered up Himself; the ashes, of the fiery judgment of God He has endured; but, as connected with sin in any way, God would mark by the words, "*without the camp*" what sin is in the eyes of the High and Holy One, and those concerned with the preparation of the ashes had themselves to acknowledge it. Ceremonially

clean when they began their work, they were ceremonially unclean when they had properly done it.

The ashes prepared, the occasion of their use is next declared—the sprinkling of anyone defiled by the dead. Here also we see shadowed forth what sin is before God. “He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean for seven days.” To touch the dead body of a clean beast which had died, rendered the person unclean till the evening (Lev. xi. 39); to touch the dead body of a man, however good he might have been, rendered the man unclean seven days. How humbling to the pride of man! A descendant of Adam, who was made in the image of God, after His likeness, was more defiling when dead than the body of a beast. Why was this? By man came sin, and by sin came death. Death witnessed of the presence of sin, for death was the consequence of it. Surrounded with the consequences of sin, and often made to feel them keenly, as death entered the family or the tent, yet a man could not always help being in a tent where death had entered, or refrain in the call of duty from touching a dead body, or a bone, or a grave. God knew this. It might not be a wrong act on the man's part, for God did not command them to refrain from this (the priests, outside certain family relationships, excepted), yet He pronounced whoever did touch the dead body, etc., unclean for seven days. And, mark this, the period of uncleanness could not be shortened; no excuse, no argument could avail to set aside God's word, or procure a relaxation of this stringent rule. On no ground could defilement by the dead be passed over as a thing of little consequence, or be excused by the exigencies of the occasion; for, even if the Passover was nigh at hand, those unclean by a dead body must wait for the following month before they could again commemorate the redemption of the people

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from Egypt. Touching a dead body was a serious thing in God's sight, whatever it might have been in man's; for He judged according to the holiness of His nature, not according to the necessity of the case.

What an illustration this affords of the nature of God! All that came into the tent, and all that was in the tent where death entered, were rendered unclean by its presence. Contact with defilement defiled, and entrance into the place where death was became a cause of defilement likewise. Inflexible was the standard of God's holiness, which must be maintained, whatever it might cost His creatures. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," cried the seraphim (Isa. vi. 3), and here we see exemplified in some degree what that holiness is. Had it been an atrocious act of sin which called forth this stringent rule, to guard the holiness of God from being sullied by the sinner's presence, all must have agreed in the justice of his exclusion. But here, where man might not have been able to avoid it, born in God's providence into a world in which death has found an entrance, whatever excuse he might have been prepared to offer, or whatever plea of inability to have kept himself clean he might truly have urged, nothing could avail when the holy character of God was in question. Unclean he was, and unclean he must be, till the appointed epoch had passed away. God could admit of no compromise. The man had not sinned, it is true, but he was unclean, because death, the wages of sin, was there. It was no question, then, about the measure of a man's guilt, but entirely a question about the nature of God. How little, surely, is this understood, even in these days.

Made to feel in himself how sin excludes from the presence of God, and how holy He must be who so jealously guarded the purity of His sanctuary, the man, whilst learning the defiling

character of sin, and all connected with it, might learn also the gracious provision of his God for the effectual removal of his uncleanness by the sprinkling of the water of separation. How to be made clean when defiled he could not have discovered; but God had disclosed the means to be used, manifesting thereby the utmost care for the sanctuary, but manifesting also His real desire for the defiled one. "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but, if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean." The water must be used on both days. Purified he would be if he conformed to God's law; but the full time must elapse before he could be clean. The clean person must use the water with hyssop, and twice must the unclean one be sprinkled. A little thing it might seem to touch the dead body, or to be in the tent; but the man must deeply feel what sin, and all connected with it, is before God. On the third day and on the seventh day was he sprinkled. It was no hasty work, done in a moment and forgotten. Sprinkled on the third day, he must wait till the seventh day arrived, and then be sprinkled afresh before he could be clean. The condition he was in as unclean must be pressed home on him. He must feel it fully, as a whole period of time elapsed between the act which defiled and the final act of bathing himself on the seventh day at even. Besides this, he had to own himself indebted to a clean person for the sprinkling of that water, by which alone he could begin to emerge from his state of ceremonial uncleanness. Without the sprinkling with the water on the two separate occasions he could not have been cleansed; and without the washing of his clothes and himself in water, the cleansing must have been imperfect.

Of what does this rite speak to us? It tells of the death

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of the Lord Jesus Christ under the judgment of God for us, brought home to the conscience in power by the Holy Ghost. His death was needed to atone for our sins ; His death was also requisite to put away sin, and to be applied to the believer as an adequate motive for his walk in separation from evil on earth. How great, then, was the need of that death, and how rich are the provisions we have in it. By it God's holiness is maintained, and because of it the defiled one can be cleansed. And, as the type sets forth what was needed, so the order therein enjoined is the order with God's people now. First, the death of Christ is applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost ; then separation from what is unclean around us will take place, just as the man was first sprinkled and then he washed himself. He washed himself because he had been sprinkled, and that twice ; not to fit himself to be sprinkled, for another, a clean man, must move in that matter first of all on his behalf. Humbling fact ! And since it was a question of cleansing from what had defiled by him by contact, or by his presence within the tent where death was, and not of standing before God, he needed not the immediate services of the priest (they had been rendered in the preparation of the ashes), but the offices of one that was himself ceremonially clean. The aspect of priestly work is towards God, so the blood of the heifer had been sprinkled towards the face of the tabernacle of the congregation. None but the priest, the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, could do this ; but the using the water of separation on behalf of another was an act of a different character, for it shadowed forth that service which one believer can do for another, as, beholding him entangled in that which is defiling, he applies, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the word—which tells of the death of Christ and the consequent position of His followers

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on earth—to free the soul from all that communicates uncleanness.

And as the sprinkled one purified himself, and washed his clothes, and bathed himself in water; so those to whom such a service is rendered must themselves acquiesce in it, and act accordingly. “Blessed are they that wash their robes (so we should read) that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. xxii. 14). There is such a thing as “cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. vii. 1), besides having our feet washed by the service of another (John xiii.). But, to minister to one in need of such offices, the individual must be clean himself.

Another thing comes out. Though only an individual was defiled, the consequences of his act were not confined to himself. Outside the camp because defiled (Numb. v.), he was nevertheless a member of that, in the midst of which God dwelt. So if the means prescribed for his cleansing were despised, or even neglected, God must have acted because he defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. Hence there was but one alternative. Death must come in in any case; but it was either for the man to avail himself of the death of the heifer, or to suffer death himself under the judicial hand of God. He might say he did not want the cleansing. That would show how completely he disregarded the peculiar privileges of the people of Israel, but that plea would not avail him. He could not shelter himself from what flowed from his position as an inhabitant of the camp, on the ground of his individuality. It mattered not what he desired, action must take place, because he belonged to the congregation in the midst of which was the sanctuary.

How holy, then, was that place! All connected with his cleansing felt it. The person who sprinkled him had to wash his clothes, and the man who touched the water of separation was unclean until the evening; whilst the poor defiled person, unable to sanctify himself, imparted pollution to whatever he came against. What a state to be in! But death, the death of God's own Son, provided all that was needful. No compromise of God's holiness, nor continuance of defilement could be allowed for a moment, nor was there the need of either; for that death, as viewed in the type, maintained the one, and purified the individual from the other.

C. E. S.

GATHERED THOUGHTS.

THERE is nothing so unreasonable *in the world* as the walk set before us in the Word—nothing which so exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If, then, God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His Word; and in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage which the almighty power of God inspires by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious Word of our God; its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us. The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him

who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

If only this word from God, the Lord, is heard—"Turn not from it, to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper *whithersoever thou goest*"—what joy for him who, through grace, comes forward to do the work of God.

My brethren, let us abide in the place of faith, apparently a more difficult one, yet the place where God is found, and where grace—the only precious thing in this world—flourishes, and binds the heart to God by a thousand links of affection and gratitude, as to One who has known us and who has stooped to meet our need and the desires of our hearts. Faith gives energy, faith gives patience, and it is often thus that the most precious affections are developed; affections which, if the energy of faith makes us servants on earth, render heaven itself happy, because He who is the object of faith is there, and fills it in the presence of the Father.

Nature makes us impatient with circumstances, because we do not sufficiently realise God, and draws us into situations where it is impossible to glorify Him. On the other hand, it is well to observe that it is when man had thoroughly failed, when even David's faith had been found wanting, and—departing from Israel—he had thrown himself among the Philistines, it was then that God gave him the kingdom. Grace is above all failure. God must glorify Himself in His people.

J. N. D.

HEBREWS XI.,

Continued from page 54.

THE history of Enoch is a short one, but the record left of him, which has been read by saints of God in all ages since it pleased God to write of him, is of the greatest interest and the deepest value. "Enoch walked with God" is twice recorded in Gen. v. In this Epistle we are told that before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God (xi. 5). He was one of two saints of God who, we are informed, were taken to heaven without dying. The expression "walked with God" is a grand record! God is with His people. He bears with our manners in our wilderness journey. He takes care of us, and supplies us with mercies innumerable. He has counted the hairs of our heads, and is with us as He said He would be to Jacob of old. Many a trouble He took Jacob out of, but none of these compassions set forth the soul "walking *with God*." "Walking with God" speaks of the soul's occupation with what is occupying God. He has His "purposes" and "counsels" which He is carrying out, and of which He has written in His word. He is pleased to make much of His will known, and He calls His saints of to-day to enter into what He has made known of these things in His word. Enoch had his day in times of growing evil, but "walking with God" preserved him from coming under the power of the evil. He was an "overcomer" because walking with God. He was above the evils. He was aware of their presence. He knew that nothing but the manifestation of the Lord in His glorious power to judgment would clear the scene of that which was so offensive to God. Of that time, still to come, he

prophesied ere he was translated. But he “walked with God”—what a calm! Nothing but peace, where God is, had been tasted by such an one as Enoch. The *Peace of God* passes all understanding. It is not “the God of Peace” shall be with you—great as that is, but it is *the Peace God dwells in*. “Walking with God” the soul views the circumstances it has to pass through as they affect God’s interests, and God as revealed in the Son becomes the object of the heart.

Of Noah also, before the flood, it is written (vi. 9) that “he walked with God.” Noah had been seen by God to be a just man and perfect in his generations, and when the long suffering of God was exhausted through the abounding evil He purposed to clear the scene by judgment. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and he is instructed to build an ark. God makes a covenant with Noah and He invites him to enter into the ark as He was about to bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh (17). Noah believed God. There was no sign of the flood, but he heeded God’s warning and moved with fear he did as God told him. His conduct condemned the world, but he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. xi. 7).

We have important lessons presented to us in the record regarding Enoch and Noah. Dispensational teaching no doubt is to be found also, but with that I am not so much concerned at present. We are exhorted in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. We cannot do this unless we are learning what the calling is. Many are satisfied with knowing that they have been sheltered from the wrath we deserved—but that, while unfathomable mercy, does not set forth our calling. That we deserved nothing but a portion in the lake of fire is terribly true, but what about the grace that bestows a portion

in Christ, to be shared by Christ with such sinners! We are children of God—chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and, consequently, before sin came into the world. By the Holy Ghost we have been united to Christ. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Let me notice that it is still often said that Christ is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. We never read such words in Scripture. Adam was not of Eve, but Eve was of him. Thus we are of Christ as stated above, and which statement is to be read in Eph. v. 30.

We are *heirs of God!* and joint heirs with Christ—if children. Children by birth first, then heirs. In this connection I notice that we are sons by *adoption*, children by *birth*. We are the *sons* (R.V., Gal. iii. 26) of God through faith in Christ Jesus. We have the spirit of adoption now, but the adoption being connected with display is still waited for (Rom. viii. 19). We are going to reign *with* Christ (Rev. ii. 20). But I would get beyond my Scripture into other fields of Holy Writ, so I must stay my pen. I wish, however, to draw the hearts of God's dear people to study the Word of God if these things are so, that some sense of the riches of grace and glory might take possession of the heart and quicken our pace out of the City of Destruction to the country where God and the Lamb shall be surrounded by the redeemed for ever and for ever. Thus far as to Enoch, but Noah's record tells us how judgment is coming on all here. Iniquity grows steadily, corruption and violence are abounding as in the days of Noah. God is calling on the sons of men to repent and turn to Him. It is admitted that sooner or later death will reach every one, but "may you have a long time here yet" is all the unrenewed man can wish you. As I have said, he admits death will come, but he turns his eye away from all connected with the passage out

of the present world into that which to him is still unknown. The Divine Record, which this country boasts of sending into so many heathen lands, and in this country is bound in such costly garb, is unheeded as to the loud notes of warning contained in it. God, in Psalm 49, says to His creatures: "Hear this all ye people; give ear all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor together" (1-2). Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. That ark in its service to Noah speaks of Christ as the only shelter from the wrath to come. Noah and all his house were safe, and Christ is the shelter from a more terrible judgment. He was not only sheltered, but "he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," Noah being dispensationally a type of the Jewish remnants who will appear on the scene after the saints of God of all previous dispensations up to the Lord's descent into the air (1 Thess. iv. 16) are caught up. The story of Enoch's translation contains the most imminent event, though in its immediate *moral* lessons it *follows* on that of Noah.

D. S.

2 TIMOTHY II., 1-7.

It is a very familiar portion of Scripture to which we turn, with the prayer that the consideration of it may be blessed to our souls. It is in the Second Epistles that the prophet's voice is heard most distinctly, putting us on our guard against the many evils current in these last days. Dangers beset the Christian on every side, for unbelief, the spirit of infidelity and the forerunner of apostacy, manifests itself in every quarter. But we are not left without directions. God has vouchsafed abundant instruction, the keeping of which

will keep us from the perils surrounding us. What we need is unbounded confidence in that Word.

The Apostle Paul was speaking at a time of great depression; for already the signs of degeneracy were to be seen. The love of the truth was being renounced. He informs Timothy, his son, that "All they which be in Asia have turned away from me" (chap. i. 15). It was not that they had apostatised from Christ, neither had Paul changed his creed; but they had so far lost their love of the truth that they turned away from the great champion of the Christian faith to follow others, self-set-up men who would consequently lead away from Christ and the Scriptures to man, and tradition, and fable.

The preservative against this is provided; and we must notice first of all the "*therefore*" of verse 1, and then the similar opening of verse 3. A good physician not only points out the disease, the secret of the weakness, but he administers the suited remedy that shall baffle the disease and strengthen the system. Many were backsliding, some like sheep following in the wake of others. How could Timothy be kept? "*Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*" Paul points him to the provision of God. There was to be no feeling falsely secure. To turn to that grace was always necessary, but the necessity became intensified when others were falling. The Apostle would say again, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and would point to the grace in Christ Jesus as that which would give the ability to stand.

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," he exhorts. God has made Christ to be the channel through which every blessing flows to us. There is no salvation apart from His worthy name; no forgiveness apart from His advocacy; no glory without Christ, for of that He is the

sum and substance. The love of God is centred in Him (Rom. viii. 39), and here the grace of God is found in Him. That grace has risen above all ruin, and suffices now for every human need, overabounding where sin abounded (Rom. v. 20). Being strong in it would preserve that servant of the Lord from being overwhelmed and carried away by the rising tide of evil. Will it do less for us if we too are strong in it? There is no need for despair, though perilous times are on us. There is urgent need for prayer, and a betaking ourselves to Christ to be fortified with grace.

And next Paul bids Timothy to instruct others in the precious truths which he had learned of his father in the faith. In brief, we are turned to the Scriptures. It is again "God and the Word of His grace" (Acts xx. 32); and for time on to eternity with these the saint is amply garrisoned.

Reminded of the source of strength he is then informed of the result that should follow. So again we have the opening words, "*Thou therefore.*" Equipped as for an arduous campaign, there was to be the enduring of "hardness as a good soldier of Christ Jesus," that is, a soldier who loves His commander, and finds his pleasure in doing His bidding. For obedience is the prime characteristic of a good soldier. Skill or valour are very secondary when compared with obedience. And, besides, such a soldier thinks not of directing affairs, nor of intruding his own wisdom. He does in spirit say, "Ours not to reason why; ours but to do," confident that such a Leader makes no mistakes.

On the road to glory many tribulations have to be encountered. So Paul informed the saints as he went from place to place confirming the disciples, and saying, "We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). "Endure hardness," he says to Timothy.

The dangers, difficulties, distresses would provide opportunities for the display of answering love, individual faithfulness shining all the more conspicuously against the dark background of the corporate failure, and like Gideon's followers, each true one would hie on his way—though faint yet pursuing.

And again, how peculiar and sweet is the relationship in which we stand to our Lord. Who can say what we owe Him for making us His soldiers? It is such an honour to be found beneath His banner. For we elected not to be His. We did not choose Him. His choice was set upon us. And hence if in earthly matters it can be said of the warrior that he "entangleth himself not with the affairs of this life; that he might please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier," how much more ought this to be true of those ranging under the great Captain of our salvation?

We ought, then, to please our Master. And first we must be free to do that, free from the entanglements of the world, that we might please *Him*. Now, if we have a very particular desire to gratify any one, we study the wishes, desires, tastes of such an one; and applying that, shall we not seek to know our Master's wishes and orders if we crave to please Him? It matters not what others say. The slanderer's tongue will be ever busy until righteousness reigns, and then shall the "good soldier" be justified indeed. Answering love His love demands, and this shows itself in obedience—"If any man love Me he will keep My commandments." So we pass to the next point.

Love displays itself in obedience. The necessity for remembering that now comes out. Zealous to please the Lord, many an one has set out in a self-chosen path acting according to self-imposed directions. But this is surely in forgetfulness that the Master has laid down rules, "*and if*

a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully" (verse 5). But, results? you say. This is a day when results are lauded to the skies—but *what* results? It is easy to build what will not stand the test of the fire in the day that He tries every man's work (1 Cor. iii. 13). But no labour for the Lord can be judged by present results. The business of the servant is to do his Master's bidding regardless of results. Have you a message to deliver? Then proclaim it, having confidence in that word which says that it shall surely accomplish that for which it was sent forth (Isa. lv. 11), a result, it may be, that eternity will alone reveal.

Noah of old, a preacher of righteousness for one hundred and twenty years, proclaimed by word or by act that judgment was impending. But where are his converts? and will there be no reward for him? we may well ask. How discouraging, under such circumstances, must the continual anticipation of what never arrives be. How encouraging to be assured that you are doing your Master's work whatever the seeming outcome may be. Was it not so with our blessed Lord? The words of the prophet Isaiah, "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" were fulfilled in the rejection of the words and acts of the Lord Jesus, perfect Teacher with a perfect message though He was (John xii. 37-38). But He never thought of His work apart from the will of God. Go over that blessed scene depicted in Mark i. 32-38, and behold the Obedient One, the perfect Servant. Wondrously He acted, in grace and mercy delivering many from the power of the devil, and then at early morn He is seen in a solitary place for prayer. But men again sought Him, and His disciples come to Him saying, "All seek for Thee." What an opportunity! How does the Lord reply?

“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: *for therefore came I forth.*” All must be *according to God* for Him; and surely in this, as in all else, the servant is called to follow in His steps (1 Peter ii. 21). With all our energies may we strive for masteries, yet remembering that no one is crowned except he strive lawfully. And may we not say that it is a solemn thing to intrude our thoughts when the Master has expressed His. Moses strikes the rock when he is told to speak to it. He thus fails, though God gives a response to the stroke, and the result?—he does not enter the land of Canaan. This is responsibility, not grace, of course, but it is of the former that our word speaks. Human methods produce like results. Confidence in His Word and obedience to His will produce results that, though unseen now, yet abide for eternity to the glory of the Lord, and the eternal joy of the servant.

Love and obedience, then, are handmaidens, and where they exist service will result. So we next learn of the necessity for labouring, and the certainty of reward. “The husbandman, labouring first, must be partaker of the fruits.” Patient toil will not go unrequited. The husbandman has to plant and water and tend and prune, all helping to make him patient as he waits to behold the fruit of his toil. Patience is a subject will, and service in conformity to the commands of our Lord begets this ere there is the tasting of the joy of harvest. But the fruitage will arrive, and then shall be fulfilled this word that the husbandman *must* be partaker.

And just retracing, we have grace to strengthen and the Word to direct, that we might stand even when others are straying. So equipped, hardness can be endured. Then, answering love, obedience and patience follow each other. To Timothy Paul says, “Consider what I say, and the Lord

give thee understanding in all things." May the good Lord answer that petition for each reader, as in dependence upon the Holy Spirit we consider His words uttered by Paul.

H. F.

A CITIZEN AND A SOLDIER.

THERE are two different ways in which a full grown male Israelite may be regarded after the entrance of the people into the land of their inheritance. The first is that of a citizen. In this character he is entitled to build him a house, to plant an orchard or vineyard, and to marry a wife. A house or home to be his very own, in which he can have things as far as his means will allow, in accordance with his particular taste and fancy; next a garden or orchard from which he may take the produce for his food and enjoyment; and lastly a wife to complete his happiness. These things are necessary to human life here on earth. The difference in the sexes was the outcome of God's creatorial power—each formed to meet the need of the other, and each incomplete without the other. Adam in Paradise, head and lord of creation, rich in the abundance of food which God's goodness had placed around him, was, nevertheless, alone. "I will make him an help-meet for him." What precious consideration! What thoughtful interest was this! But these things, so necessary to the creature's happiness on earth, and sanctioned by the blessed God, cannot in themselves be wrong, nevertheless, they may become, through the sin that is in us, occasions of failure in the duty we owe to God and also to His people.

Now Jehovah knew full well that these earthly blessings were of an absorbing and engrossing character, and very

graciously He made an allowance for it. Hence we read in Deut. xx. of a provision specially made for such when the armies of Israel went out to battle against their enemies. "And the officers shall speak and say unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not eaten of it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her?" (ver. 5-7). The responsibility to fight was his. It was a part of the duty of citizenship, but from which, for the time being, he was excused. Then we have another class exempted in verse 8: "And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as his heart." He, too, was responsible, but totally disqualified for the time through fear.

No one could have the privileges of citizenship without being subject to the laws of the country. The Israelites' laws were framed by Jehovah, their God, who was also their King. If obedient and loyal they would love to do His will and be in the forefront of the fight when duty called for it. But in going in for things God's goodness allowed to them, there must, of necessity, be a goodly measure of self-pleasing. *My house, my vineyard* or orchard, and *my wife*, and this, the last and best of all, was to be his entirely, and how glad and proud he must needs be on the day that she becomes his own. *Me and mine!* and God graciously looks on, allowing and sanctioning the joy of His creatures. The

higher duty for the moment cannot be fulfilled. But this self-gratification and enjoyment has its dangers, and hence a limit is put upon it by Jehovah. So, in chap. xxiv. 5, we read, "When a man hath taken a new wife he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: *but* he shall be free at home one year, and cheer up his wife which he hath taken." One year! a goodly holiday indeed! but even a whole year must come to an end. How will it find him? braced up in nerve and will, or enervated and enfeebled so as to be classed with the fearful and fainthearted? If so, he shall not fight; for Jehovah will not have soldiers whose great concern is their own skins. True courage, which faith in God and the certainty that the cause is His alone can inspire, must mark those who would aspire to fight His battles. It is not the numerical strength of the different battalions, but the self-surrender and self-effacement of each individual soldier. The battle will not be won by strategy, but by faith in Israel's God. Do we not well to remember the words: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he might please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier?"

