

THE
Christian's Helper.

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

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GOSPEL OF JOHN, CHAP. XIV.

(Continued from Vol. IV., page 208.)

Wonderful consideration of the Lord for His disciples is shown in the opening verses of this chapter. The Lord is in "a little while" going to leave them, and He knew all that would engage their minds in view of His departure. He was always in advance, and perfectly apprehended what they required to stay their hearts when He would depart.

"Sorrow hath filled your hearts" (xvi. 6). "He knew their sorrows" (Ex. iii. 7), as in the days of old, and He exhorts them in verse 1, and also in 27, not to "let their heart be troubled, neither to let it be afraid." They were to believe in Him as they believed in God. He would soon for a little while not be seen by them. They did not see God, yet they believed in Him, so now for a short season it was to be the same with Himself. Further, He would send them another Comforter who would abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of Truth whom the world could not receive, because it seeth Him not, and at the beginning of this chapter He assures them that He had secured their future. They would be with Himself.

In chap. xi. the Lord makes known what afterwards was fully unfolded, that all would not require to pass through death. Martha intimated (in answer to the Lord's statement that her brother would rise again) that she was aware he would rise in the resurrection at the last day. Theoretically there are those who have advanced somewhat from

Martha's belief, while many of God's children still abide where she was found. The Lord, however, desires to lead her and all His own further, and based on the Rock that He Himself was "the resurrection and the life," He declares "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." He asks Martha, "Believest thou this?" But as yet she "knew not the Scripture." This comment by the Spirit of God on the state of the disciples the morning of the resurrection is still true; Martha's faith did not lift her soul into the region He desired she should live in. We have in these words of the Lord the first statement of what is still the hope of the believer, death, in verses 25 and 26, referring undoubtedly to the body. The Lord then is about to depart to the Father. He is going to withdraw Himself from their view. They must now believe in Him as they believed in God. He pledges His word to them that if there was not sufficiency for them in His Father's house, He would have told them, and He adds, "I go to prepare a place for you." Then He informs them that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was, there they might be also. All has been considered. The need of the moment marked by His absence is met by the promise of the Comforter He assured them He would send, and full provision for them on high when their course here was run. What fulness is presented in these ten lines! It is Himself who gives every word a value which cannot be exhausted. Scriptures which follow, as found in the Epistles, carry down to us who still wait in wilderness scenes, the same gracious words. He who uttered them is our hope (1 Tim. i. 1). In unfolding this subject He discovers the need of their souls, so that by ministering to that need they might enter into the fulness which His words regarding their future contained.

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The Lord assumes they knew where He was going, and the way also. Thomas at once pleads that they did not know whither He went, and consequently they could not know the way. The Lord leads on, and tells them that He is "the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Let it be noted that primarily He is speaking of the *Father*. No doubt He was the way to *God*. He was more, *He was God*. We have His word that whoever saw Him saw the Father (9), but I could not say "He was the Father." In this chapter it is "the Father" which is the great subject of His teaching; so fully was this so, that in verse 7 He tells them, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also." They were slow to apprehend His words. Philip shows that what the Lord wished them to know was not yet apprehended. He says, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The Lord's patience is great, and he waits on their dulness, and would rouse them by asking to what use had they turned His long presence with them. He desired that they should *believe* that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, or else believe Him for the very work's sake (11). It was a matter of faith. No activity of the human mind could reach to such a region. Even the works they beheld could not have their proper voice in their souls apart from Divine apprehension of His glory. What a wondrous place He was putting them in through faith! Listen, dear believer, to what our Lord declares: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *he that believeth on Me*, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father" (12). It is not on the ground of being an apostle, or having any other office or gift, He might bestow, but "*he that believeth on me*." Yes, faith is the bringing in of God, where it is, there are no difficulties in the way of

accomplishing what He wishes done by us. Works here referred to, evidently proceed from a different condition of the believer from that of the twelve whom the Lord sent out to preach "the Gospel of the Kingdom." Then the power was conferred on them for the special mission and did not depend on their condition of heart. As we read of what they were empowered to do, we see how they were entrusted with lifting off the weights that pressed heavily on the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Now the power of Christ is seen in sustaining under tribulation, and amid the sorrows of the Christian path which may be found among all races of men under the sun. No doubt greater companies of souls received the word when preached at Pentecost on the descent of the Holy Ghost, than we read of when the Lord was on earth, but to glorify God and magnify Christ *in* the fires of pain and sickness, and tribulations of other kinds manifests a greater power than relieving the person of the affliction.