Who of us to-day are qualified to fight the Lord's battles? Let conscience answer. Cowards want things easy. To all kinds of conflict they are averse. It sounds well and will have a plenty to plead for it, but the man of God will have none of it. He is ready for the fray, if it must be. He will risk all, every privilege, every thing that to nature is dear, even the risk of being alone. Nature loves ease. The cosy fire side, the comfortable chair, the luxurious lounge, daintily prepared food, etc., etc., are not much in the soldier's line. Inured to hardship, and to want, he endures the rigours of climate, the toils of night-marching, he faces the foe and

wins the victory. Misunderstood, his conduct freely criticised, his faults discussed and magnified by those who do nothing towards gaining the victory, but who, nevertheless, reap some of the benefit of it. Such is a soldier's life. The campaign shall end in glory, and then comes the "well done," and then the stripes of distinction, then the honours awarded.

Paul in writing to Timothy says (2 Tim. ii. 10), "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." But what if he lost his life? "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead (or die) with Him, we shall also live with Him." Blessed, thrice blessed association! There was one thing the individual soldier had to be most particular about, and that was about defilement; for being a man he could not guarantee that he would not contract it (see chap. xxiii. 9). "When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing." Suppose he is careful and does this, yet still there is danger. "If there be among you any man that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad without the camp, he shall not come within the camp: but it shall be when evening cometh on he shall wash himself with water; and when the sun is down he shall come into the camp again" (ver. 10). There was no wickedness in this. It was a mere chance, as we say; still, in God's sight he was defiled, and totally unfitted during the whole of that day, to be in the camp with his fellows, and there he must on no account be, till in the evening, if he washed himself with water, he might then come into the camp. No one could obey the call of nature and relieve himself inside the camp; outside he must go and then must dig and cover that which came from him. And why? "For the Lord thy God

walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee: therefore shall thy camp be holy: that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee" (ver. 14). How much, then, hung upon the due care of each soldier for what was suited to the holy nature of God. He walked in the midst of the camp, and was there to deliver up their enemies before them; but disobedience to His word in the matters referred to, would make Him turn away, and without Him they would in truth accomplish nothing.

Then again, if the purity of the camp was maintained, and victory over their enemies was granted to them, even then they were defiled, for had they not been in contact with the dead? An instance of this is recorded in Numb. xxxi. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites. . . . And Moses spake unto the people saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian." Then when the warriors returned victorious, bringing immense spoil, we find in verse 19, "Do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh." "And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp" (ver. 24). At God's command they went to the war and His will they had accomplished, yet were they defiled; for they had to learn, and so have we, how holy is the Lord God Almighty.

The Christian's warfare is a spiritual one. His enemies are unseen. His weapons are spiritual ones. There are often enough opponents, and these may be saints of God, but from ignorance, or from some cause or other which

we cannot always explain, they are found opposing what is really God's will for His people. The power behind these opponents is Satan. The animating spirits are evil ones. We must distinguish between those who are being used and the real foes behind them. It is these unseen spiritual enemies we have to fight. God's mind must be known, and His way must be submitted to; for any display of fleshly energy or feeling only helps the foe. Patience, firmness, courage, practical righteousness, real dependence on God must be shown, and the whole armour of God put on. If we are caring for His glory, and only that, we should know that He cares still more. God will win—He always does; but many a ruined reputation marks the scene of conflict; many an one once in the front has had to take a back seat. May God keep us; for He only can.

E. R. W.

SATISFACTION.

MY DEAR A.,—

There are three passages which I have been dwelling very much upon lately, and, as usual, I pass on my thoughts to you. It was while reading Isaiah lv., the connection between the second verse of that chapter and Psalms xxxvi. 8 and lxiii. 5, flashed into my mind. It is so beautiful. I have so often enjoyed Psalm xxxvi. "They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the *fatness of Thy house*, and Thou shalt make them to drink of the river of Thy pleasures." How many even of the Lord's own people are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not." We all know what it is in some measure, one in one way and one in another. One labouring to get a position in this world, "for the sake of the

children," they say. But if in any measure true to the Lord they soon find disappointment—it satisfieth not, for the Lord "blows upon it" (Haggai i. 9). Then another, perhaps, is seeking satisfaction and happiness in friends, and taking much trouble and care to please others, not so much for their good or edification (Rom. xv. 2), but for their own pleasure and satisfaction, though perhaps they may not be conscious of that. But sooner or later they learn that that too is unsatisfying, and as we sometimes sing "*Christ alone can satisfy.*" I might give other illustrations, but in one way or another we "labour for that which satisfieth not." What is the remedy? "Hearken diligently unto me, eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah lv. 2). Ah, we do not hearken unto God's word enough. He has so much to tell us of the good things prepared for them that love Him, but we are so busy with our labours that we do not find time to listen. What depths there are in His word we have not fathomed! We get a little taste sometimes of what the fatness of His house is, and we know it does *abundantly satisfy*. How expressive the language of those Psalms, "My soul shall be satisfied as with *marrow* and *fatness*," and consequently praise must be the result. The feast is spread, and God waits to bless and fill our hearts with joy and satisfaction, but we often turn aside and try the "human cisterns" that can "hold no water," instead of drinking of the "river of his pleasures," and labour for the bread that never satisfies instead of enjoying the fatness of His house. How is it that so many of the Lord's people bear so little testimony for Him? That so many of us are like Lot in Sodom? Is it not that we are not hearkening to God's word, and not feeding on Christ the bread of life as we should, but living on that which cannot nourish the new nature, and consequently we are half-

starved spiritually, and have lost the appetite for that which is good?

May the Lord give us to *hearken diligently* to His word, to cease to look for satisfaction in anything here, but to know how abundantly He can satisfy, and to know more of what the *river* of His pleasures is.

Yours in Christ,

S. B.

COMPENSATION.

THE path was narrow, winding all the way
Onward, and upward, steep, and dark, and rough,
Strewed oft with thorns that pierced the tender feet
Of Him who trod it. Yet He turned not back :
Ever before Him was the journey's *end*—
The morning that would break without a cloud,
Rich compensation for the night of pain.
So patiently enduring passed He on
His lonely path, misunderstood by all
Save God, His Father, in that home of light,
Whose will alone it was His joy to do,
His name to glorify.

Consider Him ! Soul, whom He loved so well,
Trace out His pathway o'er the desert sands,
Those three and thirty years—then Calvary,
With all its darkness, and its untold woe ;
Hush ! 'twas for love of thee He suffered there,
For thee, O soul, who only hated Him !
Ah ! but that love has conquered, and at last
Has woo'd and won thee. Now, for evermore,

“ His own ” thou art, and nought in heaven or earth
 Shall ever part thee from that Mighty One.
 Gently He puts to thee a question now—
 List as He speaks in accents low, and sweet,
 “ Soul, for whose sake I yielded up My life,
 Wilt thou from henceforth yield thy life to Me,
 Daily to be a living sacrifice ? ”

Thy deepest joy to do the Master's will,
 To walk with Him in sweet companionship
 Along the rugged path that leadeth home ;
 Only a little while to serve Him here,
 Then life's short day is done, and thou shalt see
 Him face to face. Full compensation then
 For all the suffering of this “ little while,”
 Thine evermore.

A. S.

GLEANINGS.

I think the *old* man must be the old nature, for it is what belongs to us, yet can be viewed apart from us. “ *Our* old man is crucified that *we* should not henceforth serve sin ” (Rom. vi. 6). It is contrasted with the *new* man, and speaking of it in a practical sense, can be put off and the new man put on (Colos. iii. 9-10) ; and this is characteristic of the Christian state (Eph. iv. 20-24). It is not, it is clear, just my former self ; for if I speak of *former* self, I speak of that which is past, and in the present has no existence, whereas the old man is crucified with Christ for a present result. There would be no need to have had crucified one's *former* self. Putting then the term the *old* man in the crucible of inquiry to discover what it is, what remains ? It is not just one's former self, because its deeds, if unwatchful,

may be manifested still in any one of us. It is what is part of me as a person, and yet can be viewed as something distinct from me. What can that be but a nature—the old, the evil nature, which is in me unchanged and unchangeable?

In Romans v. 16, in telling us of the condition whether of condemnation or justification, what occasioned the former is told us (one offence called for judgment unto condemnation), and the occasion which gave rise to the latter is also stated (the free gift is of many offences unto justification). Offences seem required to be stated as that which was the *occasion* for the exercise of judgment on the one hand, and of the free gift on the other.

I believe ——— was right, that the experience described in Rom. vii. 7-24 is that of one not sealed—so of one who is in the flesh. When we *were* in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law (see 8-9) did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death (10). But then Roman saints were in the Spirit, because indwelt by the Holy Ghost (viii. 9), so they were no longer in the flesh. The effect of being in the flesh, 7-24 graphically describes, and 8-10 explicitly states.

One needs to keep the Lord Jesus before one if we are not personally to add to the failure. I was reading the blessings of Israel by Moses, Deut. xxxiii. Judah was to have the *ear* of God (7), Levi the *mind* of God (8-10), and Benjamin the *presence* of God. We have all three as Christians.

I believe the one new man in Christ in Eph. ii. 15 is the race.

In Rom. vi. 18-22 the word for *freed* is different from that in ver. 7.

I have viewed Ephes. iv. 22-23 regarding putting off, and putting on, as what is true of the Christian, not a question

of practice or realisation. But renewing is, I believe, always viewed as a process going on. Rom. xii. 2; 2 Corin. iv. 16; Eph. iv. 23; Col. iii. 10; Titus iii. 5. *Race* is that to which I belong. *Nature* is that which is in me. Col. iii. 11 speaks of the nature by which the walk is characterised, "put on." And it is Christ there in all, not all in Christ.

It is true that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. iii. 28). That refers to *race*. In Col. iii. it is what the saint, having put on the new man, recognises. National distinctions cease, Christ is everything. Rom. vi. 6 states, of course, only that our old man is crucified. I should view it as God's act, because crucifying is judicial action. Rom. viii. 3 takes in more than vi. 6. For God condemned sin in the flesh by the *life* as well as the death of Christ, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as well as for sin. Men crucified the Lord, but it was the judicial act of the governor. His authorisation was needed for it (Mat. xxvii. 26). Gal. v. 24 I should view as the professed recognition by saints of what is true of them as in Christ. They that are Christ's, i.e., in Christ, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. But it was God, I take it, who crucified our old man with Christ. We as Christ's profess to own that as true. As to the term *old man*, "the form in which the nature expresses itself through the person" may very likely be the reason for the expression. Anyone or thing crucified would be thereby judicially dealt with. Through the Lord's cross atonement was wrought, but atonement and crucifixion are different things.

ERRATA—

Page 83, last issue, 7th line from foot, "It need scarcely *by* said," should "*be*."

Page 82, 9th line from foot, "I have" should be "He hath."

Page 97, 15th line from foot, the first *by* should not be read, but should read "had defiled him by contact."

THOUGHTS ON DEUTERONOMY.

“THE Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” In these three divisions all the Old Testament was comprised by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, or Hagiographa, are the heads under which all the Old Testament scriptures are arranged by the Jews. By the law is understood the five books of Moses. Under the prophets are comprised, in addition to all the prophetic books, Daniel alone excepted, the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, the productions, some of them, of those who were prophets in Israel (1 Chron. xxix. 29). With the Psalms, the first book of the third great division, there were classed Proverbs, Job, the five rolls of Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, followed by the book of Daniel and the remaining historical writings, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. The order, then, in which the books of the Old Testament are arranged in the Hebrew Bible differs materially from that to which the readers of the Authorised Version are accustomed; but on one point all are agreed, for the order of the books of the Law in the Hebrew Pentateuch is the same in the different ancient versions of Greek, Syriac, and Latin. The titles, however, are different. By the Jews each book is named from one or more words found in its opening verse. The titles in the Greek and Latin are derived from some subject of its contents. “Genesis” reminds us of the “generations” so frequently met with in its pages (ii. 4, v. 1, vi. 9, x. 1, xi. 10-27, xxv. 12-19, xxxvi. 1, xxxvii. 2). “Exodus” tells us where we shall learn of Israel’s departure from

Egypt. "Leviticus" suggests God's directions which concern the Levitical priesthood. "Numbers" recalls the taking of the first census in connection with the tribal arrangements in the wilderness, as well as the second, on the results of which the extent of the tribal portion in the land were to be adjudged (Numb. xxvi. 53-56). On the origin of "Deuteronomy" a few words are needed. The term means a second law, and is said to be taken from the translation in the Greek version of the Hebrew copy (Deut. xvii. 18) of the law which the king was to write in a book for his instruction and guidance. Whether the title was derived from that or not may be a question, but clearly the book is not a copy or repetition of what God had previously revealed, for it records the terms of the covenant made with Israel in the land of Moab (xii.-xxix. 1), which covenant was in addition to that made with them at Horeb. Whatever, then, may have suggested the title, it does as a "second law" describe pretty well one chief feature of the book.

Three covenants there are in connection with God and Israel. The first was made by them with Him at Sinai, the terms of which we have in Exodus xx.-xxiii. 33. If kept by the people they would be to God a peculiar treasure above all people, and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. xix. 5-6). And God would make them inherit the land, driving out little by little the ancient inhabitants, lest the country should become uninhabited and cultivation in a measure cease (xxiii. 20-33). For God did not take Israel into a land which was not ready for immediate occupation, just as the Lord will not take His people into a house not made ready beforehand. We know how soon the people failed, falling into gross idolatry, and thereby forfeiting all blessing which depended on the observance of

the covenant. God then, in Exod. xxxiv. 10-27, entered into covenant with Moses and with Israel to bring the people into the land. This did not, could not fail. For the people were no parties to this engagement, though specially interested in its fulfilment. What they should do when they entered the land is briefly set before them, but their entrance was part of the covenant by which God thus bound Himself to them. But for their continuance in the land this covenant made no provision. That God would accomplish His word the people knew full well, and their position as described in the opening of this book shows that it was in process of fulfilment; for the wilderness wanderings were over, and they stood confronting the land of their inheritance. Up to this point they had learnt two things if at least God's word remained in their remembrance. By sin they had forfeited all claims to covenant blessing, yet God would be faithful and fulfil His word to the patriarchs. This was the one thing. The other was that, although they had broken the first covenant, they were not to think themselves absolved from the responsibilities which they had promised to discharge. On this point God's communication to Moses in Exod. xxxiv. was sufficiently clear. But now on the plains of Moab they learnt that continuance in the land depended on their obedience to God. This was the purpose of that other covenant made with them in that country (Deut. xxix. 1), beside that made with them at Horeb. The importance, therefore, of this covenant is manifest. All lost as far as they could claim anything by their idolatry at Sinai, their entrance into the land God bound Himself to make good, stating at the same time that when inside of it they were to be faithful to Him. And now, with the river Jordan only between them and Canaan, He acquainted them with the terms of another covenant, by

which they could abide in it unmolested and prosperous all the days that they should live upon the earth (xii. 1). One understands, then, the position of this book as the last of the five, and its importance as part of the Pentateuch. Historically, of course, its place would be after that of Numbers. Morally, too, its position must be there likewise. In the former we see clearly what the people were; in this latter we learn what God was, desirous to bless them, but able only to do so in accordance with righteousness. Desirous to bless them! Surely He was, else after He had brought them into the land He might have left them to their own devices, the bitter consequences of which He knew full well. Such, however, was not His way, for "He loved the people" (xxxiii. 3). Hence the place and the time of these addresses of Moses to Israel.

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan (*i.e.* east of the river) in the wilderness, in the plain, or Arabah (the Jordan valley), over against, not the Red Sea (for they were far from that), but Suph (Numb. xxi. 14, margin) between Paran on the one hand, and between Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab on the other; for such surely is the force of the preposition found in the original before Tophel. The sites of the places are at present unknown, but from v. 5 we must conclude that they were all in the land of Moab, or contiguous to it.

The locality thus indicated, the year, the month, the day when the law-giver thus addressed the people, are carefully recorded. On the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year dating from the exodus Israel were assembled to receive these last communications of God by His servant Moses. What an eventful year this had been and was yet to be. At Kadesh, which they reached in the first month of it, Miriam died and was buried. At Mount Hor, on the first

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day of the fifth month, Aaron died and was buried, high priest, as was evidenced by his death, after the law of a fleshly commandment (Heb. vii. 16). Across the confines of Edom they had passed (ii. 19), and had reached the plains of Moab. All the host, too, above twenty years of age at the time of the sending of the spies, thirty-eight years previously, had passed away; "for the hand of the Lord was against them to destroy them, as the Lord swore unto them" (Deut. ii. 14). And now the brook Zered stood between them and the wilderness. They had crossed it in the year appointed, and were now encamped opposite Jordan preparatory to their entrance into the land of their inheritance. War, too, had they known this year, but on each occasion victory attended their arms. The Canaanitish king Arad had learnt their power; all the males of Midian, against whom they warred, had been put to the sword; Sihon and Og had been subdued, and their territory taken possession of by the invading host; and Moab, which evidently felt itself too weak to resist in the battle-field the advance of the conquerors of their former victorious foe, Sihon, king of the Amorites, had learnt that Jehovah was with the people, and that no divination nor enchantment could succeed against Israel. It was an eventful year indeed. The smitten rock had given out its refreshing stream of water for the host and their cattle and their flocks, but the smiting of it was the death warrant of Moses and of Aaron. Judgment on the nation, too, had twice fallen, and that most severely: first, when the fiery serpents were let loose amongst them, and much people died; and, secondly, when, in consequence of their whoredom with the daughters of Midian, twenty-and-four thousand perished by the plague. What a memorable year, then, had it been. And ere it would end the people would be mourning the

death of Moses, and the last recorded appearance of the Lord in the tabernacle on the pillar of a cloud was to take place in the presence of Moses and of Joshua (Deut. xxxi. 15). The next time the cloud was seen the house was built, and Solomon, the Prince of Peace, was firmly seated on the throne. But the pillar with which Israel had become so familiar in the wilderness was never, that we know of, seen in the land. The cloud of glory was the token of Jehovah's presence wherever it appeared; its pillar form, however, was only for the wilderness journey from Rameses to the plains of Moab to mark out for them the way, and to indicate each time when the tents should be struck and a fresh march be undertaken.

In this fortieth year, then, the Book of Deuteronomy was written, its contents having been first of all delivered orally by Moses to Israel; but in reality it was God who addressed them. Now, this fact is important when the purport of Deuteronomy is perceived. For this book is *unique* in its character; nowhere else in the volume have we a book which corresponds to it. God's mind for His people had in a measure been communicated in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. His pleadings with a rebellious people after they had forsaken Him, the rock of their salvation, we are all familiar with in the writings of the Prophets. Stirring addresses they many of them are. Earnest, loving pleadings, too, proceeded from the pens or the lips of one and another of the Prophets. Their ministry, however, was for a people which had failed, to awaken them to a sense of it, and to recall them if possible to obedience. The grace on God's part of such a testimony, raised up by His Spirit, all true-hearted souls must acknowledge. In Deuteronomy, on the contrary, we have not pleadings with a people after manifest failure had come in, and open departure from God

had publicly demonstrated what they were ; but exhortation after exhortation, and the strongest, the most earnest entreaty not to forsake the Lord Jehovah, ending with a vivid description of the miseries such conduct would entail on them. For it was a people under government, without the revelation of grace, as we have it, that Moses addressed—a people therefore, who would reap what they would sow, after which God would deal with them in fullest grace. Of course, God does deal in government. He always has. He does so deal with men upon earth. But now, grace being fully revealed, we are pointed to another world, and eternal and unseen things become to faith realities. With Israel in Deuteronomy it was different. God's ways with them in government are especially pressed on them.

What a people, then, they were who needed such exhortations. What a God their God was to give them such tokens of His concern for their welfare. What pains He took to press on them the importance of being obedient, and the blessings which would flow from it. So Moses first spake these words. Then the whole was written in a book to be read to the people once every seven years, in the year of release at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xxxi. 9-11, 24-29). And to keep them continually in mind the words of the law were to be plastered on an altar on Mount Ebal, and what Moses commanded them was to be written on their doorposts, and to be frontlets between their eyes (Deut. vi. 8-9). Nothing, then, that foresight could provide or wisdom suggest was omitted in order to impress on the people the need of obedience to their God.

Was He, then, disappointed in His people? Ah, no! He reminded them what they had been, rebellious against the Lord from the day that Moses knew them (ix. 24). He told them what they were, uncircumcised in heart and

stiff-necked (x. 16). He predicted what they would do. "I know," says Moses, "that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands" (xxxi. 29). No pains that could be taken with them, no warnings that could be sounded and resounded in their ears, no catalogue of penalties that could be drawn out to act on the fears of an earthly people had any permanent effect on them. For the secret comes out. Man's nature is incurable, bad; the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. viii. 7).

C. E. S.

[The foregoing paper from the pen of this highly-gifted servant of Christ, he did not live to complete. It will have peculiar interest to many, and is very helpful to the understanding of the book of which it treats. Should any inaccuracies be found, we must remember it has not been revised by the author. We owe our thanks to the relative to whom all our brother's effects belong for his kind consideration in forwarding us this paper.—ED.]

OBEDIENCE.

THERE is both brevity and simplicity, and yet a transparent truthfulness in the opening chapters of the Bible. There is majesty too. As a narrative it has no competitor; it stands alone. God the Creator is before us. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). When was that beginning? Who can tell? The book does not, and no other can do so. The fact alone is recorded. What

we are told is that the heavens and the earth had a Creator (as is indeed self-evident), and the Creator was God. In verse 2 we learn of a condition of things as to the earth in which it could not have been when created; but of the cause of its then condition, "without form and void" and enwrapped in darkness, there is nothing to explain. Some brief account is given of the progressive work of each succeeding day, six in all. And then on the seventh day came rest (verse 31). "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." What a scene it was on which the eye of God rested on that seventh day. He surveyed His own work. It met His mind. There was no flaw. All was as He would have it, and hence His judgment expressed was "*very good*." There was light and order and beauty. There was life and food in abundance. There was life in the tiniest of creatures and in the biggest. The tiny animalculae and the elephant speak of the same skill and proclaim the same power. What a marvel it all was and still is.