The Lord continues to unfold the large place they would find themselves in. He declares to them, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (13). This is far removed from the many petitions our hearts and lips are allowed to send up to the throne as wilderness trials roll in upon us. To ask in Christ's name is the same as *Christ asking*. It is in very truth Christ requiring, but allowing His people to be the vessels who carry the need to the throne. Are we in the consciousness of the fellowship which belongs to us as mentioned in 1 John i. 3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ?" We observe that there are no dependent clauses but the one, that is, "asking in His name." Whatever that request may be, we are assured shall be granted. Self in no form can play a part in such requests. Our position is that of asking,

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and our Lord assures us He will do it (14). Then there follows the matter of obedience. Some one has said, "If we wish God to hear our prayers we must see that we always hear His Word." This will call for prayer, that the condition for knowing the will of God may be produced in us. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Where love is, the claims of it are easily responded to.

The Commandments written on the two tables of stone with the finger of God, which Moses received on Mount Sinai (Exodus xxxi. 18), if obeyed by the creature, secured life. The Commandments of which the Lord speaks in our chapter, direct the life which He gives. Let it be remarked also, that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled *in* them who walk in the Spirit, not fulfilled *for* them as human creeds often tell us. Thus no word of God falls to the ground without the attention He claims. The Commandments of the Lord Jesus are the activities of the Eternal Life in us. Christ is our life. He always did the things which pleased the Father. He kept His Father's commandments (xv. 10). He displayed His love for His Father by obeying His Commandments. In this way also we will be known as His friends (xv. 14). He is a wise man, we are told (Matt. vii. 24), who heareth the sayings of the Lord and doeth them, for when the floods come and the winds blow, his house survives the storm, because built upon *the* rock (R.V.). *The* rock we specially notice—the Christ the Son of the living God (Matt. xvi. 16), not as in A.V., *a* rock. There is only one Rock—the Rock of ages (Margin Isaiah xxvi. 4).

The Lord now intimates to them that His Father would send them another Comforter that He might abide with them for ever. This is the cardinal truth of the period *begun* when the disciples were assembled in an upper room in

Jerusalem. We read that "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 2-4). Here we have the fulfilment of the promise made in verse 16. *It is no longer a promise.* I do not now require to ask for the Holy Ghost. *He is on earth.* He dwelleth with us, and is in us—sealing all who believe until the day of redemption. Before the death of Christ he came upon man. Of this we read frequently (Num. xxiv. 2; 1 Sam. x. 10; 2 Chron. xv. 1; xx. 14; 2 Peter i. 21). Here, as another has remarked, the Lord tells His disciples of that which "would characterise the presence of the Comforter *when He came.*" "He dwelleth with you, and is in you." The Lord is not teaching them as to what then existed, but what *would be* a fact when He (the Holy Ghost) came. When the day came which would be inaugurated by His presence on earth, then what the Lord tells us in verse 20 would be entered upon, viz: "At that day, *ye shall know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you." I call special attention to this. It is knowing what was already true—the inward conscious sense of these immense realities, contained in the verse I have just referred to. Our unbelief as to the presence of the Holy Ghost is great. *It was* a promise, but no longer is it that. And when He would come the Lord tells them they would *know* that He was in the Father; they in Him (the Son) and He in them. The two last I believe to be different from their being "*in Christ*" and "*Christ in them.*" In the Son, and the Son in them speaks

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of "life and nature" which Saints of God in all times possessed, or how could they live and walk with God? "In Christ" tells us of Headship of race. He occupies this place as the ascended man—the One who died, but is now alive again and gone up to heaven, and who has sent down the Spirit. Headship of Race is a glory spoken of connected with His manhood. Life is spoken of in connection with Him as the Son (1 John v. 12) by John, and connected also with Him as the Christ by Paul (Coloss. iii. 4), "Christ who is our life." Thus the Son—the only begotten, and Christ the Head of the righteous race, "the new creation," is welded together in the one wondrous person, the Son of the Father. They are distinguished to us in the Word, but not separated.

It is a very pertinent question for saints of God, in this, the day of the Holy Ghost, and when we are so near to the coming of the Saviour, how far we *know* what He speaks of in verse 20 of this fourteenth chapter of John?

In verses 21-24 the Son of God speaks again of our obedience to His commandments, and the wonderful results accruing to us. We must have the commandments He tells us—if that be so, we must seek for them and find them in order to *have* them. The next thing is the keeping them, and this will prove that I love Him—"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." What wondrous grace, how we should watch and pray that we may not lose such great favour. Judas (not Iscariot) enquires further concerning this favour so exclusively the portion of a faithful disciple, and thus we learn further regarding it. We do not advance in the knowledge of the Father and the Son because we do not ask. Jesus answers Judas by saying, "If a man love me, he will keep my words,

and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.” How wonderful the Lord (ver. 31) Himself occupies the ground He would have us take, “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” The gracious Lord was about closing His teaching on earth to His own. He was about to enter on the last conflict with Satan, and that over, take the cup from His Father’s hand. There was no conflict with His Father, it was with Satan, but He conquered him by death. There was nothing Satan could attack in the Lord—“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” He was the only one of whom this was true, and thus the only one who could take up the question of sin and put it away to the glory of God. This He has done by dying, and so destroying him that had the power of death.

D.S.

(To be continued, D.V.)

“**DWELL DEEP.**”

Dwell deep my soul !
 When thronging duties press and troubles roll,
 And seem to overwhelm, and drive thee from
 Thy resting place, the Master’s feet. Oh, then
 Dwell deep in the blest knowledge of His peace,
 Who midst this scene of turmoil and unrest,
 Enjoyed unruffled God’s own peace within.
 That peace to thee He gives.
 Thou hast a blest retreat, a dwelling place,
 Where grief nor sorrow e’er thy soul can touch,
 Where cares of earth can never entrance find,
 Hidden from strife of tongues, from din of earth,

"Dwell Deep."

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In God's own presence, in that blest retreat,
 Dwell deep with Him.
 When in the war with the Satanic power,
 Which seeks to wrest from thee heaven's portion now,
 Those heav'nly things bought with His precious blood,
 Thine own possession now, but which the foe
 Is ever seeking to allure thee from ;
 When in that deadly conflict spent and worn,
 Fainting and almost ready to despair,
 Oh ! then retire to thy blest resting place,
 Thy Rock of strength, dwell deep in God !

Oh, blest retreat !

Oh happy rest of soul ! to find God's will
 The balm for every grief and sorrow here !
 Is earth a desert drear ? And e'en God's church,
 To outward view split up by party strife !
 That which should be a testimony here
 To the eternal unity with Him,
 Who gave His life to make it all His own.
 A testimony but to failure dire !
 Then hide thee in His counsels deep and sure
 His church shall yet His blessed purpose show,
 Display'd before a wond'ring world, array'd
 In all His glory, spotless, pure and white,
 The triumph of His grace to all eternity.
 Dwell deep ! when anxious questionings perplex,
 And none can meet the longing of thy soul ;
 When e'en thy dearest friends misunderstand,
 And vain thy quest to find an answering heart.
 Thy heart was made to find its rest in God.
 Dwell deep in Him.