The last of the works of God was the formation of man. Not the largest by many, nor the strongest either, but marked off from all the rest. Allied to the other living creatures, because one himself, and his body formed out of the dust of the earth, yet, nevertheless, there was a difference, and that difference was very great. For the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Henceforth a unique position was his. Dominion over all was given to him by God. On earth he had no superior. There was no one to whom he was accountable for his actions but to the Divine Being, and to Him he was accountable. Obedience was demanded. One command was given and one only, and there was a penalty imposed if that command was disobeyed. Thus

the true relation of man to God is disclosed to us. Formed by His power, he was plentifully cared for ; every need was anticipated and bountifully met. Gifted, too, with intelligence, he was able to hear and understand the voice of God, and to speak again to Him without terror. The Creator sought the society of the creature, and the creature was at ease in the Divine presence.

We have said that there was one command only. Why was this? Because more was not necessary. As long as this one was observed by Adam and his wife their conduct would be in harmony with God's mind. Ignorant of evil, and disposed only to do good, there was no need for a code of laws to govern their conduct. One command had been given, and that sufficed to show that obedience was expected from them. They had no desire to dispute God's right to demand this, nor any wish not to render it. But soon came the tempter ; for we read (chap. iii. 1), " Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." One wonders why the serpent went to Eve and not to Adam. Was there not design in this? and if so, it shows his subtlety. The visit, too, was paid to her when she was apart from her husband, and probably not far from the tree in question. But she knew well of God's command, and she was bound by it, although given to Adam before she was in existence. She, however, was not verbally correct in her statement. God had not said, "*Neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*" What He had

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said was, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or "dying thou shalt die" (chap. ii. 17, see margin). Her knowledge of what God had said was second-hand; she learnt it from her husband. How much wiser she would have been to have referred the serpent at once to Adam. That was her duty. To assume to know and to judge for herself, and to act apart from him, may have seemed pleasing to her. In this she was false to herself and to her husband.

Having gained her ear, the serpent sees he has won a point, and presses it with a flat contradiction of what God had said, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know" etc. God's word, then, was false; death would not follow, and He, according to the serpent, knew it was false; and yet she listened. Already she had fallen; the lie had been received. God's character, in her mind, was gone. He could not be believed. Moreover, He was denying what would be a real boon to possess—"Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Electing to judge for herself and apart from her husband, the principle of obedience surrendered, the serpent's slander accepted, her judgment was warped in consequence. She saw the fruit was good for food; it was also pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise; so she took of it and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her and he did eat. The result we know. Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. She had been deceived, but not so Adam. Probably his love for his wife led him to yield, and their ruin was complete. Naked and not ashamed at the end of chapter ii., but now they have gained the knowledge of evil, and are filled with shame. They know now the difference between good and evil. Good they had all along

known, but now they knew good and evil, but had lost the love of good and the power to practice it; and the evil, they now knew, they could not avoid even if they would.

Efforts to hide their shame followed, and real terror at the sound of the Creator's voice. Conscience, acquired by disobedience, made them cowards. Adam, when questioned, accuses his wife, and she in turn accuses the serpent, to whom no question is addressed. God knew full well what had led the serpent thus to act. Sentence was passed upon the serpent, between whom and the woman's seed God would put enmity, involving in the end the bruising of the serpent's head. Sentence, too, is passed upon Adam, and also upon Eve. Sorrow was in store for both, and then death. What was beyond death God did not then reveal. The nakedness they had discovered, and vainly sought to cover by their own poor efforts, God graciously covered for them, and gave ground for hope to cheer them even in their sorrow; but outside the garden they must go. Those hours of intercourse with the Creator were gone, never to return so far as any action of theirs was concerned. If ever they were to be in His presence, and in peace, it must be in a new way altogether and upon a basis which God alone could devise. The obligation to obey was theirs still, and God would never renounce his claim to their obedience.

The first child of the guilty pair soon proved that he had inherited a nature capable of the greatest cruelty. He killed his brother Abel. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous" (John iii. 12). Had Abel, then, a better nature than Cain? No; he, too, was born with a sinful nature, and was unfit for God's holy presence. But he knew it, and owned it, and brought such a sacrifice as proclaimed

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it; and to him and to his offering God had respect. Cain might have done the same, but he would not.

Years pass on, and the human family multiplies; but God's claims are ignored, and violence and corruption mark the race with but very few exceptions. There was an Enoch, and a Noah, and in his days came the deluge by which all were destroyed save Noah and his family. The descendants of Noah soon became idolators, and then God calls out one solitary man, Abram by name, and to him He reveals Himself and gives him promises of blessing. His seed had to sojourn in a strange land and suffer affliction there (Gen. xv.). But God raised up a deliverer for them, even Moses, first sheltering them by blood from His wrath, while destroying all the first-born both of man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt; and then by the power of His arm He brought them out from under the yoke of their enemies and opened a pathway through the Red Sea for them, whilst the Egyptians, who followed after them, were all drowned therein. God did a grand work that day and filled the mouths of His people with song. They were now a redeemed people, and the God who had redeemed them was with them to care for them, to be their Guide and Protector.

But from them He claimed obedience. As Creator He was entitled to it; but now as Redeemer He has established a double claim. Will they render it? He graciously offers them, on the third day after their song of praise, exemption from all the diseases which He had brought upon the Egyptians if they would but diligently hearken to His voice and do that which is right in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping His statutes. On the third month after, Moses is told by God to say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel, "Ye have seen

what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will *obey* my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. xix. 4-6). Brought to God—he sought them; He found them. By His power they had been delivered and brought to Himself. Nothing of theirs had been required, and they could not have furnished anything worthy of His acceptance. Slaves they were in the house of bondage, familiar with sighs, groans, and sorrows, all of which God had seen, heard, and known, and in His abundant mercy He had delivered them. And now He desired that they should be to Him, to whom the whole earth belonged, a peculiar treasure above all people. What a privilege for them! How gracious was their God!

Obedience the children of Israel readily promised, ignorant of the holiness of God on the one hand, and of their own sinful condition on the other. In chapter xx. Jehovah proceeds to define the obligations of the people to Him, basing His claims upon the fact, "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." No other God should they acknowledge; no likeness of anything in heaven or earth or in the sea should they make; and no homage to any such should they render. For He, Jehovah, was a jealous God, visiting in judgment those who hate Him, and shewing mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. His name should they revere and never take in vain. On the Sabbath they should rest and remember to keep it holy. Parents were to be honoured. They were not to commit murder, adultery, nor theft; nor to bear false witness; nor

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even to desire anything that belonged to a neighbour. Thus, in brief, is their duty to God and to each other explained to them. Soon follow a number of judicial decisions for their guidance in particular cases, but we must not enlarge. As creatures, obedience is due to the Creator. As redeemed ones, they have to learn that redemption has not set aside their creature responsibilities, but has renewed them (in a sense) and added to them. Henceforth God must be inseparably bound up with their whole practical life. Infinite in power and in goodness, richly would He bless them if obedient; but if perverse and self-willed they should feel the weight of His displeasure. His power was as great in judgment as it was in blessing. Which would they have?

God was going to dwell among them, so he makes known His mind as to the tent He would have constructed: its size, height, materials, curtains, textures, colours, furniture—everything to its smallest detail was revealed by Him. How he was to be approached, what sacrifices should be offered, and when; what days should be observed, who should officiate before Him, what ritual should be in use—nothing was left to them to decide. Then, too, God chose their food—what they should, and what they should not, eat; what they should, and what they should not, wear; whom they should marry; what company they should not associate with; in fact, He concerned Himself about everything. Nothing was needed but the hearty love of God's will, and that, as a people, they did not possess. Hence failure, crookedness, and rebellion marked their course. Space would fail to tell of all their wickedness, of the intercession of Moses, of God's forbearance with them in the wilderness. Two only of the grown men who came out of Egypt ever entered the promised land, and ere these

two, with the children who had grown up in the wilderness, did enter it, Jehovah set before them by His servant Moses, in the most solemn and impressive manner, the blessings and the cursings. Obedience secured the former; disobedience brought the latter (see Deut. xxviii.).

The blessings enumerated were all that heart could wish for in this life. They were suited to an earthly people. The cursings, too, were just the contrast to the blessings—all that could make life here on earth a misery. There is a correspondence in kind and character between the blessings and the cursings, and this of itself should make men slow to think that when blessings suited for heaven and eternity are presented for the obedience of faith, that there is no correspondence between the judgment to be endured by those who refuse it. There is, indeed, a correspondence; for he who enters through faith in Christ on eternal blessedness will find it in truth eternal, so he who dies unrepentant and unforgiven will find eternal misery to be his portion.

What God is against sin in governmental dealing here on earth can be learnt in the history of the children of Israel, notably in Deut. xxviii. to xxxii. inclusive. What God is in the holiness of His nature in view, too, of eternal questions, can only be learnt, in so far as we can learn it, at the Cross of Christ, and in the lake of fire. Men may dream, if they will, of future salvation for those who die in their sins, but it is only a dream. The descendants of the guilty Israelites will be brought into blessing in the future, and a new heart be given to them and a right spirit; but not one of those who perished in their sins will share in that blessing. God is good: He is infinite in goodness; but He is also severe, awfully severe. "Behold therefore," says the Apostle, "the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if

thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi. 22). Grace it was that brought Israel into the land in the past, and not the law. Never would they have entered into possession on that ground ; but grace had not undertaken to keep them there. To remain in the land they must be obedient. The penalties of disobedience, that section of Deuteronomy to which we have called attention, solemnly presses upon the people. Obedient they could not be, it was not in them ; and consequently they forfeited all their privileges. But by-and-bye grace shall again put the people of Israel into possession not merely of that portion of the land which their ancestors inherited, but of all that God had promised to Abram, and grace shall keep them there. Obedient they then will be ; for the law will be in their hearts and be written in their minds. A new heart will have been given to them each one, and all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. The obedience due to God, and which He craved, will be rendered by a forgiven and truly converted people, each one of whom will have received the Holy Spirit. God's glory will be manifested. The Son of David shall sit upon His throne, and the devil will be shut up in the bottomless pit. Jehovah has said it : "I will be their God and they shall be my people."

E. R. W.

HEBREWS XI. 8-40.

(Continued from page 104.)

WE now reach a phase of the triumph of faith, new in the history of man.

God, who may not be asked for a reason for His actings, steps into a home circle in Ur of the Chaldees, and addressed

Himself to a man called Abram, a son of Terah. We are told that Terah took Abram his son, Lot the son of Haran, his son's son and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife: that they went forth from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan, and that they came into Haran and dwelt there, and that there Terah died (Gen. xi. 31, 32).

It was to Abram, Terah's son, that the call of God came. In the seventh chapter of Acts we learn, at the lips of Stephen, that "the God of glory appeared unto Abraham and told him to leave his country and his kindred and come into the land which I shall show thee." God was to guide him to this new land, where he was to be a sojourner and a stranger.

As soon as Abraham was set free from family hindrances he departed, "as the Lord had spoken unto him." The call of God was to be sufficient for every question which might arise in his mind as to the propriety of such a step. Sarah might come to her lord, and speak of the strangeness of such a course as he was taking; and no doubt it was strange to man's natural mind. But another voice had been heard in Abraham's soul. *The God of glory* had spoken to him. Nothing could compete with that. God had spoken to Abraham, and he knew it and he obeyed. He did not know where he was going; that did not matter. God had said to him, "I will shew thee" (Gen. xii. 1).

Abraham sets forth to us the obedience of faith. He receives from God ability to leave every association, to surrender every tie and possession, and be a stranger for a time in a land which God had promised He would one day possess and His seed after him (Gen. xiii. 15).

We may well ask the question, Does the "like precious faith" possess us, and rule our lives here? We sinners of the Gentiles have been called by the same Almighty God that

spoke to Abraham. We read in Rom, i. 6, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." Beautiful words! But we have been told that judgment is about to fall on the scene *we* are in. We have been entreated to break with it, for the end of refusing will be to perish. Many here and there have listened and obeyed.

Not only did Abraham leave his country and his kindred, but "he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country," and the reason given is "that he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." He was contented for "the little while" with the life of a sojourner. His eye for the future was on "a city"—that which was stable and strong. *God* was the builder.

In Sarah we see one who by faith learned that God was the quickener of the dead. A son had been desired. God promised a son would be given, and although conditions gave no such expectation, she believed God. She counted that God was able to accomplish what He had promised. In due time Isaac is born (11).

We are next told that "these all died in faith"—they had not received the promises, "but saw them afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Peter, in his first epistle, beseeches us, "*as strangers and pilgrims*, to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul" (1 Peter ii. 11). Faith gives the victory over the world. The Apostle John asks the question, "Who is he that overcometh the world?" and answers, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John v. 5).

Faith is not a simple assent of the mind, but that which acts on and controls us. Faith is God's gift (Eph. ii. 8). It is given to us to believe in Him (Phil. i. 29). Faith has to do only with God. Let us apply this grand Scripture to

ourselves and ask what is faith working in us? It must be a daily work, a constant work. It wrought mightily in Abraham and Sarah, who had been brought out from a country where all was in heathen darkness (Joshua xxiv. 2). Still, faith had to secure fresh triumphs. God gives him the heir he desired. Now God puts His hand on Isaac and says, "I want him," and Abraham at once yields him up. God was more to Abraham than a son, and He who had given him the son and assured him that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed is relied on for the accomplishment of that promise, although he laid him in death. Faith triumphed on that mountain top, and there, too, Abraham received him again in a figure on the platform of resurrection, and thus his faith was perfected by works (James ii. 21-23).

Then we come to Isaac; he looks on and finds the future all aglow. "Things to come" will be abundant when the promised Messiah (of whom he was the type) and the King takes the throne and reigns.

Jacob, who had been "the man of sight" all his days, now gathers up his feet into the bed and dies in faith. He worshipped. He triumphed over what was natural. By faith he did so. He discerned how things stood as Joseph brought his two sons to receive the blessing of the aged patriarch. His days, he admits (Gen. xlvii. 9), had been few and evil; but in the dignity of faith, and as the heir with Abraham and Isaac of the promises for the world's blessing, he blesses the King of Egypt. He finished his course with joy, and in accordance with his own prophecy about one of his sons, he overcame at the last (Gen. xlix. 19).

(To be continued.)

HEBREWS XI. 8-40.

How remarkable it is that from amidst the many scenes recorded by the Spirit of God of that eventful life of Jacob, it is this one around his dying bed that God gathers the fadeless flower to place in the wreath that is in the chapter before us !

Joseph, though filling a high place in the Kingdom of Egypt, shows that he judges that the promise of God was greater, and when dying he mentions the departure of the children of Israel and gives commandment concerning his bones. The victory of faith overcame the world. No spot on earth are *we* taught to look for. We are waiting for the assembling shout which will gather us around the Saviour in the air. There we shall find Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the mighty company of saints of God gathered out before Christ died. They will have their special connection with the kingdom on earth, and the saints of the present time what is special to them.

Moses now is presented to us as the one who is the sufferer as he travels on the path with God. He *refuses* the honours of this world, and "*chooses* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (verses 24, 25, 26). Wealth that was unseen but eternal, and "which could not be gotten for gold, nor silver weighed for the price thereof," filled his heart. He forsook Egypt—the wrath of the King he did not fear. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Faith taught him also that God was holy, and that the passover with the sprinkling of blood were absolute requisites for the people and himself. He kept them both. He needed the shelter that God provided.

Then great events are passed before us. The sea is made to open to allow the people of Divine choice to pass over. Walls fall down, and the lonely Rahab on the city wall is preserved alive because she had faith in Israel's God.

Man cannot compete with the deeds God has recorded of the acts His children have performed by faith; they are recorded in imperishable records on high. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthæ, David, Samuel, the prophets, and many others whose names are not mentioned in this portion wrought valiantly by faith. "The world was not worthy of such" is the comment by the living God. Heroes they were, but heroes in whom all the power is seen to be of God. They lived and died in faith ere the Son of God appeared on earth. God had spoken to such, and He wrought in them "to will and to do of His good pleasure."

When faith fills the soul, God carries the saint forward, and mighty deeds are still wrought by the Christian warrior in and by the power of the holy servant Jesus (Acts iv. 31).

May God inspire His dear children in these closing days so full of man's will and way in the things of God, to be followers of such who fought the good fight of faith and overcame.

D. S.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. iv. 12—v. 1.)

THE King's commendation has not yet exhausted itself. Figure upon figure is used to express His knowledge and appreciation, and to give the sum of His delight in His spouse. And how significant and telling the figures are. "A garden inclosed is my sister spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Gardens in the East were often surrounded by walls or hedges of thorns, effectually barring admission to them, and thus constituting them places of repose and communion, where the owners could walk in secrecy, fearing no molestation from without. Shut off from the wilderness around, such a garden was wholly for the possessor; and so the King counts the spouse as entirely His. Not only were her words and acts and graces precious to Him, but herself. For whom else was she enclosed? Like an inclosed garden He views her, to which He alone has access. The perfume of the spices therein growing might flow out and others catch the scent, but she was as a garden, and this she declares to be His (ver. 16). Those creatures were barred from entering that would be destructive; but there was fruitfulness within also; and not only is the exclusion of evil necessary but we want the activities of grace, the working of God's Holy Spirit in the heart—inclosed *from* the world but *for* Christ.

And she was "a spring shut up." Springs were valuable possessions in those Eastern lands, and travellers relate how that they were often covered up, sometimes built over, by the discoverer, and access to them was by some secret door and passage. The thought in common found in these terms is that of secrecy: the truth here set forth that the hidden workings, the desire, the motives were His.

The spring was His and hence the fountain must be ; and as the former was shut up, so this is sealed. How incomprehensible is this to the untaught who know not the secrets of communion, and judge only by what is manward, alas ! all too often but the energy of nature untempered by grace. The hidden comes first—what is public emanates from that. Oh ! to have according to the words of the Beloved here, a heart undivided for Him ; for then, indeed, like Mary of Bethany, there will first be the sitting at His feet and then the anticipation of His heart's yearning (Jno. xii. 7). They serve best, because truly, who commune most. Again, then, the truth comes before her heart, as He speaks of inclosed, shut up, sealed, that the King regarded her as truly separated to Himself.

What an enumeration of the beautiful and fragrant products of nature follows to show her full fruitfulness. The pomegranate, a rich luscious fruit, is used to set forth in figure a fruitful walk (Ex. xxviii. 33), but she was a veritable garden of delights ; for He says, "Thy plants (or shoots) are a paradise of pomegranates with pleasant fruits." Grace was active indeed ! And in the various plants and spices which follow we have set out the varied displays of grace.

Not indigenous to Palestine some plants had been introduced from the East ; and of the spices some were obtained by using the knife to permit the quiet exuding of the fragrant, preserving balm within. Frankincense is supposed to have been brought from Arabia ; spikenard and aloes from India ; and myrrh was obtained by exudation.

And what lessons are here. Is the fruit of the Spirit natural to the human heart ? The manifestation of such are like heavenly exotics, and how plainly is the hand of the Gardener revealed. "From me is thy fruit found." It is common knowledge that the [most fragrant virtues of the

saints are not produced without the use of "the knife" (Jno. xv.). It might mean death, but is nevertheless a necessity. Here adversity does, indeed, justify itself. The outer bark of worldly hopes and aspirations has to be pierced, and then flows forth the preserving myrrh, with other precious perfumes—"all the chief spices"—none are lacking.

To "camphire (rather henna) with spikenard plants," does He liken her. To a *cluster* of henna flowers the spouse compared her Beloved as He charmed her (ch. i. 14). But further this goes. In this enclosed garden grew the plant along with the precious spikenard. In Oriental language the flower it bore was a love flower, and so suitably is it linked with the plant that produces what is so costly. Love is not far separated from what is of great price. So much we gather from the woman that poured her love offering over the head and feet of Jesus. Here is love and its fruit.

But she was also as spikenard and saffron. Of ointments the costliest was the spikenard, and of perfumes saffron was reputed one of the finest. This latter is said to be obtained from the crocus flower, which is, by many believed to be the one meant by the "rose of Sharon," mentioned in chap. ii. 1. What delighted Him came from her garden. Grace permitted her to say, "I am the rose (crocus) of Sharon;" and now He endorses her statement, enumerating it along with the products of her garden.

In the next phrase we learn that "Calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense" were there. From Ex. xxx. we gather that the first two were used in the composition of the holy anointing oil, and that frankincense was one of the ingredients of the incense (vers. 23, 34). These set forth in sum the moral excellencies and perfections of Christ her King, manifested in the power of the Holy Spirit. What pertained to Him perfectly does He in love apply to her. "All trees of frankincense" were there; and remembering

the import of this sacred spice, we can the better understand His delight and pleasure in her. And now when what characterised Christ is displayed we are a sweet savour of Him to God. The manifestation may be feeble compared with the original, but He sees it fully developed and gives the deepest significance to it. And only from those who are His can this sweet savour arise. Acts of kindness, moral living, and so forth, in which deluded men profess to see Christ manifested, however valuable in themselves, rise not to God as a sweet savour, flowing as they do from hearts that have not the faith that honours Him (Heb. xi. 6), and in whom the spirit of disobedience now works (Eph. ii. 2). "All trees of frankincense" were in the inclosed garden. The virtues of Christ are seen in the saints when walking in the Spirit.

The Psalmist, in dilating upon the wondrous glory of the exalted Messiah, the King, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, says, "All Thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces" (Ps. xlv. 8); and she who was to be queen, forgetting her own people and becoming "a garden enclosed" for Him, has the "myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices" associated with herself by her Lord. Greatly did He desire her beauty! What a token of love was that when Nicodemus came with his hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes to embalm the body of the One whose death had discovered to him the depths of his affection (Jno. xx., 39). So, then, if these grew in the garden of the spouse they grew for Him; and at the fit moment would be the fitting token of her answering love, as "sweet-smelling myrrh" presently assures her that His love was a never-changing affection—pure and changeless.

All is not yet said; and now we have the result that follows from being in such blessedly close association with

the Beloved. For Him she is a fountain sealed, but becomes likewise "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." She is the means of fertilising and blessing others; the medium whereby His good things are diffused around. Grace received cannot be locked away, and the words of the Lord come to us as we peruse this portion, that out of the belly of the one who believed on Him should flow rivers of living waters, such an one having within a well of water—living water indeed, for it springs up unto everlasting life (Jno. iv. 14; vii. 39). From whence did these living waters come? Who is the source of them? The prophet Jeremiah instructs, for there we read that the Lord is "the fountain of living water" (ch. xvii. 13). There Judah had forsaken her Lord, but as we read of her in Canticles, how well is the word of Isaiah fulfilled, "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (lviii. 11).

The spouse is compared to flowing streams, a well, and a fountain of gardens. Given in the reverse order, it is plain that the outward blessing is traced upwards to its source. Let us begin there. View that eternal snow on Lebanon's lofty summit, and behold the beginning of many a flowing stream, some open, some subterraneous. How fittingly emblematic are those of the unseen streams of grace and refreshment that issue from the throne of the Eternal. And as the cold-flowing waters find a lodgement in some prepared recess, so do these waters from on high find an abiding place within the believer, a well of living waters. Not to remain there inactive, as it were, but they rise, as does water to its source, unto everlasting life, and in rising, overflow and become "rivers of living water." The believer is, then, verily a fountain of gardens causing fruitfulness to abound. What beautiful accord is here! The never-failing snows on Lebanon provided supplies for many a fountain.

Our God, the Jehovah of Israel, is the living source of the waters that fail not.

And shall there be no response to this? That were impossible. Let but the love of Jesus be grasped, let His voice be heard in the soul, and then whatever hastens the consummation of our hope, whatever will help towards pleasing Him, is welcomed. Yes, "sweet are the uses of adversity" even, but it is only as there is Divine intelligence that the soul can, in any measure, glory in tribulation—*knowing* that tribulation worketh patience, a "spice" quite according to His heart.

What is the response of the spouse? The King has said in His love-breathings that she was a garden, and that in it were plants rare and precious. Then let the spices flow forth. What will help to that end? Not a dormant atmosphere—then the air might be scentless; but blow contrary winds: "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden." Thus she calls ere inviting her Beloved to come into His garden. "*My garden*," she says, as she calls upon the winds to blow upon it. Could she appeal to the winds to blow upon His garden? When, however, the activities of the plants therein growing were apparent, then the invitation goes forth, and "my" becomes "His"; for she was the garden, and He was the possessor, and consequently the pleasant fruits were His.

We have cold and rain connected with the north wind (Prov. xxv. 23; Job xxxvii. 9), and warmth attributed to the south (Job xxxvii. 17). Contrary winds producing good—how emblematic of the trials and afflictions of the pathway sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The winds do not produce the spices; they aid in their circulation. In nature the winds by motion hasten the circulation of the sap, and so are helpful to the tree in this as well as in bringing rain and heat. In the spiritual world trials, difficulties, and

persecution beget patience, and help to strengthen and develop faith, hope, and love, spices with perfume very acceptable to the heavenly Gardener.

Travellers have recorded some remarkable instances of trees, vines especially, showing a wondrous growth during storms, and that symbolises well the energy of faith put forth to meet the blasts. Lebanon's cedars more firmly cling to the rocks when the shaking is over. Trials call forth faith, and trust, and prayer; then, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow forth."

Thus the spouse desires the diffusion of the spices, and that stands for the open manifest display of the fruit of the Spirit. Then the invitation is given, "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." They were His; for apart from Him no fruit could be borne.

No sooner does she invite than the answer comes, "I am come into my garden, my sister spouse," owning the truth of what she had said, and sealing all as His with "*my*." And what an occupation had been His; for the words intimate that all this time He had been getting delight and refreshment from His garden—

"I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk."

There He obtained precious things, sweet things, necessary and nourishing things. He gathered for His own delectation of her graces, and ate and drank of the sweets of love's providing. What condescension for Him to speak in this way!

It is a wondrous and surprising thought that Christ is delighted with what is produced in us. But the actings of grace are very surprising. Do we not wonder how He can have any delight in us at all? Would not the harlot of Samaria wonder with a greater surprise than that caused by

the fact that a Jew should ask a drink of a Samaritan when she learnt *who* it was that spake to her, and knew Him as the One who could tell her all things that ever she did? And how delighted was Christ with the result of that interview. Tired He reached the well; refreshed He went up to the city. "I have drunk my wine with my milk."

The first results of grace must be His. The spouse invites Him to partake. The King invites others to share His joy. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly of love" (ch. vi. R.V. margin). Those are called blessed who have a part in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix.), and it is the same spirit here. His friends He would have share His joy. Those are His friends who rejoice with Him; and in words before quoted He says, "Rejoice . . . that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory (Isa. lxv. 19; lxvi., 11). He rejoices and they rejoice with Him.

May the Lord help us to enter into the wonders of His transforming love, that, animated by one desire, we may know how to suffer unflinchingly until we see His face in glory, and there learn perfectly the story of all His love and grace.

H. F.

JOSHUA.

THE Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are inseparably bound up with the name of Moses. So much is this the case that on reading the last chapters of the last of these books a feeling of sadness creeps over the spirit, for one has learned to admire and to love this most interesting and distinguished servant of God. There are a few others deserving of honourable mention in connection with the forty years wilderness journey of the children of

Israel, but Moses stands out before us in a pre-eminent degree as God's man for his day. Godward and manward he was a giant amongst his fellows. Called of God and sustained by Him, his life and service were not free from sorrow, nor did his position as the leader of the people remain unchallenged. Small men, mere pigmies by his side, were jealous of him, and even his own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, spake against Moses. But God defended His servant—He stood by Him. A truly unique individual was he. Access to God was always his, and Jehovah spoke to him as a man speaks to his friend. True to Jehovah, he was true also to the best interests of the people, and through him they learn that, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear" (Acts vii. 37, see also Deut. xviii. 15-18). No other servant of God could use such language.

However, Moses is not our present theme, but Joshua, and the first notice we have of him is recorded in Ex. xvii. A young man we know he is called in Ex. xxxiii., and he was so in contrast to Moses, though we gather that his age, in chap. xxii., was 46; and although their deliverance from Egypt was not many weeks old, yet he had gained the esteem and confidence of Moses, who entrusted him with the leadership of the army when they went out to fight Amalek. The choice of the fighting men was left to Joshua, and the generalship too, Moses meanwhile interceding for them. The result is stated in ver. 13: "And Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword." A man of valour, we may term him, and one whose moral qualities had won for him the confidence and trust of God's man for that day. Henceforth we may regard him as the Timothy of his time. Paul had no man like-minded who naturally cared for the saints, and Joshua stuck to Moses during all

those long years of trial. Fighting was not characteristic of the wilderness, and hence these very qualities in which Joshua excelled would not be called into use. He must bide God's time; patient endurance was called for, and in that he did not fail.

Our next notice of him is found in Ex. xxiv. The Lord had said unto Moses, "Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord" (ver. 1 and 2). Again in ver. 9, "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:" and in ver. 13 we read, "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you." Most definite were the instructions given to them. "Tarry ye here for us." How long? "Until we come again to you." Joshua accompanied Moses still further, and then was left to wait alone until Moses re-appeared. And this he did. But what of Aaron and the seventy elders? Every one of them returned to the camp, and became involved in the general failure. They saw the God of Israel, and yet became identified with the golden calf and its worship, and all this sprung from the prolonged absence of Moses. Their presence in the camp was due to disobedience on their part. They could not wait, and hence they had no moral power to check the down-grade movement amongst the people. Had they remained where Moses left them, and waited for him and Joshua, they would have escaped identification with idolatry. Joshua alone waited, and so was mercifully saved from this dreadful sin. He stayed where he was told. Solitary he might have felt, nevertheless he waited. Nor was it wasted time; for it is never wasted time to do as we are told.

In chap. xxxii. Moses and Joshua descend the mountain together, and find dancing and singing going on around the golden calf. Moses acts for God, and asks, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him," each of whom is commanded to take his sword, and to slay every man his brother, and his companion, and his neighbour. On the morrow Moses again goes up to God, and we presume accompanied by Joshua, although it is not mentioned. On returning to the camp with evil tidings for the people, in consequence of which they mourn and put off their ornaments, we read of a new action on the part of Moses. He took the tent (his own, we believe, for the tabernacle was not yet made) and pitched it without the camp—*afar* off from the camp. By this action care was manifested for God's name and glory, and the evil of the people's sin was openly declared. Further, it was soon made plain who really sought the Lord and who did not. It was one thing to mourn when judgment threatened, and quite another thing to hate the sin that called for it, and to have a heart that really longed after God. God openly endorses Moses' action, for we read (chap. xxxiii. 9), "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tent, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle (or tent), and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tent door, and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door." "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (ver. 11).

We should note well the conduct of Joshua. He did not follow his chief. Moses went again into the camp, but Joshua remained outside it. But where? Where God was.

He departed not out of the tabernacle. Was Moses wrong? No. Was Joshua wrong—was he unduly severe? No; and yet their conduct was so dissimilar. We must remember the position occupied by Moses, and the work God had given him to do. He had been appointed to lead God's people from Egypt to Canaan. He was also a mediator between them and God. As long as the people remained undestroyed and not disowned by God, he had a duty to perform amongst them. Joshua held no such position, and had no such work. It was his to remain in separation until he could, without compromise, appear in the midst of his brethren. And this we take it was accomplished when, in answer to the intercession of Moses, God promised to continue His presence with him and the people. Beautiful indeed was the intercession of Moses, and rich was the grace God displayed in answer thereto.

Our next notice of Joshua will be found in Numb. xiii., where, at the command of God, Moses sends twelve men, each of whom was a ruler among his tribe; thus each tribe was represented, and would have its own witness to rely upon. The origin of their being sent rested with the people, not with either God or Moses (Deut. i. 22). Moses was pleased with the idea, and God commanded their being sent. Had they been men of faith all would have ended well. Chief men they were, each one a ruler in his tribe; but the sequel proved that it would have been far better for the people if they had made no such request. Proofs they wanted—human eyes to see, and human testimony to corroborate God's word. Unbelief underlay it all. But two of the twelve were true men; and one of these was Joshua, the son of Nun. They accomplish their mission and return, and give a united testimony, for the land was all that God had said of it. "*Nevertheless*"—yes, there is always an "if," or a "but," or a qualifying "*nevertheless*,"

where God has lost His place in the eyes of an individual or a company. Difficulties there were, and occupation with them led to a reversal of their testimony. In ver. 27 they had said of the land, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it"; but now in ver. 32 they say, "The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." Caleb speaks out boldly, and stilled the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." The majority win the day. Caleb's testimony is refused; but where is Joshua? Not a word does he say in Numb. xiii. It may well have been that it was deemed wiser to allow Caleb alone to speak, for he was not identified with Moses as was Joshua. If the testimony of the ten were true, Moses and Aaron had led them wrongly and deceived them, and Joshua was so completely identified with Moses that for him to speak would only have enraged the people the more.

Soon comes the proposal to make a captain to return to Egypt (chap. xiv. 4). Moses and Aaron are virtually deposed, and now is Joshua's time to speak; and right well does he acquit himself, and Caleb is with him. What answer is there to their united and powerful testimony? "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones," and this would doubtless have been done had not God immediately intervened, for we read, "And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." It was God they had provoked—it was His word they had disbelieved, and that in face of all the signs He had shewed to them. Immediate destruction is threatened, and is only averted by the intercession of Moses, who rises to the occasion, even refusing the magnificent offer of making him a great nation; for he loved the people, and pleaded for forgiveness, and God

granted it saying, "I have pardoned according to thy word." The congregation were saved from immediate judgment, but each one should die a natural death in the wilderness. Forty years should they wander to and fro and know God's breach of promise. This is the fruit of unbelief. Caleb and Joshua are exempted, and their names are linked together in the pages of holy writ as having stood for God against the ten, and against the whole congregation of Israel. It is interesting to notice that Moses in Deut. i. only mentions Caleb. Joshua's testimony is not alluded to, but the sequel proved who were right.

Thirty-eight years pass away, and then we read, "And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (Numb. xxvi. 65). We read of Joshua on another occasion jealous for the honour of Moses. Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, and he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them;" but we never read of any jealousy for his own honour—no self-assertion. He could fight the Lord's battles when called on. He could stand alone and wait the return of Moses in obedience to the word and not lose heart. He could take the separate place outside the camp, when the holiness of God claimed it. He could face the wrath of the whole congregation and give a true testimony in honour of Jehovah. He could sink self, and be heartily content to remain in the shade—a mere minister to God's man for his day. And what came of it? He got a position at last, a real work for God and for His people.

Moses and Aaron must both die, for they had failed, and God was inexorable. Often had Moses been heard when he prayed for the people, but now God will not hear. "Speak no more to me on the matter." Moses obeys; but if he cannot repeat his desire for himself, he can still pray for the people, and this discloses true moral greatness.

“Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (Numb. xxvii. 16, 17). And God answers at once. It would seem from his prayer that Moses had no inkling of who would fill that position. It was to be Joshua. Moses’ attendant must come to the front. Jehovah wants him now. Retire, Moses; lay down and die. God can still care for His people, and His man is in readiness. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of Israel may be obedient” (ver. 18 and 20). Moses is to encourage him (Deut. i. 38), and this he does (chap. xxxi., 7). Moreover, God Himself would give him a charge: “Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: *and I will be with thee*” (ver. 23).

In chap. xxxiv. Moses dies, and the Lord buries him. What a loss! But Jehovah lives. “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him, and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses” (ver. 9). Joshua has been called of God; he has been duly qualified, and is also accepted by the congregation. But there is one weak element in his character, and that is what, from his previous history, we should not have perceived. Jehovah knew it, and Moses knew it. Joshua lacked courage, so Moses was to encourage him. Jehovah bids him be strong, and of a good courage; and the people also say to him, “Only be strong and of a good courage” (Josh. i., 18). He receives the title deeds of the inheritance for Israel from Jehovah

Himself in ver. 3 and 4. He is afresh reminded in ver. 2 of having Jehovah's authority to lead the people into the promised land; and in ver. 5 he is promised the presence and aid of the Omnipotent One: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." But Joshua still lacks a most important thing. Oh! the goodness of God. He cheers, He encourages His servant thus, "*Be strong and of good courage.*" These were needed for dividing the inheritance (ver. 6). This was *public* work, done *before* and *with* the people. *Strength and courage* were needed in *larger measure* than for what was *secret*, for what no eye but Jehovah's could see; and upon this would depend in the end the success of his public work. "Only be thou *strong* and VERY COURAGEOUS, that thou mayest observe to do according to *all* the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (ver. 7). He must, moreover, keep himself in constant touch with the word, keeping the law in his mouth, and meditating (in his heart, we may say) on the law day and night. "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (ver. 8). One more word—and what is it? "Have not *I* commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest." Armed thus on all points all should have gone well with Joshua.

The Jordan is crossed; all the males are circumcised; Jericho is taken and destroyed; and then comes an ignominious defeat, and that, too, from a little city against whom Joshua had only sent 3,000 soldiers. He under-estimated the enemy's power. He broke the unity of the host. Yet neither of these caused the disaster; for if Jehovah had

been with them victory would have been theirs. Where was Joshua's courage now? Gone, clean gone. Right well, then, did he need all the exhortations he had received. God's way was blocked by sin, and this hindrance must be dealt with ere His presence and blessing could be enjoyed. The sin is discovered and judged, the offender and all that belonged to him are both stoned and burnt. Jehovah had said, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." And then, in effect, Joshua reproaches God with having been untrue to His word; and even brought them across Jordan to deliver the people into the hands of their enemies. How cruelly false is unbelief! Joshua's next failure is evidenced in receiving the Gibeonites. He *prayed* when he should have *acted*, and now he *acts* when he should have *prayed*. He forgot to ask counsel of God. Judging by sight and sense he entailed a perpetual loss upon God's people, from which they could never rightly free themselves.

Saul, the first king of Israel, slew the Gibeonites in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah, and God apparently sanctioned his action, or rather He expressed no disapproval of it at the time, as far as we know. But long after Saul's death, in the days when David sat upon the throne, there came a famine for three years in succession. What distress this must have occasioned! At last David enquired of the Lord. "And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (2 Saml. xxi. 1). Had Joshua enquired of the Lord as to the Gibeonites, no league would have been made with them, and Saul in his zeal would not have been guilty of breaking a solemn covenant, and thus causing widespread distress amongst God's people, as also the death of his seven sons (ver. 8-9), ere prosperity could again return to the land of Israel.

The surrounding kings, incensed at the Gibeonites having made peace with Israel, unite to attack them. "And the

men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand: there shall not a man of them stand before thee" (chap. x. 6-8). How like God is this goodness! Never had there been such a victory on earth before. Joshua and the princes had failed—failed to ask counsel of God; but it was not wickedness. They had not availed themselves of their privilege, but God would bring good out of it all. "And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter." Then, too, God had heard the voice of His servant, and had lengthened the day as never before or since. In ver. 25 we find Joshua is able to encourage all the men of Israel. He who had so often been encouraged now is able to address others, and minister to them what God had ministered to him. "And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." In going from city to city in each case we read, "And all Israel with him." Never again would he repeat the blunder of taking but a few, as at Ai. Almost his last testimony is this: "And behold, I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord thy God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (chap. xxiii. 14). Beautiful testimony is this! Now we must close, and may it be ours to profit, as surely we may, from the history of this distinguished servant of God. E.R.W.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. v. 2-8.)

WE were noticing in our contemplation of the third canticle the matchless way in which the King assured His spouse of her preciousness to Him ; of His full delight in her ; and she learnt from His own lips that He much desired her presence. In this, the fourth song, we learn indeed that she could change, but that He was unchangeable ; that His love was equal to every test—neither coldness nor indifference could quench it. How wonderful His affection ! How remarkable her slowness and sloth !

For our opening verse is a confession of slothfulness. "I sleep but my heart waketh." Assured of His love she allowed that to induce carelessness, and sleep ensued when there should have been vigilance, and real enjoyment of the Beloved. The assurance of being loved is much ; the enjoyment of it is much more : and with nothing short of this would He be contented. But this is not an unique experience, for how often spiritual ecstasy seems to be succeeded by spiritual torpor, the soul seeming content to rest upon what has been imparted. It turns in upon itself and consequently, first missing the exquisite joy of communion, has to learn in a painful way not to rest in any, but just to have Christ as the Object of the life.

But sensibility had not entirely gone. "*I sleep, but my heart waketh.*" A voice was heard, that voice that was once so quickly caught inviting away to regions of blissful enjoyment after the long winter season—"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away," is again heard issuing an

invitation. "I sleep"—alas! that such was all too true, as seen from her behaviour to her Beloved (ver. 3). "But my heart waketh"—blessed fact!—presently to be fully awake when dull sloth shall have been thrown aside, and by her loss she is roused to action. And where Christ is prized, the loss of intimacy with Him is felt. Could it be otherwise? The heart that misses Him not, is the heart that has never heard His voice, never felt him to be indispensable, never said, "*This is my beloved, and this is my friend.*"

"It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." In tones unmistakable He knocked at her heart's door, and in the fulness of His love pleaded for admission. His accents of love were heard, and using every term of endearment He invites her to communion with Himself. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Surely here is an irresistible appeal. All these terms, except the last, He had addressed to her before; and now in combination with the others He mentions her perfection. "My undefiled," or "perfect one," putting into a title the outpourings of His love in chap. iv. Had He not said, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (ver. 7)?

Oh, moment of supreme heart-joy when Jesus invites to communion! And note the many relationships He puts forth: "My sister," the natural relationship; "My love," the object of His choice; "My dove," the constant one; "My undefiled," the very embodiment of all purity and loveliness—mine altogether. What more could be said? How desirous He was to be with her His tenderly-moving language plainly indicates, and it would appear that, of necessity, He would get an immediate response. But no; not even when He tells her of what He had undergone to get to her: "For my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

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He had waited long; He had suffered much; and now what answer from within awaits Him? Could she refuse His appeal? Could she slight such love? Must not indifference give way before love and grace like this? From within comes the excuse, "I have put off my coat: how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet: how shall I defile them?" Thus the most trivial things are allowed to hinder what she, when in her proper condition, most highly prized. The slight exertion of robing herself was too much for her to undertake just then; and think of the sloth that could speak of defiling the feet by walking across the chamber to open to Him. Not for His sake would she defile her feet; it was too much trouble for her to array herself for Him. O base ingratitude! but truly she was her own enemy, robbing her heart of the inestimable joy of Christ's presence, and for which she must presently justly suffer.

But individual experience testifies to the truth of this. How like the spouse we each are! So prone to go asleep, becoming indifferent to all the claims the love of the Beloved imposes upon us. How often do we find that bodily indulgence, carnal ease, takes the place of spiritual communion. How often do we seem to remind the Lord that His invites are premature, and unseasonable, and the wondrous story of His wonderful love fails for the moment to arouse us out of our lethargy. Excuses come easy to us. Not that there is lack of love, nor yet want of desire; but, seeking our own things, we are negligent of His voice, and in our way say:

" My clothes are off, my nap is sweet,
 How shall I rise undressed?
 How shall I stain my new-washed feet?
 Excuse me,—let me rest."

When Jesus speaks it is out of the very depths of His heart, and he seeks to acquaint us with what we are in His

sight. Oh! let us with all our renewed energies seek to respond to His word, "Abide in me." Remember the path of suffering Christ trod, culminating in the dark hours of Calvary with pains inconceivable, when storms on His head did blow. May alienation from Christ be painful to us. If we trust to self we, too, shall have to learn experimentally that it is not to be trusted. We want, as already remarked, not to rest in the assurance of His love, but in the enjoyment of it.

Indifference brings suffering, and now love so slighted is to be withdrawn, but not before further tokens of its enduring character, its superiority to every affront are given. What love is like the love of Jesus? "Earthly lessons teach us the limits of earthly love,—the trifles which may snap affection's cords; the tiny word, the thoughtless letter, which may sunder a life-long friendship. Not so our Saviour's love. How does the study of the Apostles conduct to Jesus when on earth illustrate this? Their ignorance, their apathy, their want of sympathy, all borne with so lovingly, forgiven and corrected. And just the same history is repeated over again in our inner life." And Jesus remains the same.

Other tokens of love He gives—acts follow His words. "My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door; and my bowels yearned for Him." Utter insensibility there was not yet, and the sight of that hand accomplished more than His words. "The hole of the door" refers to the opening made for the hand to be thrust in to undo the lock which was placed on the inside of the door. One traveller writes: "I once spent a summer in an old castle, whose great outer door had a lock and a key which were almost a load to carry. This kind of lock is no doubt very ancient. They are placed on the *inside* of the doors of gardens and outer courts, and

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even on those of inner rooms in some places. To enable the owner to unlock them a *hole* is cut in the door, through which he thrusts his arm and inserts the key. All the garden doors about Sidon are thus arranged; and such must have been the custom at Jerusalem in the days of Solomon."

The sight of that hand hastened the quickening of the senses, and agitated emotion followed. Her inmost soul was moved. There was grace in her heart, and grace "once implanted can never be lost; though it is not always in exercise, in motion, yet it is always in being." "My bowels yearned for Him." His boundless love was again before her.

For her discoveries are once more two-fold—(1) about herself, her indifference, her ingratitude; and (2) about her Well-Beloved. He had not withdrawn Himself without leaving some evidence of His mighty affection behind; and so on going to open the door, she finds her "hands dropped with myrrh" and her fingers "with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the locks." What indications of abiding affection. There was the myrrh, and overflowing (rather than sweet smelling) myrrh, telling of love and grace and the over-abounding of it. Myrrh is a preservative, and so is figurative of that preserving love of His. "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved unto me, He shall lie betwixt my breasts," she had said (chap. i.). Well for her would it have been, her experience would have been less painful, had she kept Him there, and not have allowed false confidences to rob her of His joy.