S. B.

GOD'S THOUGHTS AND WAYS.*(Continued from Vol. IV, page 236.)*

IN Numbers xxv. the people commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and "they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" (verses 2 and 3). *God was angry with the whole people.* Action had to be taken to turn away His *fierce* anger. The heads of the people were to be hung up before the Lord against the sun; and the judges of Israel are commanded to slay every one his men who had been joined unto Baal-peor. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, distinguished himself by running a man and woman through with a javelin, and won the divine approval, and a covenant of an everlasting priesthood Jehovah grants to him. The plague, too, carried off twenty-four thousand men. Later, God commands them to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites. The people were cleared, and yet they were not entirely cleansed; for several years afterwards when a deputation waited upon the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh about the altar they had erected (Joshua xxii. 17), we read: "Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day?"

And God had brought them into the land spite of the fact that the larger part of the males were not in covenant relationship with Him; for all the males born in the wilderness had not been circumcised. Was it not written: "And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; *he hath broken My covenant*" (Gen. xvii. 11). What patience

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had Jehovah exercised towards them ! What grace had He displayed !

Across Jordan they came, and then Joshua received the command to circumcise the people. This done we soon see a specimen of what God would do for His people. The walls of Jericho fell down flat, and they had but to enter straight before them. All in that city were devoted ; Jehovah claimed the whole, and this was well understood. One individual coveted certain things and took them, hiding them in his tent. Joshua knew it not ; Israel knew it not ; yet God held them guilty. Thirty-six men were slain in battle ere even Joshua became aware that there was something wrong, and even then he was disposed to blame Jehovah. "Israel hath sinned," was the solemn rejoinder, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." Where were they ? In the land, surrounded by enemies, without allies, without resources ; irresistible if God was with them ; weak as water if He forsook them. And this He did, charging the whole company with sin, and throwing the responsibility upon them of discovering the actual offender and executing judgment upon him. Corporate defilement existed and could only be removed by corporate action against what produced it. In dealing with Achan, the great object was to clear themselves. Who dared to dispute the justness of the charge Jehovah made against them all when He said, Israel hath sinned ? Defiled they were, and they acknowledged it. In real trouble they were, for they had lost for the time being the presence of Jehovah *with them*. To clear themselves, to get rid of their trouble, to secure Jehovah's being with them, they put the troubler Achan to death, not him alone, but his sons, and his daughters, his beasts too, and burnt them with fire, with all that pertained to him.

About 21 years after the death of Joshua we are permitted to learn into what a condition God's people had fallen (see Judges xix. and xx.). A Levite of Mount Ephraim took to wife a woman of Bethlehem—Judah. She became unfaithful to him and played the harlot against him, returning to her father's house, who received her. God had commanded that one so guilty should die (Deut. xxii. 22). But the husband, who should have known God's mind, was willing to condone her conduct and to reinstate her as his wife. The father, who probably did not approve of her conduct (for he rejoiced to meet his son-in-law), had taken no steps to have God's mind carried out. The man takes his wife, and on reaching Gibeah of Benjamin turned into it to lodge for the night. But the men of the place were vile, and in result the woman, the wife or concubine of the Levite, is found dead in consequence of their infamous conduct. The husband lays hold of her body and cuts it into twelve pieces and sends throughout all the coasts of Israel. "And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak." God's mind was plain. These wretched men should die.

There was not much need for consideration if obedience to God's holy word had been their habit. They knew, or thought they did, the history of Israel since their exodus from Egypt; for, say they, no such deed was done or seen throughout their past as this one. Had they forgotten this: "The people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods" (Numb. xxv. 1, 2). To commit whoredom was to disobey God and incur the penalty of death; but to bow

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down to idols was to give up God altogether. Yet this was but a small part of the history of the past. Were they impartial historians? What had been their history in the land? How many times had they forsaken Jehovah? There is no sin like that. Alive they were, but they owed that to the sovereign goodness and mercy of that God whom they had so often disobeyed and forsaken. Surely that should have been borne in mind.