She rose from her couch of repose to open, but—He was gone. In love He came; in love He withdrew Himself. And now when her loss is apparent, she is nigh overwhelmed with sorrow. But truant hearts have to pass through a painful schooling to rid them of lukewarmness and

indolence which cling so tightly to them. But, dear saints, we can rejoice also, that if, through yielding to circumstances, we cause Christ to withdraw Himself yet He leaves us not without witness of His love. A sight of His pierced hand will bring with it the remembrance of blessings we enjoy, the fruit of His atoning death; and if we have, on account of slothfulness, to pass through the bitterness of not having the sensible enjoyment of His blissful presence, let us remember the "overflowing myrrh" and turn to Him to prove that He is willing to be found of us.

"*Had turned away—was gone*" is her mournful lament. He had spoken, her soul failed to respond, or rather perhaps we should say that hearing, self hindered the response, and now she must be made sensible of her coldness. It was His purpose to bless her, and consequently there was the necessity for her to further learn herself. Christ does not break with His own on account of their ingratitude and coldness. Having loved, He loves for ever. None of the little things that separateth "chief friends" can diminish that love of His or make Him change His mind about them, but He must bless them. So chastening becomes blessing, for it enlarges their capacity for the enjoyment of Himself. He withdraws Himself—was gone. How that would test her desire for Him, and prove the reality of her love.

She sought Him: "I sought Him, but I found Him not." A great void had arisen in her life. Her remissness had brought her pain, and she who might have been in the most blissful communion was found searching the city in quest of her Beloved; and brought in contact with "the watchmen," those responsible for the order of the city, the guardians of its peace, they smite her and insult her by taking away her veil. It was right for them so to act. The reason of her being there did not concern them. What cognisance of her

love could they take? She was but suffering the due reward of her neglect of the Well-Beloved. In chap. iii. the watchmen are silent. Here they exercise violence towards her; for it was not a first offence. Bitter experiences followed on her refusal to have communion with Him.

Nor, we must learn for ourselves, should the joy of communion be an occasional thing. True it is that there are seasons when we seem to apprehend, appreciate, and respond to the breathings of our Lord in a fuller way than at others; but yet, called as we are to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, the joy of this is to be our general and not exceptional experience. But like the spouse we can be neglectful, and forgetful, and so need to pray the prayer that the little foxes that spoil the vines with tender shoots be taken away. We can assuredly bless Him for the knowledge given, that though so poorly responsive now, yet to each one it is—

“ Sweet to know that, by and by,
My heart shall love Thee perfectly,
 Shall yield at length a full response
 To all Thy love, that never once
 Has failed, in grace to bear with me,
 Whose ways so oft are grieving Thee.”

To the daughters of Jerusalem a charge is given: “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell Him that I am sick of love.” He was gone but her soul was after Him; though slothful, yet unsatisfied without her Object. The daughters of Jerusalem might be sympathetic, but sympathy would not quench her desire, nor give the ease she sought. Christ alone would satisfy.

“ I want my soul's beloved one,
 None else can give me ease;
 I'm sick of love; O is there none
 To tell Him my disease?”

Do we so feel after behaving in practically the same way as the spouse? Happy are we if we feel the loss—which should never be felt—as keenly as she. With nothing short of full satisfaction and rapturous enjoyment of Jesus and His love unknowable, ought the heart to rest satisfied. If the *must* of the heart is that it *must have Christ* then such longing shall be speedily quieted.

(To be continued.)

FREEDOM:

AS SET FORTH IN JOHN VIII. 32 AND 36.

THE Lord Jesus puts before us most wonderful truths in this portion of Scripture. It is not a question of how much those hypocritical Jews understood Him. The truth is there for us, and we seek to gain from it what the Jews rejected.

To me the difference between being made free in ver. 32 and in ver. 36 is marked. To put it simply, the first speaks of freedom FROM and the second of freedom TO. Ver. 32 is negative and ver. 36 is positive—subjective and objective, if you like. We most of us know the former to a greater or less extent, but how much do we know of the latter? It is there for us.

In ver. 32 we get the truth making us free—the disciples were to continue in His word; they would know the TRUTH and the truth would deliver them. Has not this been our experience? We were troubled about our sins and the truth of forgiveness through the blood of Christ relieved us. Then we found our “old man” as active as ever—we found ourselves in spite of ourselves the servants of sin (Rom. vi.), but we see that our old man is crucified with Christ, and by accepting this truth, and practically reckoning ourselves to be so, we get liberty. For he that is dead is freed from sin

(Rom. vi 7), and being made free from sin we become servants of righteousness (Rom. vi. 18). Thus the truth makes us free. We get to know it, and in measure as we grasp it and put it into practice we find ourselves free. The truth in Romans frees us from sin (its dominion); the truth in Galatians frees us from law (Gal. iii. 25) and so on. It is made good to us by the Spirit and it makes us free. Blessed be God for that. We are exhorted, too, to *stand fast* in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We are reminded that while the truth (abstract truth, I take it) makes us free, it is CHRIST who is the spring of it. Can we think of what that Blessed One went through in order to make this possible for us? It truly behoves us to stand fast in that freedom to His glory.

This is what is termed by some SUBJECTIVE truth. It deals with our deliverance—what we are freed FROM. It is most necessary for us to make this our own. If we do not enjoy this liberty we certainly cannot enter into the freedom of ver. 36. I am sure of this. The heart and conscience must first be thoroughly at rest.

In ver. 36 we encounter a Person—the Son. Are you and I in any way acquainted with the Son? It is more than knowing Jesus as Saviour. The man in John ix. knew Jesus as the One who had opened his eyes. He knew (ver. 33) He was OF God. But he did not know Him as the SON OF GOD (see v. 36). However, there was the willing and enquiring spirit, and the Lord reveals Himself as the Son of God, and the next thing is worship. Do we really apprehend the thought of the Son? He who in eternity was in the bosom of the Father? the One in Whom the counsels of God centre, Who fills the Father's heart, and is even equal with God—Jehovah's fellow! Truly the same One as the humble Man of Nazareth, but what a contrast. "I and

My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones to stone Him. The thought is so high the natural mind pronounces it blasphemy. The mind taught of the Spirit of God says "Lord, I believe," and worships.

Abstract truth is necessary, but if we stop short of personal touch with the Son of God we miss God's thought for us. This point cannot be pressed too much. Now-a-days there is much abroad for the intellect, and anything that can be grasped by the mind is at once seized upon, but unless we have CHRIST for the HEART we lose the very object of Christianity. This is contemplated in ver. 36. It is the SON making us free to all that is His. To illustrate it—suppose I am in gaol. You obtain my release and come and tell me of it, and it sets my mind at rest. Thus we know the Lord Jesus as our Deliverer, but the great thing is to go on to know Him. Further, suppose you take me to your home and introduce me to your father, whose affairs are in your hands. You give me the freedom of the house, and tell me all your father's plans, and so on. If a servant had introduced me to your house would I have been at home? No. But if the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.

Does not the Lord desire to conduct us into the circle of His Father's love and interests? Why are we satisfied with a Christianity which is almost "earthly" in character? Look at Luke x. 22. Here we see the Son reveals the Father to whom He will. Do we know what it is for the blessed Son of God to reveal to us these high things? Or are we simply content to know our sins forgiven and the glory secure? Do we seek personal contact with Him so that He can make us "free indeed"? This alone will give us that apprehension of the grace of God which will reproduce Christ in us in a little way down here—and this is God's thought for us.

The knowledge of abstract truth, necessary as it is, will not alone do it. Intelligence must be balanced by affection. Paul desired that he might know Him (Phil. iii. 10). We see from Rom. viii. 39, that the love of God is in Christ Jesus, and if we want to know anything about it, it must be in Him. "He that hath the Son hath life," and it is those who hear the voice of the Son of God who live (John v. 25).

There must be affection for Christ—a heart for Him. There will be a moment when, at home in that unclouded scene, we will all be free, but nothing makes up for the loss of things here. By the Spirit we can anticipate that time and enjoy these blessings here. Thank God for the truth which has made us free, but let us not stay at that. We HAVE the understanding to know Him (1 John v. 20) and the Son, who abideth in the house ever, will make us free.

The path we must go to enjoy this is beautifully pictured in 2 Kings ii. 1-8, but I cannot go into this now. Our affection for Christ will be tested. We must cleave to Him and follow Him through Jordan. We must accept death with Him, and things of this scene must go. Association with Him must be in resurrection. The fifty sons of the prophets were children of God, but they stood to view afar off, and only the one who went the path with Elijah got the blessing.

May God give us grace to accept death to ourselves as to this scene and by occupation of heart with Christ in glory we shall gain that intimacy with Himself, thus enabling Him, by the Spirit through the Word, to make us indeed free as to those things which He, as Son, has had given into His hands by His Father (John iii. 35).

New Zealand.

W. C. C.

THE CLAIMS OF RELATIONSHIP.

“BELOVED, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God ” (1 John iv. 7). “ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth ” (chap. iii. 18). “ By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments ” (chap. v. 2). Our first passage exhorts the “ Beloved ” to love one another. Those who obey the exhortation and love the brethren prove two things are true of them ; first, that they have been born of God ; second, that they know God. No one can truly love who has not the divine nature. He who has it loves. Our second passage insists on the genuineness of the love, for there is the false as well as the true. No spurious article will stand the test ; word love won’t do ; tongue love cannot be accepted ; deeds not words are required ; truth not talk. How real all is and must be when we have to do with God. Our third passage applies the test to all the pretensions to love. By this we know that we love the children of God *when we love God and keep His commandments.*

Obedience to God, then, is the test, and not honeyed words and kind phrases. Why so ? Because our relationship to our brethren depends on the nearer one of our Father. He is the cause of our relationship to each other. He begat us each one. To Him, then, we owe, not only love, but obedience. The claims of the brotherhood are second to those of our Father. Every command of His is to be observed, and thus, and thus only, can we know that our love to the brethren is genuine. *We keep His commandments.*

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Must we have always a definite command? Is it mere legal obedience that we are to render? We know God—do we? If we do we should know His character, tastes, way of looking at things. We instinctively perceive that our Father would not approve of so-and-so, and that He would approve of so-and-so. The need of a positive command in all cases proves our ignorance of Him, our low state of soul. The *sayings* of Jesus are as dear to the true disciple as the commands; and the one who loves Him will keep His words. His sayings and His words have all the force of positive commands to the true and loyal heart. “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings” (John xiv. 24). We have commandments in ver. 21, words in ver. 23, and sayings in ver. 24. “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (chap. xv. 17). After what order, and according to what measure? This we can learn from ver. 12. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” Did the blessed Lord always speak sweet honeyed words? Did He not reprove? Did He not expose their selfishness? Patient, gracious, compassionate, and tender He was; blessed be His name, yet He could not, would not, allow the soil of sin. He died to make atonement, He lives to wash our feet. What a fountain of love there is in His heart. Access to it there is for each one of His own. We love Him because He first loved us. We love one another, too, but not with that strength of unchanging affection as He does. The saint who wanders, who grows careless and worldly, is still loved, but the Lord does not act towards such an one as He does to the obedient saint. The sweets of holy intercourse enjoyed by the latter are unknown by the former. Christ manifests Himself to the obedient saint. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it

is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (ver. 21).

Now we know that there is no truly converted soul who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, and of whom it is not always true that Jesus loves him. Each loved one is called upon to demonstrate the love he has in his heart by having Christ's commands and keeping them. It is a comfort at times to know when conscious of failure that He reads the heart. Peter when being proved by Christ fell back upon this fact. "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee." Should this suffice? A real comfort it is as we have said. Shall we not intensely long to prove by our actions the genuineness of our love to Him? Was His a heart love only to us? Did He not prove it by His actions? *He died for us.* What love! We must prove our love to Him by obeying every wish, every desire of His. The foolishly fond parent often caresses the naughty child, when true love would chastise it. And with what result? The poor child grows up a selfish, disobedient, troublesome person, a nuisance to himself and to others. Our God acts not thus, nor should we. The medical man may order a blister, a mustard plaster, may even have to use the knife, or may give his patient very disagreeable medicine to swallow. We do not accuse him of unkindness. He uses these means to an end, and that end is the health of his patient. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Our doctor may have much suavity of manner, or he may be brusque and curt. We certainly like the first the best; but manner is one thing and skill is another. Being really ill, mere manner, pleasant or the reverse, will not cure us. It is skill we want. Does he understand our case? Does he

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know the remedy? If he does, and effects a cure, we forgive him his lack of a pleasant manner.

Our Father chastens every son whom He receiveth, and the reason is, "That we might be partakers of His holiness." Not merely to be holy, which we are commanded to be, but to be partakers of His holiness. The chastening, then, to which each son is liable, is the direct result of love, and to fit us all the more to enjoy His love. Evil He detests; us He loves. We often sing—

*"All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away."*

Shall we not then submit to our Father's will, "As obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Pet. i. 14-17). Children then we are, and how we become so ver. 23 tells us: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." God's children we are, and are called upon to fashion ourselves according to the pattern of what He is. He is holy; we are to be the same. Being our Father, and as such we call upon Him, He claims the right to rule our lives, and will judge each one according to his work.

We should, then, pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. His children are journeying to the home of the Son, to the Father's house. Would that these precious truths were inwrought into our very beings by the power of the Holy Ghost. All former habits and ways abjured; all fleshly lusts abstained from; malice, guile, hypocrisies,

envies, and all evil speakings are to be laid aside. It is terrible to think that we can be guilty of such things, but we can, and not to the world only, but to one another. Our conduct towards one another is to be characterised by *unfeigned love* out of a pure heart, and not feebly but perfectly. How often is it said that love is blind? But it is not true. We do read, "Charity (or love) shall cover the multitude of sins;" (1 Pet. iv. 8). It is not ours to place the conduct of our brethren under the microscope, nor to publish abroad this one's inconsistency or that one's, but to cover rather with the mantle of love. It is ours, however, to seek the practical sanctification of each one. It is ours to endeavour to wash one another's feet. This is our positive duty. If a Peter does not walk uprightly, and puts the truth in jeopardy, he must be withstood. The glory of God demands the maintenance of the truth, and so much is this the case, that even if an apostle or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which Paul had preached, "Let him be accursed." Solemn thought! Are we to sit still and see God's truth endangered, the spiritual well-being of His children destroyed, and call it by the name of love? Love, indeed! it is anything but that. It may be indifference, or cowardice, or the selfish love of ease. If so, it is a wretched excuse to hide our own unfaithfulness under the plea of love to our brethren.

But we shall be found out. *He knows*, for "The ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings" (Prov. v. 21); "For mine eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes" (Jer. xvi. 17); "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13). Who can stand the scrutiny of

those eyes? There was One, and His name was and is JESUS. Those eyes from which nothing can be hid found unspeakable delight in gazing into the depths of that moral perfectness found in Him—sweet incense, indeed! But what of us? Shall we not, as it were, throw ourselves down at His feet, and earnestly entreat to be helped and strengthened to overcome all that is not what He would have? Like Christ! Conformed to the image of God's Son! Blessed, thrice blessed prospect. But oh! for more of it now! Evil, whether moral, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical, is opposed to all real advancement in the things of God, and prevents the enjoyment of true fellowship, which is and must be in the power of an ungrieved spirit.

E. R. W.

GLEANINGS.

“THERE were critical periods in the Mission history; there were dissensions that might have broken up the stations; there were questions to be decided . . . that concerned the welfare of God's Kingdom in Java and Nagpore; there was a unity of thought and action to be maintained among many at the most opposite points, and perhaps of the most opposite opinions; an unbroken connection to be kept by letters with every settlement; the Mission paper had to be edited; the training school at home to be diligently watched; nay, the very income itself was uncertain, for it was left to the private thoughts of Christian brethren.

“Whose head would not be puzzled if left to its own wits in such a tangle? What peculiar doctrine of chances would cover with a uniform and calculable success the venture of twenty years? What known human power can determine that when a man receives twenty pounds, he will be kept as

comfortably as if he had one hundred? Yet push forward such questions and the world will set busily to answer them. It does not believe in our day that there is anything which it cannot do; it must account for all phenomena upon its own principles. It is a monstrously clever world; steam and telegraph and photography, and planets discovered before they are seen, Great Eastern's and St. Lawrence Bridges, are very fair credentials. *But there is a Kingdom into which none enter but children, in which the children play with infinite forces, where the child's little finger becomes stronger than the giant world—a wide kingdom, where the world exists only by sufferance, to which the world's laws and developments are for ever subjected, in which the world lies like a foolish, wilful dream in the solid truth of the day. Gossner had been brought into that Kingdom; these questions were nothing to him—it was enough that he could kneel down and pray.*

“ ‘Here I sit,’ he would say, ‘in my little room; I cannot go here and there to arrange and order everything; and if I could, who knows if it would be well done? But the LORD is there, who knows and can do everything, and I give it all over to Him, and beg Him to direct it all, and order it after His holy will; and then my heart is light and joyful, and I believe and trust Him that He will carry it all nobly out.’ ”

From *Praying and Working*, by W. F. Stevenson.

“ It is so blessed standing perplexed at the head of two or three paths, to shut our eyes and put our hand in His, and say ‘LORD JESUS,’ lead me?’ It is so blessed, when the path thus taken leads over sharp thorns and through a weary wilderness, to feel ‘He led me here; I did not lead myself into this.’ It is so blessed when the loneliness of the way makes Him stoop and clasp our hand more tightly,

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and the sharper thorns and stones induce Him to lift us sometimes quite off our feet.

“Do you know that feeling—of being, as it were, lifted off one’s feet? I do; but it was in the days of deepest trial my heart ever had. Such happy, restful, confiding feeling! I have never *wholly* lost it since—the feeling—though gently set down again upon the stones and thorns. And I know that if the road *could* be so painful again, He would carry me as before. Shall we *ever*, EVER fathom the ultra-philosophic depths of that phrase, ‘As a little child?’”

EMILY BLATCHLEY.

1 Peter ii. 12 refers to God’s visitation concerning the actions of men, when the ungodly dealt with by Him, will glorify Him by confessing the righteousness of His ways with them, who had seen the good works of Christians, but had not profited by that so as to really serve God. The visitation seems expressed in a general way to take in very probably the great white throne, but not confined to that, embracing as well God’s previous visitations in this world. There is no thought of their repentance (1 Peter ii. 24). Peter looks at the acts, Paul at the principle. With Peter it is simply the practice. With Paul it is how we can practically keep from sinning.

C. E. S.

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON MALACHI.

THE captivity did not purify Israel. The returned captives deny the love and despise the judgment of the Lord. See Chapter i. 2, ii. 17.

The unclean spirit went out; but the house was not the Lord’s.

But there is a remnant, informal, spiritual, remembered now, to be distinguished hereafter.

They are exhorted to hold by the word. They are promised the judgment of the evil, and a new dispensation. They are not promised present recovery of David's throne, or deliverance from the Gentiles.

The Apostles contemplate an informal remnant, promise judgment and a new thing, but hold out no present recovery. See 2 Tim., 2 Peter, Jude, Rev. ii., iii.

Malachi's remnant were found by Jesus as Malachi left them, see Luke i., ii. So will the coming of the Lord find the saints as left by the Apostles in the Epistles.

From Bible Treasury.

HIMSELF—HIS WORD.

WE saw Thee not when Thou did'st come
 To this poor world of sin and death,
 Nor e'er beheld Thy cottage home
 In poor despised Nazareth;
 But we believe Thy footsteps trod
 Its streets and ways, Thou Son of God!
 We stood not by the empty tomb
 Where once Thy sacred body lay,
 Nor sat within the upper room,
 Nor met Thee in the open way;
 But we believe that angels said,
 Why seek the living 'mongst the dead?
 And now that Thou art throned on high,
 And thence Thy waiting saints dost bless,
 No ray of glory from the sky
 Doth shine upon our wilderness;
 But we believe Thy faithful word,
 We soon shall see our coming Lord.

ANON.

THE TRUTH IN DUE PROPORTION.

It is a wise thing to study carefully the Scripture proportion of God's teaching, and not to deviate from it, even with the best intentions. The Spirit will not be with us if we distort or misapply the word, even with the purpose of exalting Christ.

While the grand leading theme of the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures is God's thoughts about His Son, in His person, work, relationships, and glories; yet no Scriptures would have been written if there had been no redeemed saints on earth; and God would not have *them* to be overlooked.

The Old Testament was given to Israel; and both Old and New were given to the Church. What happened in the past has been written for the present. Luke tells us that the Lord, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, *expounded* unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (to give that *exposition of Scripture* was the first work of the risen Saviour); yet 1 Corin. x. 11, tells us that besides "the things concerning Himself," there are things "*written for our admonition.*" The Church was thus *an* object to the Holy Ghost.

We are told by some that we should not look to ourselves, but always look to Christ: if this mean that all grace and truth are to be found in Him, or that we are to live by the faith of the Son of God, we quite agree; but there is a side,

not of grace, but of responsibility, though we need grace to discharge it. If it be a matter of salvation, then the word says, "*Look unto Me and be ye saved;*" but if a matter of responsibility there is, "*Look to yourselves,* that we lose not those things which we have wrought."

Then again, some have said we must have Christ alone as an example. Most true; but Scripture teaches more fully about this, *e.g.*, see in Phil. ii. three *lesser examples* of devotedness in Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus—examples to us, but only as they followed Christ. "Brethren, *be followers together of me, as ye have us for an example.*" Again, "Be thou *an example* of the believers;" and the Hebrews were exhorted, "*whose faith follow.*" These are the very persons who are told to be "*looking unto Jesus,*" as supreme over all the galaxy of worthies mentioned in the ancient chronicle of faith.

The Spirit of God has given the Lord His place and pre-eminence in the word, but there are Scriptures about our walk, work, and worship, as well as about the person, life, work, and glory of our Lord Jesus. Everything is natural, proportioned, sober, and unexaggerated in the word, and balanced withal, and the highest things, things that are heavenly, are given in the same chapter as earthly things. God would not have dwelt in a tent for forty years in the wilderness if Israel had not been there: nor would He be on earth now if His saints were not here as His New Testament "*habitation in the Spirit.*" His people are of value and interest to Him; and He testifies to this by his writing so much to them concerning what they have in Christ, and also what they should be and do. His testimony gives the person of Christ a unique place, but the word speaks also "*concerning Christ and the Church.*" And so linked are we with Him in God's purpose and grace, that we cannot see Him

in His official glory without at the same time seeing ourselves, and what concerns ourselves, and learning what suits Him in our walk.

I set down these two or three things as samples of due proportion in the Holy Scriptures, that I may beseech my brethren to observe the balance of truth; and be careful to act upon it, and avoid distorting, dislocating, alienating, or exaggerating Scripture; for this can be only displeasing to God, and damaging to His Saints. Such an extra Scriptural canon of interpretation, for example, as would find Christ everywhere in the book of Psalms, and the remnant of the coming day nowhere, cannot be pleasing to the Spirit, nor honouring to Him, because it is not true: nor that we should ignore all that the Spirit says regarding ourselves and our practical every day life, by way of exalting Him. Let us not dare to improve upon the Holy Ghost's *method, variety, and fulness*, from a false notion that our way is more glorifying to Christ, for not only is Christ before the mind of the Spirit in His testimony, but Christians in their privilege and responsibility are so, too, in their subordinate, yet important place. The teaching that sees nothing but Christ and His glory in God's Holy Scriptures is sure to lead to Antinomianism. It has become a grave question, why there is so much of loose living in connection with the enjoyment of high truth in our day; and whether teachers can have been rightly dividing the word of truth, giving the practical side of truth in the same proportion and with the same frequency as we find it in the Scriptures. It is, no doubt, difficult for weak, erring creatures like us to take in God's word as He has written it, and to hold the balance even between what speaks of God's grace and what speaks of the saints' responsibility, not exaggerating the one nor abating the other (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13).

The teaching has not been too doctrinal, but it is too little practical. Among the sects, responsibility has been so exclusively dwelt upon that it has been exaggerated into legalism; among those who have left them, grace and Christ have been so exclusively preached, that in not a few instances the grace of God has been turned to lasciviousness. There is a revulsion from legalism that has a strong tendency towards Antinomianism. Neither the one set of teachers nor the other has given a facsimile of the truth of God in the proportion and balance of the word. The Scripture proportion of grace and responsibility is the thing that is wanted. We all need the teaching of the Holy Ghost to enable us to divide the word correctly, take it in spiritually, and live it out practically.

The Puritans exaggerated the Spirit's work in the soul, and its progress in knowledge and experience; and while there was much seeking after God, there was little deliverance known; but some of our modern teaching ignores the exigencies of the inner life, its health, growth, and progress, dwelling all but exclusively on objective truth. But the word of God has it otherwise. There must be growth, progress, and attainment of Christ, if Scripture injunctions are heeded by us.

The word gives exhortations to grow, fight, put off and put on, run, and make progress. "*Grow up* to him in all things." "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye *may grow* thereby unto salvation;" "*Grow in grace* and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" "Your faith *groweth exceedingly*;" "He that hath begun a *good work in you will perfect it* up to the day of Jesus Christ;" "*Work out your own salvation*, . . . for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure;" "Not as though I had already attained, either were already per-

fect, but I *press on* if so be I may lay hold of that for which also I ~~am laid~~ hold of by Christ" (see also verses 13 and 14); "We beseech you, *brethren*, that ye *increase* more and more"—in love: "I beseech you, *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" "If *ye*, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." See also Titus ii. 11-15.

Christ is God's object—*the* Object before God, and all His other objects are in connection with Him and subordinated to Him.

The world in its misery is, no doubt, *an* object to God: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" but Christ is *the* Object to God, and the Church is *an* object because Christ gave Himself for it; and it is now His in a real way by the Holy Ghost. God has many objects, but His testimony is about His Son in glory, and the Church connected with Him. The glory of Christ is *the* object dear to God's heart, and whatever man may do to thwart His purpose, and to blot out His Church in its holiness, as His house on earth, He will bring it out in all its virgin freshness and bridal beauty when the marriage of the Lamb shall come, and His wife shall have made herself ready; the children given Him shall all be presented faultless to the Father: the Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Christ will present to himself—holy and without blemish: and Christ and the Church will be seen together in the holy Jerusalem set for the blessing and governing of the millennial world in the height of heavenly glory in the kingdom of the Father; and Christ shall reign when His enemies are made His footstool, and, then, He shall deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father.

God's purpose is to glorify His Son, who has glorified Him at all cost here below, and His object now is Christ glorified—the Christ, the Son of the living God—but as such the Christ of the mystery of God; for God has formed a body for his Son, and a bride will one day be ready for the Lamb—and so the testimony of God is of His Son the second man—not of the first: the last Adam in the glory of God—not the first man Adam, a living soul, in this terrestrial world.

The Gospel proper is “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” No doubt we read of “the gospel of the grace of God,” but it cannot be rightly preached as dissociated from the glory of Christ, for what tells out so fully God's sovereign action in association with Him as “grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life”? No gospel like God's purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from a glorified Christ, who, in the fulness of time, came down in love and went up in righteousness, and who has now a body united to Him in the power of the Holy Ghost: “*The Church, which is His body.*”

Well, then, may we refuse to turn from the Second Man in heaven, to the first man in his misery, knowing well that the first man in misery can only be reached and blessed through the Second Man in glory, who is THE object before God's mind and the delight of God's heart. “Set up from everlasting.” “Daily His delight!” “*And My delights were with the sons of men.*”

ANON.

CONSOLATOR.

Father !

Broke from the lips with anguish well-nigh dumb,
Heart well-nigh broken with the pain too deep
For words. Father—Thou knowest—help Thy child !
The cry ascended, reaching e'en the Throne.
The Father heard, outstretched His loving arms
And folded close the weary stricken heart,
Whispering His peace.

The storm within was hushed,
From the sad eyes the trouble died away ;
The throbbing heart grew still beneath His touch,
And Heaven's deep calm was mirrored on the brow.
The cross was *not* removed, the Father's love
Was chastening His child for lasting gain ;
He who allowed the trial would have her prove,
Thro' bitter pain, and e'en earth's keenest loss,
The real sustainment of His mighty love.

A. S.

PSALM XXXII.

OUR Psalm opens with a description of what constitutes a blessed man. It is not the only one, for Psalm i. 1 gives us another: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." Then in Psalm xl. v. 4 we have another: "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies." In

Psalm xli. 1 we find another: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord shall well deliver him in time of trouble." And yet another in Psalm lxxxiv.: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee: in whose heart are the ways." Each of these have their special significance and contains precious instruction for the one whose desire it is to be well-pleasing to God.

But our Psalm tells of a man whom God accounts blessed upon other grounds than either of the four we have quoted. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (verse 1-2). To be forgiven, to have his sin covered and no iniquity imputed to him, constitutes the ground of the blessedness here recorded, with the added word, "In whose spirit there is no guile." For whatever the divine action may be, if there is any cloaking over, anything like guile in the spirit, real happiness or blessedness there cannot be. The Psalmist recounts an experience which he himself had passed through. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer" (verse 3-4). Does not this shew to what the term guile refers? He kept silence. There was then something pressing upon his spirit; something lying heavy upon his conscience, and yet he would not unbosom himself. God, too, was dealing with him, bringing down His hand heavily upon him—and for what purpose? To overcome his reluctance to make a clean breast as to his past evil conduct; in fact, to take the place of a penitent and confess his sin. *Do not say to God, I am innocent*

How well this suits the convicted sinner, but it does not stop there. For the secret of many a wreck amongst God's

~~went~~ or

people lies in the lack of this guileless spirit. A wrong course pursued it may be, a false step taken, or perhaps mixing with worldly associations, or the continuance of habits inconsistent with true discipleship, and the refusal to get alone with God, into His presence and have it all out in true confession and heart sorrow. For the Psalmist the time came when he could bear it no longer, for we read in v. 5: "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." How sweet to the sinner is the blessing of forgiveness. "I confessed" and "Thou forgavest." He was not kept waiting. Sweet, too, it is to the saint who has wandered away or got down into a low state of soul, when at last, repentant and broken, he seeks the ear of his God and tells out all. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

God's readiness to forgive the Psalmist had proved, and by the pen of inspiration he had put it on record [as an encouragement to every godly] soul that should come after him. For there is a time when discoveries are made, sometimes of evils, never even thought of; when the light of God's holy Word flashes in upon the conscience and we see self-pleasing, where we had vainly flattered ourselves that we were pleasing God. It matters but little whether our sins can be classed as moral, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical, sins they are, and as such most offensive to God. We wist them not, yet are we guilty, but not, thank God, without resource: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in the time when Thou mayest be found" (v. 6). And when is that? When we lay bare all the secrets of our hearts before Him, so far as we know them; when we honestly seek to get to the bottom in true repentance and confession. Then,

yes, just then, the blessed God loves to flood the heart of the poor downcast one with the sense of His precious mercy and grace. *I confessed and Thou forgavest.* The latter clause of v. 6 points to a future judgment. "Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him" (R. V.). Whether the godly one is to find his future on earth or in heaven, in either case the waters of judgment cannot reach him. Is it only that he is placed too high for them to reach? He is that, but there is much more, for the God whose mercy he has afresh experienced has become his *hiding place.* The waters must then reach God Himself ere they can reach the soul that hides in Him. Safe then he is, blessedly so; but there is still more. One may forget to hide sometimes, but God has become our preserver.

In v. 7 we read, "Thou art my hiding place, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." There are three distinct things presented to us here. God is the soul's hiding place; God is his preserver; and He surrounds him with songs of deliverance. He is then not alone. He can sing surely, but not a solo, for he is surrounded by others whose hearts overflow with praise. He is in the midst of a praising company. But we must remember that v. 7 is not the language of accomplished fact, but the confident expectation of faith. Will God verify it? Will the saint's boast prove an empty one? Will Jehovah deign to answer it? Yes, He will, and does so at once. It was no vain boast, for He says "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye." The soul's boast stands unrepudiated. Also a new feature is added by Jehovah: I will instruct thee and teach thee—I will guide thee. The boast of the Psalmist was that God was his hiding place, his preserver from trouble, and that He would sur-

round him with songs of deliverance. God had heard his boasting and had not challenged it. But this He does. He brings before him another important truth, saying, as it were, "Yes, you may hide in me and I will certainly preserve you, but you must bear in mind that I expect you to learn what the way is in which you are to walk, and to surrender your will to mine. I will teach and I will guide. Do not compel me to use force. The bit and the bridle are used for beasts of no understanding, such as the horse and the mule, but I will guide thee with Mine eye. The path in which I desire you to walk I want you to understand to be the right one." He is a wise and gracious Teacher, and we should be apt and diligent learners, so as to see that the way we are to walk in is the very one we should ourselves choose. Consequently, God's will shall prove to us a perfect law of liberty. We shall be going just where we want to go, and doing just what we wish to do. God has granted to us the faculty for learning, and has undertaken to instruct and to teach us Himself.

The latter part of v. 8 in the R.V. reads thus, "I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee." Sweet thought! "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." An obedient saint, walking by choice in the way God has taught him to walk in, is an object of real and abiding interest to Him. Men who want their own way; men, even saints of God, who would seek a broader path, and sigh for a larger company, afford no such a pleasing spectacle to God as a poor solitary one, it may be, who, learning God's mind, cleaves to it and is content with His approval. "*Mine eye shall be upon thee.*" Is not that enough? "He shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." A good time is surely coming! A grand company, with every heart true and every voice in harmony! We may be favoured with a

taste of it here below, but the future in glory, what will it be? The inspired writer doubtless looked for deliverance and blessing here on the earth, as the godly Jew will do in the future. The Christian is instructed to look for full deliverance when Jesus his Lord* and Saviour shall fulfill His promise, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." Solemn thought! "But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."

The writer has finished his short but most instructive composition, and we part company with a brief exhortation: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (v. 11). Gladness, rejoicing, and shouting for joy are to characterise a certain class. And who are these? The righteous and the upright in heart. Having ceased to keep silence, having freely confessed their transgressions, and now walking in God's way, they can be glad and rejoice, but only in the Lord.

E. R. W.

THE LIVING ONE.

"FEAR not!" Ah, Lord, how sweet those words to me
From Thee, the living One, wilt ever be;
When bowed to earth midst all this ruined scene,
Ashamed to think of what Thy Church has been.

Thou blessed Lord, the Holy and the True!
With eyes like flame of fire piercing through!
Judging each thought and action by Thy Word
Reaching the inmost soul like two-edged sword!

Yet, though in glory, Thou art still the same ;
 Though Lord of all, still *Jesus* is Thy name ;
 Thy right hand strengthens, while Thy tender tones,
 " Fear not," makes " to rejoice " the " broken bones."

" The First and Last ! " Then I need fear no change,
 All, all may pass away from nature's range.
 " The living One," who never more can die,
 On whom I may for life and death rely.

The One too, who was dead ; then I need fear
 No evil, should I pass death's waters drear ;
 Sure, for Thy Word is faithful, I shall rise
 Like Thee, to live for ever in the skies.

The keys of death and hades, too, are Thine !
 Oh, precious words, making assurance mine,
 That should I pass death's portal, *Thou* wilt keep
 My spirit safe, and guard the body's sleep.

Oh, wondrous grace of Thine, Thou blessed Lord,
 Thus to assure me with Thy *hand* and *Word* !
 That though Thy glory must my spirit bow,
 'Tis the same Jesus tells me " Fear not," now.

Oh, Lord, Thy precious love 'tis breaks my heart
 How could I live without Thee ? Would I part
 With Thee, blest Saviour ? No, for nothing here
 Can be compared with Thine own love so dear.

Oh, may I heed Thy message, have an ear
 To all Thy Word, and walking in Thy fear,
 Make me an overcomer in the strife,
 Till I enjoy in all its fulness—*life* !

S. B.

LET DOWN YOUR NETS.

(Luke v. 4, 5).

EVERY incident in connection with the life our Lord is fraught with interest for hearts that love Him. He was here a man amongst men, and yet how immeasurably greater. He could tire, and hunger, and weep; could be appealed to by misery and want, and in response didst minister perfect compassion and help; giving, not only temporal relief but words that would lead to God and everlasting bliss. Biographies are interesting, but the life of our Lord is beyond comparison. See One unmoved by popular applause—His guide God's word, His motive God's glory. Strong are the pleadings of human affection—who has not felt it pulling at the heart-strings? It was perfect in Christ, yet was He superior to it; for He who loved Lazarus much loved God His Father more (Jno. xi.).

But our purpose just now is to call attention more particularly to the incident with which our chapter opens, and especially the portion that tells of Peter's answer to the Lord's command, "Let down your nets."

The people pressed upon the Lord as He was by the lake of Gennesaret. They wanted to hear the word of God, and we may be quite sure that from Him they did hear that, though the text of His discourse is not revealed. Sitting in Simon's boat, a little way from land, He *taught* the people from thence. The scene it is easy to imagine. That multitude on the seashore amongst which we may well believe there were some more than curious to hear—desirous to know and anxious to understand the will of God; that Perfect Teacher in the boat patiently expounding that will.

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Having finished speaking, He bids Simon "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught;" for we may say here that the Lord was no man's debtor, though there was something far deeper and more profound before the mind of the Lord than that merely. And this brings us to Peter's answer: "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the nets," the consideration of which is our immediate purpose.

And in sermonizing a little upon it we may notice that it contains an element of reasoning combined with faith. Simon and the others were to be made acquainted with the truth that their Master had great resources, and how opportune the moment. All that human arms could do had been done. Toiling all the night but without result, they were for the time, so to speak, stranded, and when in this condition the Master says, "*Let down your nets for a draught.*"

Now under the circumstances it was a test, and Peter reasons but yet trusts and gets the blessing. "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing," gives us his reasoning; "Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the nets" (R.V.) reveals his faith; and the blessing he gets is not only the draught of fishes—that was the smallest portion—but the knowledge that the Creator, God manifest in flesh, was on earth.

All can understand Simon Peter's reasoning, his contemplation of the circumstances. The unrequited toil of the night was before him; their unavailing efforts during the long hours he would not have forgotten. Still, the rehearsal of this lends force to his faith. In the face of untoward circumstances, just when the doing what is enjoined seems unreasonable, it is blessed, it is sublime, to act simply and

solely upon the Word of the Lord. Alas! all too often we find in our attendant circumstances some pretext for our unbelief.

In the extremity of the saint God has often stepped in to show that what is impossible with man is quite possible with Him, and to effectively teach about Himself—His wonderful resources; about ourselves—our nothingness. But reason will intrude itself where faith *only* ought to be. Not reasoning but action is required when the Lord speaks. “What are they amongst so many?” asked the disciples with regard to the meagre fare of five barley loaves and two fishes for the hungry thousands following Him. Yet the same blessed fact is taught by the overplus of twelve baskets full as here by the great draught of fishes. And surely we need the heart-challenging about this. Trials are verily sanctified to us if they teach us our weakness and thus make us strong. We must not reckon up our apparent failures to discount the commands or promises of our Lord. Do we feel inclined to say, in effect, “I have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing”? If so pass on to the other clause and embrace the very fulness of the Lord,—“Nevertheless at Thy word.”

Here is faith rising about the strong urgings of circumstances. “Nevertheless” baffles the pleas of unbelief. “Nevertheless” makes the weakling a conqueror, turning a retreat into a triumph. Difficulties, dangers, unavailing labours unitedly say that further progress is useless. They together proclaim the inutility of further effort. Look back over them all, and then let faith substantiate what may not be seen, and say, “Nevertheless at Thy word,” remembering that the power of the Lord has accomplished what the arm of flesh has failed to effect.

What is promised will be performed, and therefore our

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confidence must not be thrown away. The blessing, the reward, will follow in due time. Patience is often needed after having performed (Heb. x., 36), and in the great race over the wilderness sands to glory, patience is requisite all the way—"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us," exhorts the writer to the Hebrews (ch. xii.). And it is just here that we can make great use of "Nevertheless at Thy word." Tired saint, does the way seem long and Christian endeavour very uneffective? Verily you have need of patience. Say you "Nevertheless at Thy word" I will go forward. Know you not that "'tis brighter on before;" that in that near future lies the Master's commendation? Our stumbling is caused by our shortsightedness, our fears by our lack of faith, and our barrenness through disobedience. For obedience and faith are handmaidens—the one must be linked with the other. We show our faith in His word by obeying it, by acting upon it. "Lord, increase our faith" prayed His disciples when they should have asked for grace empowering them to obey, as our Lord's reply to them on that occasion amply proves (Luke xvii. 3-10). If *He* lays down that as often as a brother repents, so often must he be forgiven, or anything else, duty demands (and more beside) that the Master's words be obeyed, and small is the credit due, or claimed, after all. It seemed hard to *them* at first—does it seem hard to *us*? "Nevertheless, at Thy word" it shall be done.

In how many ways we can apply this word, this "Nevertheless at Thy word." Had we the artless simplicity of little children more and less of the studied reason of the philosopher, we should want little instruction about such applications. Whatever the Master enjoined would then indeed be law, and how happy should we be in the ready

compliance with His desires. The unstudied utterance of a little one, the perfected praise of babes as being free from every element of reason, lifts a load from the heart and sets it free, soaring heavenward :

“Jesus loves me, this I know ;
For the Bible tells me so.”

His word has taught us, and now our experience fully accords with it. Faith lays hold of His word and gets the sweet out of it. Does it seem unworthy of a man living in this enlightened age to give the very unphilosophic answer to many an enquiry, “For the Bible tells me so” ? Blessed answer ! for think of the majesty and greatness of the One who therein speaks. How consistent with Himself is every word, and how enlightening to the eyes and rejoicing to the hearts of those who receive them. What says the Lord with respect to that Word ? “Take heed *how* you hear.” We must be submissive listeners. The attitude of mind towards that Word is important, and leads to our souls being reminded of that message, “He that hath my words and *keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me” (John xiv.). The love that is shown by obedience is out of fashion now, for other people’s word are substituted for the words of Christ. But yet may it be for the saint of God still action based upon this—“at Thy word.”

Likewise from this incident we may learn that the Master means just what He says, and so it can be used to its utmost extent. Peter and his companion let down the nets. What is the consequence ? Not the withholding of fishes, but the breaking of the nets. Divine fulness must exceed human provision. So we can venture surely on His word. Does He say, “Launch out into the deep” ? Then we may do so. Let us not be slow of heart to believe *all* that He has spoken. Why should we fear or hesitate

to act upon His word? Have we no evidences of His faithfulness? Yea, ten thousand pieces of indubitable evidence; and we can say He *is* faithful. Has He ever failed? Be it that His command points us to a mode of action not commended by reason or prevailing opinion, yet with the glory of the Speaker before the soul, as Abraham heard the Lord of Glory, the response must be, "Nevertheless at Thy word." And let your heart embrace every portion of God's Word. It is His lamp for our feet, and most assuredly we do well to take heed unto it, "as unto a light that shineth in a squalid place, until the day dawn," that day that shall know no waning, "and the day star arise in our hearts" (2 Peter i. 19).

H. F.

STUDY CHRIST.

"You who love and fear Him, neglect not your Bibles; neglect not that fellowship which, like the light of a candle, shines upon the page of the Bible. Some of you are studying earthly sciences, perhaps you give your minds to the classics, or you delight to master the mysteries of mathematics; but oh! take care that this most excellent science, the science of Christ crucified, is not made to take a second place with you. Always put this science first; try to understand the glory of your Lord's person, without beginning of days or end of years; search into the purity of His character in all that He was here below from His birth to His death. Be conversant with Christ in all His sacred offices; think much of His precious blood, and of all the holy mysteries that cluster around His cross. Trace Him from Bethlehem

to Gabbatha, and then from Gabbatha follow Him in His resurrection and ascension along the star-bespangled way up to the throne of His glory, and let your soul hopefully linger in the full belief of His second coming, and in all the glory that shall surely follow the day of His august appearing. Study Christ, study Christ, so as to be able to tell others of Him, and be not slow to communicate to those of an enquiring mind that which you have yourself heard, and seen, and handled, of the Word of life.”—*Spurgeon*.

——’s paper leaves out the truth of the assembly in its *general* character being God’s *house* (1 Tim. iii.). When that is seen it is plain that if a matter has been Scripturally dealt with in one place, it should when understood be regarded as dealt with everywhere. You could not suppose one line of action sanctioned by God in one part of His house and the contrary in another part of the same house. With —— there is no need for clearing ourselves, no requirement of that supposed necessary, as people may be received from where “there is leaven.”

It is sin in Heb. ix. 26 which is in us, and also weighs on the world (Rom. viii.). If we speak of *us* we may call it nature, otherwise, a principle, in default of a better word. Indeed a nature is a principle, being the cause from which things proceed. So sin is the cause of evil acts, and of creation groaning. In Rom. v. we learn that sin itself, that hateful thing, entered the world by one man, not merely the evil nature in Adam, but sin itself, the sin of the world, as much as sin in the flesh.

JOHN XIII—XVII.

CHAP. xii. of this Gospel in a very distinct manner ends the first part of that Scripture. We read (verse 36), "These things spake Jesus and did hide Himself from them."

In chap i. 11, it is written, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The writer has before his mind all through that he is engaged with One who is rejected. In the three synoptic Gospels the Lord is presented to the people for their acceptance according to what is written in Matt. xxi. 33-44. This last test, and the greatest of all, is definitely disowned by His own, to whom He came. God, in sending His Son, "in the fulness of time," presented the best He could bestow, saying on more than one occasion, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5). We read also in xxi. 37, of same Gospel, Jehovah (under the character of a householder, after sending various servants), last of all sends His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son." We know they did not; they said "This is the heir, come let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." He, though rejected, loved the nation—His people—"beloved for the fathers' sakes." Often He would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but they would not (Matt. xxiii. 37). To this in its *world* wide aspect the Apostle refers when he writes in 2 Corin. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The question came to be, could man, a child of Adam, and as such, be reconciled? The sending of God's Son into the world, and His rejection by those to whom He came, proved he was irreconcilable in

life. A robber and murderer was preferred to the Prince of Life. God, however—wondrous fact!—gave His Son to die in order that these, His enemies, might be reconciled (Rom. v. 10), and brought to Himself (1 Peter iii. 18).