Full of zeal against the sin of Gibeah, they forgot their own. To judge the evil, to put it away was right; but if God was to be with them in the doing it they must be true to their past, and rightly feel their present condition. Another thing. There was then, and there is now, such a thing as local responsibility. Benjamin was the tribe chiefly concerned, and should have been exhorted to move in the matter. Instead of that it is taken completely out of their hands. They are not even consulted; for there assembled four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. In the world to-day it would be said that they assumed a bellicose attitude. They take note of the evidence and send throughout Benjamin saying: "What wickedness is this that is done *among you*? Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel."

Benjamin refuses and takes sides with the evil. They had heard of this great armed host and will meet force by force. Doubtless they were sorely hurt at this denial of their right. Israel prepared for war before peaceful efforts were tried, and the war they got ready for they are to have, and are to be twice ignominiously defeated by little Benjamin, who was openly on the side of sin. What a muddle it seemed, and what a puzzle too. The large party arrayed against a grave sin defeated twice by a very small one in open asso-

ciation with it! Nearness to God can alone explain it. It was a party against evil, and God will not sanction mere party. All were His people. Had this been remembered war might have been averted. But it was not, and we may well ask ourselves after all, Which was right in the main as regards the sin of Gibeah? Undoubtedly it was Israel and not Benjamin. Twice defeated as we have seen, they gather together to the house of God and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

They have learned a bitter but much needed lesson. Their hearts are sore, their will is broken; for they inquire of the Lord "Shall I yet again go out against the children of Benjamin *my brother*, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand." God could trust them now. He could be with them. Alas for poor Benjamin! A tribe in Israel seemed almost extinct. And it might have been so different. *Might have been!* Well, we have to do with *what is*; sorrowing over past blunders, but yet set against the sin that God has condemned, for it is an undeniable truth of Scripture that "association with evil defiles." Better blunder in dealing with it, than be content to put up with it.

We now pass on to the time of Samuel, in the latter part of whose life the people come to him to make them a king to judge them like all the nations. Was it not their chiefest good that they were separated from all the nations around them? What had Moses said to them? "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deut. iv. 7). Nearness to God was an inestimable privilege, but it called for obedience of heart to be able to enjoy it, and this they constantly failed to render. Time after time

God had chastened them for their sins in turning away from Him, and as often as they cried out in their distress He had raised up a deliverer for them.

But now they want a man as a king to judge them. What had become of Jehovah? Was He dead? or was it that they would shirk the honest exercise of conscience as to why their enemies were allowed to distress them. They wearied of judging and finding the true cause of their weaknesses—ease they wanted, and a king just as nations around them possessed.

Samuel was displeased and prayed unto the Lord (1 Sam. viii. 7). “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.” Solemnly were they warned as to the character of the king that would reign over them, and of his many exactions, but they have no mind to heed aught that Samuel puts before them. “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles,” (verses 19, 20). They would have a king at all costs.

Samuel was virtually deposed, and Jehovah really so; for Samuel was His servant, and hence to set aside the one whom God had chosen, to reject him, was to definitely reject Jehovah as their Sovereign Ruler, their King. They gain their desire. Jehovah finds a king exactly suited to their mind, one after their own heart; but what *He* thinks of their conduct they will have to learn. Samuel compels them to acknowledge that he had filled the office of judge without the least miscarriage of justice: “Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I

defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand." (1 Sam. xii. 3-4).

Samuel was clear; no case could they make out against him. Jehovah's servant they themselves justified. Was there any ground for complaint to be made against Jehovah as their King? When had He failed them? Did He not hear their cry in the land of Egypt, and send His servants, Moses and Aaron, to deliver them? Samuel passes over all their manners in the wilderness, and mentions some of their enemies who had oppressed them in the land, the Canaanites, the Philistines, and the Moabites. And how did these in their turn gain the mastery over them? Because they had forsaken the Lord and served other gods. All their troubles came from forsaking Him, and all their deliverances *came from Him*; for in their distress they cried to Jehovah, and such was His mercy, such His pity and compassion, that each time He raised up a deliverer for His faithless people, yet now they reject Him for an arm of flesh.

Oh the folly of unbelief! As yet their conscience is not reached. The *word* produces no effect. Well, Jehovah has other means to use when His people are so blind that they will not see, or so deaf that they will not hear. "Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain: that ye may perceive that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king." (verses 16-17). Samuel called, and the Lord heard and answered: "And the Lord sent thunder and rain

that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord *thy* God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this great evil, to ask us a king." (verse 19).

Conscience was reached at last. Jehovah and His servant are linked together: both are feared. The people cannot pray to Jehovah for themselves, so beg of Samuel to pray for them unto *his* God. Was He not also theirs? but they had rejected Him. *All had sinned. All were defiled.* Doubtless there were those who had led, and those who had followed. Possibly some had not heartily joined in the movement, but all had incurred the penalty of death, and there was no resource but in the mercy of that God whom they had rejected, and to whom they dare not pray. Samuel does it for them, and they owe their deliverance instrumentally to him.

And now it was his to tell them that "the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you. But if ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king" (verses 22-25).

Saul proved a complete failure. He reigned one year and then came war with the Philistines. No courage had his followers, for we read "And all the people followed him trembling

(To be continued D.V.)

NOTE OF INTEREST.

THE following extract from a letter recently received, telling of a work going on in South Africa amongst the natives will no doubt be welcomed by your readers :—

Jeppe, Transvaal,
South Africa.

“ I am thankful to you for your kind letter received to-night, and am especially pleased as I had purposed writing you this mail *re* a Zulu tract.

“ I find there are a good many here who can read, and especially the Zulu language, which is generally known amongst the natives. I am glad you purpose printing some texts, and would suggest your doing them in Zulu, as the Kaffirs (Ukoso) can also understand it.

“ You would be delighted to see the manifest pleasure many express on receiving the leaflets in their own language. Several came after me at my work this week seeking them, one saying, “ All the boys like them.” They read them to those who cannot read. Last Lord's Day there was great interest at one of the mines I go to. At the end three came and wanted to join “ my church.” Another, a Shangaan, seemed under conviction. He wanted to come and learn. I pray the Lord may open the way for us to get some sort of an iron shed as a school. The interpreter, who is a believer, and is enjoying “ Aids for Believers,” would willingly help to teach them to read Zulu, and so get the Word of God to them. When converted, some of them delight to preach the Gospel themselves to their countrymen.”—To W.B.

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS.

FORGIVE for your own sake. For your own sake! A man with an unforgiving spirit is his own worst enemy. "He that studieth revenge," says Bacon, "keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. If thou hast not mercy for others yet be not cruel unto thyself." To ruminate upon evils, to make critical notes upon injuries, is to add unto our own tortures. It is to feather the arrows of our enemies. Aye! I tell you that there is no self-torture that is so keen, that is so acute as the self-torture that has learned to brood over its own wrongs, be they real or be they only fancied; and there is no gloom so thick and so unfathomable as the gloom of night that settles down upon the spirit of a hard and unrelenting man. And, on the other hand, I tell you there is no joy that is so pure, there is no joy that is so rewarding as the joy of him who has learned from his heart to say I forgive. That man tastes the very joy of God, of Him of whom it is written, "He delighteth in mercy."

"When blindness came upon John Milton he wrote a sonnet in which he put this question: Whether God would hold him to account for the use of a faculty which had passed away from him. And he answered that it was God's service now to bear the mild yoke of God's will, that they also serve who only stand and wait."—*Extract.*

No one was, or could have been buried with Christ by John's baptism unto death. Well, till people understand from the Word the difference between the terms *atonement*, *propitiation* and *substitution*, they will not get cleared up about it all.

THE FEET OF JESUS.

I hied me to His feet,

And there I lay, shedding most bitter tears
Of sorrow for my past,—my many sins,
But He forgave, and is—my Saviour !

I hie me to His feet,

And peaceful sit to listen to His word
Who teacheth truth, in wisdom making wise
The simple. None like Him—my Saviour !

I hie me to His feet

When storm and tempest rages all around,
And my poor heart is fearful, and cast down ;
He quiets all, gives peace—my Saviour !