Chapter after chapter contains references to the death of the Son of God as the only way of deliverance out of the condition sin had brought man into, and the only way by which he could be put in possession of everlasting life. Plainly, man, high or low, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, is lost, judged already (John iii. 18). He hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

But at this point when lost, the olive branch is held out to the sinner—to the one who is appointed to death, and after that the judgment. Now if man, as seen in the Jew, will not *come*, and *cannot* unless drawn of the Father (John v. 40, vi. 44), the message of Divine love is sent to *all men* as it is written, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me” (xii. 32). “Lifting up,” speaking of the Jews’ rejection of Him by putting Him to death, is plainly set forth in chap. viii. 28. Such rejection, however, resulted in the love of God being presented to the world (John iii. 16). The sluices of Divine love were opened to the full when the nation rejected their Messiah.

In the verse of chap. xii. (36), already referred to, the Lord definitely closes His testimony to the people. He hides Himself from them, and the world seeth Him no more.

Chap. xiii. begins direct ministry to “His own.” These, we are told in chap. i. 12, are those who received Him, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Such received the right or privilege to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name. They have a birth tie which Israel as a nation had not. It has been helpful in reading the writings

of John to keep in mind that only on one occasion does he write of sonship. It is always of the birth link. (In Rev. xxi. 7, we have the only instance he wrote of being a son.) Such are drawn to Him by His death—they have been cleansed by His blood—they have received the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God's Son into their hearts, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father."

In this chapter (xiii.) we learn that the last passover feast was at hand, and that Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

His service is "to His own." Precious tie, wonderful and abiding! They have been given to Him by the Father (xvii. 6). As such He thinks of them and serves them.

I believe that these chapters noted on head line of this fragmentary meditation are the special portion of "His own" during the time marked by His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and his coming into the air for His saints. If this belief be a correct one they should be more studied and dwelt on than they generally are. Isolated portions are turned to by all "His own," but every detail is of intense value to us. Not only words of comfort, as chap. xiv. opens with, but an education into His mind, so that we may think with Him, and be moulded into His ways in view of being where He is for ever.

The gracious Lord in His words is the reflexion of His Father's mind. He tells us in chap. xv. 15, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Should any one proceed to name over one thing and another of these "all things" found in the Lord's wondrous utterances, as recorded in these chapters, such may ask them-

selves what effect they have had on their spirit and manner of life. It is the effect on the inner springs of our being—our inner man (Ephes. iii. 16) that needs to be watched and nourished, in order that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (2 Corin. iv. 10). Do the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Corin. x. 1) find room for manifestation in our ways at home, among the saints of God, and in our daily path in the world? It is the lack of Christ in our daily ways, and thus the neglect of *self*-judgment which chokes the outgoings of Christ who is our life.

Verse 2 tells us that supper was come—the end was close at hand—the paschal supper for the last time was to be kept in figure, and the true paschal Lamb, the Lamb of God (John i. 29), was about to be offered. Satan has increased in his activity. He at this moment puts it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord, and leads him on to that awful deed because of which the Master says, “It had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matt. xxvi. 24).

The Lord, unhindered by what He knew was coming upon Him, “and knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded” (xiii. 2-5).

Many see only in this action the humility of the Lord, stooping to wash their feet. Clearly, however, the Lord desires them to understand that a deep meaning lay under the symbol. We have the symbol (4-12) and the Master’s challenge (12) if they understood what He had been doing to them. The teaching contained in these wonderful portions give us the thing symbolised. There is the washing

of water by the word. Water, then, is a symbol (Eph. v. 26) of the Word. There is the *education* He desires to give us, in His love for the Church, in order that we may have "part with Him" (verse 8).

Unfathomable mercy as that is, which has come to us as sinners in our sins, and which is seen in the cross, blood, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of the Son of God is also the foundation for righteously bestowing that grace or favour which was in the purpose of God before the world began (Eph. i. 6). There is that therefore which was before sin, as this verse I have just quoted speaks of.

"Part *with me*"—He comes and ministers to His feeble people as the High Priest on their wilderness journey the help they require in order to triumph over their infirmities. In every way He would help His people. He is the Advocate with the Father, as John instructs us (1 John ii. 1) when we, children, sin. These services, however, which the Lord renders to His people now do not reach to what is meant by "having part with me."

The Lord tells Peter that he would know hereafter (7) what He was doing—not simply know the meaning of the service—not simply be able to contrast it with other services, but know—have inward conscious knowledge of it. The realities of this service must be learned if we are to act in a similar way to one another. We must learn it by receiving it—by being the subjects of it at His hands. This, I apprehend, is the great end of all ministry also, which He still gives through His servants. The servants have to receive it at the hands of the Master, so that they may serve Him in passing to others His words, even the words the Father gave to Him (xvii. 8). All ministry given by Him is for edification, that is "building up." The servant requires to seek for himself that the service he would render may not

suffer in his hands. He is only a servant. He has to exercise himself as to the effect the truth, he desires to present and believes the Master desires him to present, has produced in his own heart. It is ever true what another wrote long since that "a brother's spirit is more edifying than his communication." He must watch also that it is "the present truth" required for the state of those he seeks to serve. He must see that he gives it in "its due proportion," and not overbalanced on the one side or the other. He will, if he realises in some measure the need he has for all these points to be guarded and maintained in *himself*, feel "*Who* is sufficient for all this," and as he becomes conscious that *he* is not, he will prove that his sufficiency is of God. What a thought that is—what brokenness of spirit, and self-nothingness as seen in Paul when he writes in 2 Corin. xii. 11, "though I be nothing," "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."

Verse 11. What divine knowledge presented to us in the Master, whom we behold *serving* His poor disciples!

The girded servant (Luke xii. 37) He will be after we reach the house. We shall find how imperfectly we have learned or understood His service to us. He laid aside His garments (4), but He will take them again (12), and then, in perfect quietude, free from all disposition to question, we shall listen to His unfolding what He would have us know of His service to us while we journeyed on to the rest above. We shall sit down, and in this wonderful way of recalling all that has and is now taking place, He will serve us (Luke xii. 37).

Verses 14-17 teach us that we have to learn from Him how to act in the same way to one another. Alas! how we lack in this! The word of Christ (Coloss. iii. 16) is so feebly

dwelling in us that it does not quietly, naturally flow from us in our intercourse with one another. How often "the stream of refreshing" is so low that there is no flow (John vii. 38). We have not been drinking at the fountain head. Verse 20 passes before us the suffering the Lord endured from the knowledge that one of them should betray Him. He, at the same time, tells them that the reception of every one He sent was receiving Himself, as the receiving Him was in truth the receiving of Him who sent Him. "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (21). This was an awful thing to the Lord. Prophetically to Judas the words in Psalm xli. 9 refer: "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." This utterance of the Lord stirred the disciples, and they all began to wonder who the Lord could refer to. In Matt. xxvi. it is stated that they all were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? "Judas also (25), who betrayed Him, said, Master, or Rabbi, is it I?" Judas never said *Lord*. How could he! He was never Lord in Judas's soul. He had received power at his call in Matt. x. 4, equally with the other eleven disciples, but no real divine work had ever been wrought in him who had the bag. He was a covetous man. What awful lengths will sin in its varied forms lead the creature to! aye, and the child of God if he does not watch and be sober. Do we not need daily to pray, "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe" (Psalm cxix. 117).

The one who was to betray the Lord was marked by receiving the sop from the Holy One of God. We read (30) "he then having received the sop went immediately out, and it was night." Judas goes out on his errand of

darkness. He retires, too, from the presence of Him who was light, and God was glorified. Light triumphed, and the heart of Him who was straitened found relief in saying, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him" (31, 32). This, the glory of God, was the great work He came to secure. His life-work in the world was over, and He was the victor. Satan had yet to be met in death. The judgment of sin had to be borne by the Lord. Satan will bring on Him the reality of death, but that will discover more fully the perfection of Him who in all things was the obedient and dependent one. "He trusted in God" was *the* truth, though a taunt by His enemies.

At verse 33 the Lord speaks of going, telling them that for the present they could not follow Him, and for this moment when he would be in death, a moment which stands alone in the annals of eternity, we may be allowed to say, as surely as in time, He presses on them the need of loving one another. Simon Peter breaks in by an enquiry as to where the Lord was going. The Lord meets the question by telling him that he cannot follow Him for the present, but that afterwards he would follow Him (36). Peter still contests the point by asking, "Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." The Lord replies that instead of following he will deny Him thrice before the cock shall crow (38). The lesson as to the danger of self-confidence was not yet learned in such a way as to prevent the sad outbreak that we know followed later on.

What shall we lose if we do not participate in this "washing," and what failure we have made through self-confidence not being discovered by us in the fashion that brings us to His feet in self-judgment!

D. S.

(To be continued, D.V.)

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. v. 9-16.)

DEEPLY deploring the loss of her Beloved, and with yearning heart desirous of regaining His company she has pressed into her service the daughters of Jerusalem and given them a charge that, finding Him, they were to acquaint Him with the fact that she was "sick of love."

But they instantly challenge her about Him. Why such earnestness? Why such haste? Who was her Beloved that she should so brood over her loss? Could not another take His place? Was she not "the fairest among women"? a title addressed to her in chap. i. 8, and here again ungrudgingly given. She evidently had deeply impressed them by her words and manner. But her heart was equal to the demand, and a glowing description eloquently uttered until language fails, and He is the altogether lovely One, pours forth. In detail she describes her Well-beloved. Of her beauty He has spoken to her. Upon His beauty she now dilates to others. Her heart was stirred to its deepest depths, and though she had been faithless, yet out of the abundance of her heart she now speaks, and her full and accurate description proves that she *knew* Him, had studied Him. Intimate with the perfection of every feature of His sacred Person she goes into detail, and triumphantly closes with "This is my Beloved, yea, this is my friend" (ver. 16). No exaggerated account have we; for the excellencies of Christ cannot be exaggerated. The more microscopic our examination of Him the more profound our astonishment, the deeper our delight. Well, then, does the spouse answer the challenge of the daughters of Jerusalem.

Wanted they to know what He was? "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." A

statement this that declares Him to be both pure and beautiful, and in His excellency standing alone. With whom shall he be compared? When looked at through eyes of unbelief it might be that there was no form nor comeliness, no beauty to attract; but how very different the verdict when he is by faith gazed upon through the eyes of love. Come forward ye sons of men, the brightest and the best! Are there no spots seen on these? Is there here inward purity combined with outward loveliness, providing rest for both eye and heart? Ah, no! perfect purity and matchless beauty belongs to One alone, the Christ of God. And so the heart's language is,

Fairer than all, Thou art!
 None can compare with Thee!
 The chiefest of ten thousand *now*,
 So shalt Thou ever be.

Eternity shall show
 Thy beauties clearer Lord,
 Now known by faith, but then by sight,
 Thyself alone adored.

What think *ye* of Christ? is the question to test the heart. Put it to your own heart, and what is the response? Does not every answer betray the deep need of growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? To study Christ is to be our first employ; and this study brings no weariness, but increases in delight and pleasure the more it is pursued.

In chap. iv. the Beloved was heard giving to His love a word-portraiture of herself. Minutely He there describes her; and now not less minute is the description she gives of Him. Fittingly she begins with His head which, she says, "is as finest gold" (ver. 11), and in this way marks His

supremacy, and superiority over all others. He must take precedence. In every way the first place belongs to Him. Pre-eminence is rightly His; and who so fitted to give expression to the fact as those in whose hearts He is enthroned? Mark the figure, and lay the greatest stress upon the truth that Christ is and must be pre-eminent.

And beauty is there, associated with the signs of strength and vigour, unaccompanied by the least sign of decay. Here is the fairness of youth, as it were, in company with the vigour of full manhood. "His locks are flowing," sets out the former; "black as the raven," reminds of the latter, for grey hairs denote decay, either premature or otherwise. Christ is the only perennial stream of joy. What He is now He ever will be. That fountain never fails to yield more than heart can hold.

And coming to His eyes she describes them "as of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set." Like a precious gem in a proper setting so were the eyes of her Beloved in that head of gold. Here the fixedness of His love, and His constant gentleness are shown out. Doves are pictured as loving to sit by placid streams to gaze into the limpid waters. Thus she sees Him with all His tender, constant affection gazing upon her with beaming eyes. No marks of dimness, but no signs of "the flame of fire" there now gleaming through; for "washed with milk" is to add both brilliancy and gentleness. Love's flame, not the flare of judgment, shines through for her. And as the clear water would reflect the gentle gaze of the doves, so love's beams attract, and there is the reflection back of answering love. Would not the beloved John, leaning on Jesus' bosom, understand, without explanation, the force of this part of the spouse's description of her King? And so, dear saints, the more we are acquaint with our Lord and

all that He is to us, the better shall we understand these figures. The Songs are sealed to how many for this very reason, that they know but little of the reality of what is therein set forth in figure. Know the reality and you enjoy the truth as set forth. It becomes a repetition of a former joyful experience, and the soul fully appreciates the force of the imagery love uses. For what is communion? It is the answer of heart to heart. Think not that because you are zealous in service that therefore you are pleasing to your Lord. There are many that will excel in that to whom He will say, "I never knew you." Ah soul, pause! Can you say, having discovered it for yourself, "His eyes are as doves' by the rivers of waters"? If not then cease to wonder that your soul seems sapless. Where did you learn your lessons? How got you your instructions? Clearly not as set forth in the first golden-teaching Psalm (xxxii. 8), "I will counsel Thee with mine eye." Look up, for He is looking down upon you. Oh! the gentleness, the graciousness of the beams that issue from those eyes of His! To know the force, then, of the language we must know the reality. The one who uttered the figure had before this "*sat down under His shadow with great delight.*" Where have you been? Out in the heat and toil of the day without so much as a sit-down at all? Then sit down just here—under His shadow—and in that blissful spot seek to fathom the depths of love reposing in His eyes, and rest and renewed strength shall be yours. Occupation with the Son of God is our rightful employ. Have we been negligent? Perhaps so, yet look up, for with all the benignancy of unalterable and unending love He is looking down—"His eyes are as doves' beside the rivers of waters."

But Christ is all delights, and so every feature must provide its meed of joy. He is to be gazed upon and admired,

Song of Songs.

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and now His cheeks pass in review. What does she see there? "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as towers (or banks) of perfume" (ver. 13). The lips speak, the eyes watch, the hands tend, all ministering in some way to our necessities, but the thought we attach to the cheeks is that of communion. The activity of other members is lacking, yet upon them the kiss is implanted. They are radiant with loveliness, and provide her with numerous heart's eases; for she sees not only the rising banks laden with the beauties of nature, and the air redolent with their fragrance, but "His cheeks are as a bed of spices"—useful and precious.

And the sight of that blessed face captivates the soul with its charms, and is the most effective antidote against the inroads of worldliness. In two ways can we think of His cheeks—as they are now, radiant in glory; as they were, beautiful in humiliation. For think of the inexpressible grace that permitted Judas to kiss Him. Why did not the divine glory shine forth then and end that career of infamy and shame? He came to save. He gave His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not His face from shame and spitting. Oh, mystery of love! Here we are compelled to keep company with those that were astonished at Him. His visage was so marred more than any man; for He only could take the place He did. Are not His cheeks as beds of spices—refreshing, preservative, and gladdening? Are you angry because others seem not to accord you your place? Gaze upon *His cheeks*, and think of the place man gave Him. Does pride urge you to assert yourself and to come forward? Think of Him who took the place of suffering for thee, giving His cheeks to the pluckers off of hair. Look, and see there the expression of grace upon grace, gentleness upon gentleness, meekness overabounding. He was not hasty in His own cause. Marks

of dishonour were heaped upon Him to whom all honour was due. And now to glory exalted we can gaze upon His face still, and by faith discern the glory of God centred there. Yes, the face upon which wicked men spat, reflects the glory of God.

And passing on in her survey the lips are next mentioned: "His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh" (verse 13). Myrrh is not a product of lilies, but the spouse by her figure combines two thoughts—gentleness and beauty with preservation. Ever full of *grace and truth* was Christ Jesus. His speech was "alway with grace seasoned with salt." And in these figures used of His lips, we can behold in the lilies the grace that ever characterised Him; and in the liquid myrrh the truth, ever the accompaniment of grace. Go for an illustration of this to the scene depicted in Luke iv. 16-30. The synagogue in Nazareth He entered, and on that eventful occasion read of Himself from Isaiah; and then, expounding that word, all there "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Who of that company would not have then said that "*His lips were like lilies*"? But proceeding, the other side must come out. The liquid myrrh must drop. And so, in His matchless way the truth flows, acquainting the hearers with their true condition, writing, one can say, the sentence of death upon that guilty nation. The reception of this would have been their salvation, but they loved Him not, and so did not value His words. They hurried Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him headlong down. Who of the assemblage *then* looked upon His lips as lilies?

And what are those lips to us? The testimony of His enemies was, "Never man spake like this Man." The utterance of the heart in love with Him is that they are "as lilies dropping liquid myrrh." Surely, having experienced

the sweet, mysterious influence of the Word of Christ, having proved its keeping power in the midst of evil, we can combine both. May we love the truth that we may enjoy the grace.

“His hands as gold rings set with the beryl.” The hand reminds of practical service; and not only did Christ speak, but He ministered also. “He went about doing good,” we read; and that ministry of His towards needy men was ever a sweet savour to God. In all things He glorified God. Those once-pierced hands she beholds adorned with—or rather, the spouse speaks of the gold rings set with beryl as the hands, suggestive this of the fact that true service flows from love. Christ’s service to man and God’s glory cannot be separated; and the double colour of the stone mentioned—the beryl is bluish-green—may suggest the double character of Christ’s service, that being both earthly and heavenly.

“His body,” as we should here read, “is ivory work overlaid with sapphires.” This sets forth the glory of His Person in all its effulgence; for the ivory and the sapphires both refer to the throne; the ivory setting forth its purity, and the sapphire indicating the glory of God’s throne (1 Kings x. 18; Ex. xxiv. 10; Ezek. i. 26). And did not, and will not, Christ uphold the glory of that throne in His own blessed Person? The deep mysteries of His Being the Father alone comprehendeth, yet can we behold Him resplendent with majesty and glory.

Continuing, we read, “His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.” Here is strength and stability. Oh, most excellent foundation! indicative indeed of the truth that He stands in His own divine rights. His head of finest gold asserts that pré-eminence is His; the sockets of fine gold repeat the truth and shadow forth that it is rightly His. Props of silver supports the canopy that shelters the

spouse (iii. 10) ; for divine grace put her within. No rights apart from that had she ; but the gold reiterates a different fact. Well, well may her heart and ours adore Him who has made the fulness of grace our blessed portion.

Having taken her survey from the head downwards, how natural to take in at a glance the whole figure ; and exultingly she exclaims, " His aspect (not countenance) is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." The dignity, the majesty, the surpassing excellency of His Person rises before her heart and mind ; and what would delineate this as well as the imposing grandeur and beauty of Lebanon and its cedars ? Of these latter a traveller has written when describing a visit to them : " Nor could I wonder that Hebrew poets selected such graceful foliage, and stately forms, and colossal trunks as emblems of pride and majesty and power." For greatness and glory, who could match her Well-beloved.

" *His mouth is most sweet.*" The ring of His voice was, as it were, still in her ears ; His words of love re-echoed in her heart, and hence her dwelling upon this most precious feature. The hearts of cold unbelieving disciples burned within them as Jesus talked with them by the way. And the more we hear His voice the more shall we repeat, with added force, " His voice is most sweet."

Now what point has the spouse reached ? The point where language fails, as she realizes that no words can fully describe Him, no language set forth all His worth :—

" I wrong His name with words so faint,
Nor half His worth declare ;
Can finite pencil ever paint
The infinitely fair ? "

Consequently she combines them all and declares, " *Yea, He is altogether lovely.*" Gaze at Him as you will, view Him

from any standpoint, and only the most perfect harmony is discernible. He is to be desired, then, above all others. Of all others it is true that they offend in many things. Some defect mars the virtues of every creature. John, with his loving spirit, has his deficiencies. Peter, with his energy, proves coward in trial's hour. Paul, with his ardent devotion, yet goes forward spite of the Spirit's warning. And so we might extend the list, but none can justify their right to the "*altogether*" of the spouse's praise. But of Jesus it has been well said, "Under all aspects, and in all offices and all relations, at all times, and under all circumstances and conditions, anywhere, everywhere, 'He is altogether lovely.'"

Space will not permit of our dwelling more upon this, but, dear fellow believer, is not the heart at home in meditating upon a theme so glorious, so enthralling? Sit you down and spread the Gospels before you, and let your heart, as you view Him laying hands upon sick folk, raising the dead, weeping with those that weep, weeping over callous rebels, unfolding His Father's counsel, let your heart confirm the opinion of Him that "He is altogether lovely."

And with what emphasis the seeking one would declare to the daughters of Jerusalem, "This is my beloved, yea this is my friend." Oh, precious combination where love is concerned! Espoused to Christ as chaste virgins can we say, "Yea, this is my friend"? He is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Christ is the friend that has "not only heart but capacity"—capacity to meet and satisfy the yearning of the hungry soul. Want you an object? "This is my beloved!" Do you feel lonely? "This is my friend!" I commend Him to you, and pray that our contemplation of Him, as portrayed by the spouse, may lead to deeper appreciation of Him, and result in our being kept

from treating Him as she did. Here is an enigma. She knew Him, loved Him well, and yet was slothful. What does that say? Rest not in your love or your knowledge, but maintain constant communion that the heart may be kept ever awake.

H. F.

GOD'S THOUGHTS AND WAYS.

God's thoughts! How can they be known? By revelation only. Man cannot of himself discover them, nor could he understand them if that were possible. The bias of his nature through the evil that is in him, blinds his eyes and perverts his judgment. *Self-loving* and *self-pleasing*—no act, no thought is free from the taint of sin. Believing in himself, but not believing in God. His estimate of himself is that he is not utterly bad, not altogether without strength, not dead in trespasses and sins.

“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him (God), I would order my cause before Him” (Job xxiii., 3-4). These were the words of a saint of God who had not yet learnt *God's thoughts and ways*. How self-esteem clings to us all! How hard it is at times to give up our own thoughts and accept God's! How difficult for us to trust absolutely and continuously the blessed God! We misread Him. We do not know, as we should, His thoughts of sin and His ways of dealing with it; nor do we know, as we should, His thoughts of love and all His ways of manifesting it. Feeble in our sense of what we are, and of the evil of sin, we are of necessity feeble in our sense of what grace is—God's wondrous grace.