There at His feet I find

Both rest and peace, a blissful soothing calm ;
My heart forgets its woe, He filleth all—
Himself. How good He is—my Saviour !

I hie me to His feet

To pour into His willing ear a song,
My feeble song of praise ; and down I fall
And worship Him. He's God my Saviour !

Oh, leave me but alone !

Alone with Him, enfolded in His arms,
Hugged to His breast, Whose deep full joy
It is to richly bless. My Saviour !

I'd like to serve Him well,

To run His errands, doing all to please
Him Who is worthy, more than I can tell.
He gave Himself for me—my Saviour !

E. R. W.

FALLING ASLEEP.

UP to the time of Moses we do not read of death being termed sleep. Adam, Seth, Noah, etc., each one died. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died. To Moses was death for the first time called sleep, and that was by Jehovah Himself. He was about to acquaint Moses with the future conduct of that people he had been instrumental in bringing out of Egypt and in leading them through the wilderness. In Deut. xxxi. 14, we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold thy days approach that thou must die;" and then in verse 16, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." As regards human life here on earth Moses was to die, and leave everything. All his work was done, but though dead, there was to be an awakening, and hence death could be called sleep. Jehovah first calls it sleep. We read of Joshua's death, so too of Eli's, Samuel's, and of Saul's; but to David Jehovah would in grace make known the future of his seed, of the kingdom also, and of the blessing of Israel. He says (2 Saml. vii. 12) "And when thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers."

After this it is used of the wicked kings of Israel and Judah as well as of the good. Solomon slept with his fathers and so did Rehoboam and Baasha, Omri and others who were wicked, thus showing that sleeping is as true of the wicked as it is of the righteous.

The Lord Jesus speaking to His disciples in John xi. says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples did not understand, so Jesus said, "Lazarus is dead." Viewing death as death,

resurrection was called for; so Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." Viewing death as sleep, awakening would fitly express what was needed. The term sleep seems to involve the thought of awaking, whilst that of death does not. Of the many blessings which our beneficent Creator has bestowed upon His creatures none can surpass that of sleep. It is a period of unconsciousness, of inaction. What produces it we may not know, but of its benefit we can speak. The loss of it soon leads to grave disturbance, and often to mental disaster. Sleep, blessed sleep, revives and refreshes. It is often called "nature's sweet restorer." How natural that the disciples should say to the blessed Lord, not understanding what He meant about Lazarus being asleep, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well." How often has the anxious watcher been cheered by the hope that a turn for the better has taken place in the condition of some loved sick one when they have seen the closed eyelids and noticed the quiet breathing, plainly evidencing that their patient was sleeping.

Sleep belongs to no class in particular. The sons of toil often get more than those who appear more favoured in the matter of wealth. Anxious care usually drives it away. A peaceful mind (and this it is the privilege of God's people to enjoy) induces it. So He giveth His beloved sleep. "I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety." Natural sleep restores nature, and then comes the awaking, but we awake to the same scenes and circumstances. Nothing has changed. We have to take up our duties and work as before. The period of unconsciousness is such a boon to those for whom life seems all sadness. How different the awaking of those who are sleeping their last sleep. Never will they awake of themselves. Never will the poor body say, I have been

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asleep long enough. No, no ; its existence can scarcely be traced by the living. What has become of those who fell asleep some thousand years or so ago ? Who can find their bodies now ? One, and One only, and that One has a voice of divinely penetrating power. Of old we read, " He spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast." " The hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth." Not all at once—first the saved, and then long after all the unsaved ; but both saved and unsaved awake to scenes so different to those around them when they fell asleep. And their condition is immensely changed. In a natural body they went asleep. In a spiritual body will they awake. The prospect before the saved is life and glory, whilst that of the unsaved will be to live for ever in the lake of fire.