Let us look at a few Scriptures which may help us, and perhaps, with God's blessing, enlarge our view of things.

In Gen. vi. the judgment threatened was nothing short of the destruction of the whole human race, and also of every beast and creeping thing and fowl of the air: "for it repenteth *Me* that I have made them." It may be asked—What had these creatures done? and why does God repent of having made them? Do we not read that judgment is His strange work? Yet He felt compelled to destroy the whole. Man alone had sinned—corruption and violence marked mankind. All other living creatures had been placed by the Creator under the dominion of man, and as he had entirely departed from God and corrupted his way upon the earth, judgment must come. Not even an *infant* would be spared, nor a single, living creature. It was not, then; necessary to have individually become wicked. All were associated with the evil, and as such, all must suffer.

But there was to be an exception made; and why? One individual who, though in the midst of the evil, was yet morally separated from it; for we are told "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations, Noah walked with God" (ver. 9). Did Noah obtain salvation from the judgment which came upon all flesh by his own good works? No; for we read "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (vi., 8); and Paul wrote "If it be by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Rom. xi., 6). On the principle that association with evil defiles, Noah must suffer with the rest.

But Noah was regarded by God as a fit subject for salvation by grace, and now a new principle is introduced. Not only should Noah be preserved alive, but his family should each one likewise be preserved. His wife, his three sons and their wives share in the salvation granted to Noah by virtue of their association with him. Two and two of all flesh are likewise kept alive. We must bear in mind that

what is before us is *Divine government on the earth*, and association with evil involved all so linked in governmental dealing. If a man like Noah is a fit subject to be preserved through it by grace, his family are to share in the grace extended to him. These two principles run right through Scripture, and the latter explains the meaning of a statement that has sorely puzzled many a true Christian: "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

In Gen. xix we have the account of the destruction by fire and brimstone from heaven of the cities of the plain, in one of which Lot dwelt. The Apostle Peter tells us he was a just man and a righteous man (2 Peter ii., 7-8). Would his personal righteousness have saved him from the judgment that destroyed those cities and their inhabitants? No, it would not. An inhabitant of Sodom he had become, and "his soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds." Nevertheless, he remained there. It was no place for a saint of God, but he deliberately chose it and definitely settled there. But he was saved? True, he was; but let verse 29 tell us how: "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, *that God remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt." Abraham's intercession, then, it was that secured the salvation of Lot. He would have perished but for that. Abraham had said "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (verse 25). Eternal judgment and eternal salvation were not here in question. Lot, if cut off in the judgment of Sodom would, we doubt not, have been eternally saved.

(To be continued.)

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chapter vi.)

THE earnestness of the spouse, and the urgency with which she pressed her desire upon the daughters of Jerusalem led them to issue the challenge, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us?" Right well did she respond; and the description of One so lovely, uttered so fully, freely, and eloquently from the depths of a deeply-stirred heart brought forth from them the question, "Whither hath thy Beloved turned and we will seek Him with thee?" (verse 1). Her rapturous strains took them captive and made them seekers too; not the only occasion, either, when the testimony of Jesus has won hearts for Him. In company with her they would search for Him who had no equal.

But was that necessary? Would He be far from one who so perfectly set Him forth. Ah, no! He was more than willing to be found of her. But a little while previously she was conscious of a great loss through indolence; conscious of having treated her Friend in any but a comely manner, and her heart smote her. Then His worth rose before her soul. Again she is aware of His presence, and informs the daughters of Jerusalem of His whereabouts. Whither had he turned aside? He had gone "to His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in His gardens and to gather lilies." The scales had dropped from her eyes. Her experience, though painful, had brought her blessing. Could One so faithful be far from her? Impossible. And on the instant she realises where He would be. Was it not communion with her He sought? In *His* garden He would have that.

When unresponsive to the heart of Jesus, dulness creeps over the soul, and a feeling of estrangement arises, the bitter consequence of our negligence. But let the heart tell out all it knows of Him, and at once He who was thought to be so distant is found quite near, the heart learning that all the time He has been thinking of it. Many a soul has found an ecstatic joy in giving utterance to the gloriousness of the Person of Jesus, Son of God. Coldness flees before that warming flame. Enthusiasm reigns when Christ is the theme of the heart upon which the tongue dilates. When Christ is all, and in all, everything else falls into its proper place. An overflowing heart never lacks fervour. But our hearts are strange vessels, and the experience of the spouse, and our experience too, so in accord with hers, justifies the poet's riddle—

“ My heart's a mirror dim and bright,
A compound strange of day and night,
Of dung and diamonds, dross and gold,
Of summer's heat and winter's cold.”

Near indeed was her Beloved whilst yet she sought Him, and this she now realises. For He had gone down to His garden, to the beds of spices, “to feed in the gardens.” Once, at her invitation, He had come into His garden (iv. 16). Under that figure she was portrayed, and there He had eaten of His pleasant fruits—those precious virtues which grace produced in her. Upon these He fed. “And to gather lilies,” the emblems of loveliness and purity; the reminder to Him of her exquisite beauty, a beauty *not* produced by toiling or spinning, but yet incomparable. Fruit and flowers grew in His garden for His delight and for His refreshment.

Her soul must have remembered His tender breathings of love, and accounting herself precious to Him, His occupation

then proving it, spite of her recent waywardness, spite of her slothfulness, her heart bubbles over, and joyfully she exclaims in her fervour, "*I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine* ; He feedeth among the lilies," thus showing His appreciation of her beauty. How near she seems to nestle to His heart ! This savours of resting in *His love*.

And here we mark progress. Before she lays stress on the blessed assurance that Jesus was hers—"My Beloved is mine." There we have assured safety ; but here—"I am my Beloved's"—is definite certainty. And this is right and appropriate, and as His grace would have it. She had passed through many exercises and had learnt in an experimental way the untrustworthiness of her own heart but the reality of His love, a love too sensitive to permit failure to pass uncorrected. True, His perfection shines out in the way He leads to self-judgment. Our ways of correction often drive from us those whom we strive to win. He gave her through it all a deeper sense of the relationship existing, and drew her to Himself. "*I am my Beloved's*," she exclaims, but without losing the blessedness of her former utterance ; for she adds, "And my Beloved is mine."

Like true love sonnets these rise from the bottom of her heart. There is not a dubious sound about them—"am" and "is" are emphatic the other way. They provide themes for meditation. May our souls draw forth sweetness from them.

His voice is once more heard. He speaks to her. Will He upbraid ? Does he demand an explanation, asking her what she can say in extenuation of her indifference ? Nay ; the voice that praised her before praises her still. And He speaks, as we may say, in the same voice thus to reassure her that He had not changed. For many of the figures used here are repeated from chapter iv. ; yet here He dwells

more upon the outward appearance telling of beauty, dignity, and glory.

“Thou art fair, my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem.” Unchanged was He towards her. Tirzah was the residence of the kings of Israel before Samaria was built (1 Kings xvi.). Little is now known of it, but evidently from the allusion to it, it was noted for its beauty. And so Jerusalem likewise. Says an Eastern traveller, “But when I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city, crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed—‘Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King’” (Psalm xlviii. 2).

But He also associates the majesty of a bannered host with her. Awe-inspiring is the sight of an army with flags fluttering on the breeze. How very suggestive of triumph is such an array. A threefold combination of grace, beauty, and glory we have here, then.

And she was verily victorious; for though it be marvellous, yet is it true, that His heart was captivated. She was His chosen one; and why? *Because* the Lord loved her (Deut. vii.). “Turn away thine eyes from Me, for they overcome Me,” He says. Evidently, then, she had been looking upon Him, intently searching the depths of love in His. In chapter v. we behold her gazing upon Him until enthralled, and the words burst from her lips, “He is altogether lovely.” The victory was won. No furtive glance had hers been. Grace had wrought effectively, and strong in faith she conquers, and appears as a bannered army, and sets herself in His heart—“I am my Beloved’s.”

The declaration that with *one* of her eyes she had ravished His heart we contemplated in chap. iv. There the question was put—

“Part of thy form has ravished me ;

How must the whole my heart affect ?”

“They overcome Me” is the answer we might give from this portion. It is an expression of His appreciative love, as though He were held captive by her. How much had been wrought by His precious tenderness. Where *was* indifference now ?

How oft neglectful are we ; prone, indeed, to be forgetful. And yet what do we find on seeking Him ? We give our response in the words of the hymn—

“And yet to find Thee still the same—

’Tis this that humbles us with shame.”

And right well may we declare—

“Thy love exceeds our highest thought,

Henceforth be Thou our all in all,

THOU who our souls with blood hast bought.”

Proceeding to describe her He uses again the figures that relate to her personal appearance. And without dwelling on them we would just briefly recapitulate what has been already stated in our musings on chapter iv. (p. 67). He notes her hair, a woman’s glory ; her teeth, perfect in every way—in whiteness, regularity, completeness ; her temples, like the richly-hued pomegranate, a type of delicate beauty. There were many upon whom love could be set. “There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number ;” and though through her they shall be blessed (Isa. lx. 3), yet she was *the* object of His heart. The choice one of her mother was His dove, His undefiled or perfect one. The perfection of beauty shone in her, for His glory was seen upon her. And surely the day of manifestation was drawing nigh. “The daughters saw her and called her blessed ; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.” The day of rivalry will then be over

and she will be made "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations;" for she occupies, of all on earth, the supreme place in His heart's affection, and is destined to possess glory with Him.

And in that unique place He views her; first asking a question, and then stating what He had done and its results. "Who is she," He demands, "that looketh forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" His queen surely in association with Himself. She appears triumphant, exquisitely beautiful and fair, covered with glory's radiance, and accompanied with the outward signs of victory. So much His words convey. Awe-inspiring was she in her grandeur; irresistible as though just returning from a victorious march.

And she was ready for Him. After many wanderings He finds her willing in the day of His power. Many lessons she had had to learn, but her education is now well-nigh finished. Her heart is just bursting to declare, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii.). His grace proves triumphant at the last.

"He plants He waters every tree,
His blessing makes them spring
Then gladly comes He down to see,
What rich increase they bring."

He had proved her readiness; for going down into the garden of nuts, a figure expressive of the place where the hidden riches of grace could be found, He finds the fruits of the valley ripening indeed. There were signs of development apparent on every side. The vine budded; the pomegranate blossomed. It was what He had waited for, and immediately His soul is kindled within Him. If she was ready for Him, He must expend the fulness of love upon her, "and before I was aware, My soul set Me on the

chariots of Ammi-nadib" (or, My willing people) (verse 12, margin). Desire of heart was there for Him, and He responds. He finds her willing, and the day of His power at once arrives.

Here then in anticipation we have the day of glory for which the rejected Messiah waits, the day "when Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely" (Jer. xxxiii.). In that day shall be seen the precious consummation of long-suffering grace and mercy; and repentant, with every sin blotted out, the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and Jesus, the Messiah, the King, shall appear according to the Word (Acts iii. 19, 20). This is the historical aspect. In the Song we have the heart exercise through which she passes ere completely assured that His love towards her was perfect.

There are many ways in which this can be applied now for our own profit, but we must pass on with just this remark, that it is evident He wants a people morally prepared to enjoy His own love. May we be diligent to allow His grace free, full scope. The bearing much fruit not only glorifies the Father, but brings deep joy in the enjoyment of the presence of Jesus (John xiv. 23).

And the cry is raised, "Return, return, O Shulamite." The spouse has gone, led by the King in glory and triumph. The desire is to look upon her. But what could be there seen? "As it were the company of two armies." In the margin we have "Mahanaim" for "two armies" or "camps." Thus we are referred to Gen. xxxii. 2, when Jacob returning from his sojourn in the far country, has the assurance, if he could but receive it, that God was still for him. God's host met him. Jacob himself had gone out empty, but returned strong—*two bands*. What will ye look upon in the Shulamite? "As upon the dance of two

camps." O wondrous transformation ! It is a change from wandering to home, His heart ; from humiliation and shame to glory, His glory ; from weakness to strength, His host. "As upon the dance of two camps," is expressive of victorious joy and exultation, and in this is shadowed forth the full blessing of Israel. Truly they then shall enter into the joy of the Lord Jehovah. They come with singing unto Zion, and with everlasting joy upon their heads (Isa. li. 11).

H. F.

GOD'S THOUGHTS AND WAYS.

Sodom and Gomorrah have to face a future judgment in the which every man shall be judged according to his works. In that judgment (Rev. xx.) no saint shall be.

"The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen. xiii. 13). In the corporate defilement of Sodom, Lot had his part, for he was associated with it ; and whilst preserving himself from the practice of such evils as were common there, nevertheless his moral sense became enfeebled. Twice soon after his deliverance he allowed his daughters to make him drunk, and in that state fell a prey to their wicked scheme—to preserve seed alive of their father. What daughters for a saint of God to have ! sad fruit of his sojourn in Sodom. Two daughters had found husbands in Sodom and perished with them. That association with evil defiles is writ large in this history, as is also the melancholy fact that it results in lowering the spiritual tone, and in blinding to a great extent the spiritual vision ; so that a saint thus associated is really incapable of forming a true and holy judgment where evil is in question.

In Gen. xx. we have another striking lesson. Abraham goes to Gerar, and Abimelech the king took Sarah to be his wife. God, however, watched over Sarah, and He came to Abimelech in a dream by night, "And said unto him, Behold thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife" (verse 3). Now Abimelech had acted in integrity of heart and in innocency of hands. This God knew, and so made known to him what he had done; and He it was who prevented Abimelech from fulfilling his desire and sinning against God. Ignorant he was, and had acted in integrity of heart, but these provided no ground to stay divine judgment. "Thou art but a dead man," said Jehovah. Abimelech said, "*Lord, wilt Thou slay also a righteous nation?*" Even he seemed to know what many saints of God do not, that there is such a thing as corporate defilement, that association with evil defiles. Was it in his case only an ignorant assumption? No; he was quite right. "Now, therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, *thou, and all that are thine*" (verse 7). God had in fact already acted in judgment, as verse 18 tells us. Abimelech alone had taken Sarah, yet all his were exposed to death. Hear what he says to Abraham: "Thou hast brought on *me* and on *my kingdom* a great sin"

When the time drew near of which God spake to Abraham in Gen. xv. for the return of his seed to the land of Canaan, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, and associated with him his brother Aaron. To the king of Egypt they wend their way to demand the release of a people whom he mightily oppressed. The haughty monarch of Egypt was not accustomed to be addressed in such undiplomatic language as "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that

they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness" (Ex. v. 1). And he resents it. He said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." True it was, he knew not the Lord, but he must be taught to bend to Him, or else be broken in judgment. Ten sore plagues, and then those so eager before to retain God's people as their slaves are as eager to be rid of them, even regarding them with favour and lending to them jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They spoiled the Egyptians. It was not an escape under cover of darkness, but the Lord's host carrying with them as spoil the wealth of Egypt, obtained not by any martial valour on their part, but by the power of Israel's God. Who ever heard before of such a victory?

In the three first plagues it does not appear that any difference was made in favour of the Israelites. All were sinners. Pharoah refused to believe the word Jehovah, by His servants, addressed to him; and the Israelites, it is written, "Hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and cruel bondage" (ch. vi. 9). How then could any difference be made between the oppressor and the oppressed, since both were sinners and both were unbelieving? Jehovah in Egypt was acting in judgment, and sin it was that called it forth. Different degrees there were on individual lines, but on corporate grounds all must share in it, and as at the flood, even the animals were not exempt. So here, those beasts which were the property of the people are included in the judgment.

In chap. viii. 22, Jehovah said, "And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in the which My people dwell, that no swarm of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth." A difference is now made. On what ground? Did merit

enter into it? No; it was *all of grace to Israel*, and to make Pharoah know that Jehovah was supreme in the midst of the earth. Lord and Master He was. He could and would do as He pleased. If He chose to show grace to the seed of Abraham who could prevent His doing so?

But He is holy and must needs act consistently with what He is. But not until we reach the last plague, the death of all the first-born of man and beast, are we made acquainted with the ground on which the destroyer could pass over the Israelites and their cattle. It was entirely by the blood of the paschal lamb. Sheltered beneath that blood, death could not enter. Man and beast were exposed to the judgment. The Israelites having put the blood where directed could rest in peace, and God owns the truth of association in the saving of their cattle, as He did with the Egyptians in the destruction of theirs. The judgment in question was governmental, dealing with men here on the earth; it reached to death, but what was beyond it was not then revealed. Yet as a type how beautifully was shelter by blood portrayed from that judgment which comes after death, and is eternal. Into this judgment no one will come merely upon the ground of association with the sins of others. Each will have to answer for his own. So no one able to understand will be saved with eternal salvation without personal repentance toward God and faith in divine testimony.

The Israelites march out of Egypt. Pharoah had said, "Go now ye that are men" (chap. x. 11). When they did go it was not as Pharoah allowed. All their women and children accompanied them, and of their cattle not a hoof was left behind. Soon after they were pursued by the army of Egypt to bring them back again; but God opened a path for His people in the midst of the Red Sea, through which

they pass unharmed. Redemption by power they experienced. All their cattle march through with them. A two-fold deliverance God had vouchsafed to His people—first, by blood from His judgment, to which they in common with the Egyptians were equally exposed; and second, by the power of His arm, who opened a way for them through the Red Sea, in which all their enemies were overthrown. Thus what was salvation to Israel was destruction to the Egyptians. In chap. xii. 38, we learn that “A mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle.” This mixed multitude had no claim to share in what Jehovah was doing for Israel, but having identified themselves with His people they are permitted to share in their deliverance, and all the flocks and herds as well.

We will now pass on to Ex. xxxii., where the children of Israel had caused a calf of gold to be made, and had worshipped it. Jehovah said unto Moses, “I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (verse 9). Moses intercedes for the people, “And the Lord repented of the evil that He thought to do unto His people” (verse 14). The judgment threatened involved the cutting off of the whole people. It was corporate defilement again. There is good reason for believing that there were many individuals in that congregation who did not join in the idolatry, although it is not expressly stated. For when Moses said, “Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me,” all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. These did good execution among their brethren with the sword, slaying about three thousand men. Had Jehovah fulfilled His threat and destroyed the whole

people, the Levites would have perished as also would all the women and children. The whole company as such were defiled. On individual lines there might be a great difference, but God acts upon His own principle, and not upon what men may think right.

The next Scripture we turn to is Numbers xiv. The twelve men who had been sent to spy out the land of Canaan had returned and given their testimony. Ten out of the twelve left God entirely out of their reckoning, measuring themselves against the difficulties. Two, Joshua and Caleb, put God against the difficulties and these vanished. *God for us* was to them a substantial reality. Men of faith they were, yet the ten carried the day. The two did all they possibly could to stem the tide of unbelief, but in vain. What was the response? "All the congregation bade stone them with stones," but ere their desire could be accomplished, "The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke *Me*? and how long will it be ere they believe *Me*, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (verses 10 to 12). Had this taken place all would have been destroyed or disinherited. Again Moses prayed for the people. Little enough did they care for him; often and often had they grieved and distressed him. Blessed man that he was, he pleads for the people, closing with these words, "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according unto thy word." The people as a whole were accounted guilty. Corporate defile-

ment existed. But again God pardoned in answer to the intercession of Moses, but those men who were of age and had seen Jehovah's glory and the miracles done in Egypt and in the wilderness must bear their sin and die in the wilderness, and the whole congregation must wander in the wilderness until all such had died, ere they could enter into possession of the promised land.

In Genesis xix. Lot was saved through the intercession of Abraham. In chap. xx. Abimelech and all belonging to him were saved through the prayer of Abraham. Lot was not guilty of personal wickedness, but he was of association with it. Abimelech was not guilty of intentional wrongdoing to Abraham, but he was guilty of a grave wrong done in ignorance. In Exodus xxxii., the people became idolators and were for the most part so, in their heart of hearts. Others may not have gone so far, and in heart if not in word, disapprove of it, but forming a part of the congregation of the Lord they were in direct association with it and hence must share in the judgment which the corporate condition of the assembly demanded. In Numbers xiv., the ten spies were directly responsible for the unbelief of the people, which resulted in the proposal to make a captain and return again into Egypt. Caleb and Joshua stood forth in bold testimony against it all, but what did Jehovah propose to do, even to smite the people with the pestilence and disinherit them, and to make of Moses a greater and mightier nation than they. No word of making any exception in favour of Caleb and Joshua, or of the little children who had no direct share in the sin of the people. Corporate defilement existed, and whilst some were wickedly responsible, all, even the little ones, were associated with it. Moses prayed and God heard and answered in both cases, but judgment had its way with the evildoers, whilst those who were only guilty by associa-

tion were spared. Nevertheless, even these must linger in the wilderness for more than half a life time, all these long years deprived of the promised inheritance, through the sin of others. Hard, very hard, it may seem to us, and human reason may lead some to call it unjust, but was it so? To whom did the promises belong? To the seed of Abraham, who would be strangers in a land not theirs where they would suffer affliction. God would judge their guilty persecutors and deliver the people (Gen. xv.). It was then the people or nation of Israel who should possess the land of Canaan. Individuals could only share in the blessing by virtue of their being a part of the nation. The blessing was for the people in their corporate character. How could any share in the corporate blessing without equally sharing in the corporate responsibility? No one objected as individuals to the privilege of sharing in the corporate blessing. How then could any complain of sharing in the corporate responsibility?

In Numbers xvi. we read of a conspiracy on the part of certain Levites and some sons of Reuben to overthrow Moses and Aaron. The movement quickly grew, "And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." Moses and Aaron intercede, and the sinners, Korah and his company, are swallowed up by an earthquake. The 250 men who offered incense are consumed by fire from the Lord. "On the morrow all the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." How lightly they viewed the sin! How little they felt their share in it! owing,

as they did, their deliverance from destruction to the intercession of those two whom they now charge with killing the people of the Lord. Again the Lord interposes: "Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment." Did they obey? They fell upon their faces. Oh, the agony of that moment! The whole people in danger of immediate destruction. What could they say? Nothing to God; but Aaron, at the request of Moses, takes a censer, puts fire thereon and puts on incense, and running in among the people, stood between the living and the dead and made atonement, and thus the plague was stayed. Quick as Aaron had been, judgment was much quicker; and fourteen thousand seven hundred died of the plague, besides those cut off on the previous day. How hateful is sin to God! How far it reaches! Twice had the congregation been defiled. Twice had entire destruction been averted. What patience! What mercy!

From chapter xxvi. 11 we learn that the sons of Korah died not. This surely spoke of mercy to them. Standing *apart* from their guilty father they *must* have been, and God was gracious to them. Several Psalms we find "For the sons of Korah," the second of which, Ps. lxxxv. 2, runs thus: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." What those words must have conveyed to them who were the descendants of a man cut off in judgment, and yet his sons were spared.

E. R. W.

(To be continued, D.V.)