In natural sleep there is rest both for body and mind. If the latter should be active, for it is so sometimes, it generally indicates a lack of health. " The sleep of a labouring man is sweet." It should rest the tired brain as well as tired limbs ; but in the sleep of death the body alone sleeps. The spirit and the soul, thank God, do not need it and will not share in it. Men sometimes speak of the sleep of the soul, and view those who have fallen asleep as existing, but it is an unconscious existence. Not so, thank God. " To-day," said the dying Saviour to the repentent thief, " shalt thou be with Me in paradise." " To depart and be with Christ, which is far better," wrote Paul (Phil. i.). " Absent from the body, present with the Lord," he also wrote in 2 Cor. v. With Christ in paradise ! With Christ, which is far better ! Present with the Lord and yet asleep is all a delusion. Never had they been so wide awake, never so happy. Saints are privileged to be happy and enjoy Christ here, but no matter how much any dear Christian may taste of

the joy of Christ's presence whilst here in the flesh, *very far better* is it with those who have departed to be with Christ. What of the unsaved—are they somewhere in unconscious existence? Let us hear the voice of the only One who perfectly knew: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." His body lay in the tomb; for we read: "The rich man also died and was buried. But in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments." Immediate bliss in the one case, immediate misery in the other, and this we learn from the lips of the Son of God.

Still, after all, there is a lurking dread in the minds of very many true Christians of dying or falling asleep. Well, God has put into his creatures the love of life, and there is in the thought something strange and uncanny, and those who pass through it, sometimes triumphantly, do not come back to tell us of their experiences, so it is a new and untried experience for each one when it comes. Our hope is the coming of Christ, and we are commanded to wait and to watch for His return. That is quite enough for us to do. Should it, however, be our lot to pass through death, shall we be quite alone? Thank God, He who has said, "I will never leave thee," will be with us then. Dying grace is not ministered to the living, but to the dying. Further, Jesus died, and died for us. His exit from the tomb was one of magnificent triumph. He came forth as the Victor, and has ever since held the keys of the gates, and no one can pass in without his knowledge and sanction. "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and hades" (Rev. i.). Fellow believer, let us keep our eyes upon the Victor; let us ponder those precious words, "Behold I am alive for evermore." He is thine and He is mine.

Another thing, we have seen that He has the keys of the

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gates, but those who sleep sleep in Jesus, or through Jesus (1 Thess. iv.). It is sometimes stated, Put to sleep *by* Jesus. At any rate, they fall asleep through Him—there is no accident about it. It is not old age, or disease, although these may be present and be the means He is using for taking down the tabernacle, but through Him they sleep. A nervous child does not like going to sleep alone and in the dark, but does not mind at all if in its mother's arms. Her winsome presence, her gentle voice singing some little lullaby, and off the child goes before it knows anything of it. So with the Christian. Through Jesus he falls asleep, and this is the beginning of bliss which will never end. The sleeping body in due time Christ will awaken in glory. It is His, bought by His own blood, safe in His custody, Sweet sleep!

“Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest;
 Thy spirit now with Christ is richly blest.
 We loved thee well; but Jesus loved thee best—
 Good night! good night! good night!”

E. R. W.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. vii. 1-10.)

(Continued from Vol. IV., page 228.)

THE answer evoked by the cry for Solyma to return, provides the occasion for the King to proceed with His eulogy in her praise. “As upon the dance of two camps,” the answer came. “How beautiful are thy feet with sandals, O prince's daughter,” is His response. The bare feet indicate shame (Isa. xx. 4), affliction (2 Sam. xv. 30), and unpreparedness

for travel (Ex. xii. 11). Shame was gone ; affliction had given place to victory and joy ; and she was prepared to come up out of the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved (viii. 5).

From the head downwards the spouse had traced the features of her King. Upwards, from her feet, He speaks of her members, each of which must yield its mead of pleasure, or refreshment for Him. In verse 2 we seem to have indications of the fact that she would be fruitful, the mother of many (Isa. liv. 1), of a generation not yet born.

Her two breasts are again referred to, and set forth the delicately pure and undivided affection that was entirely set upon Him. It was of the character of her first love, "the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. ii. 2). Then it was truly *Himself* that attracted, and not the scene around—the blessing. And now she must emerge out of the wilderness in His company. True, other objects came in and her heart played truant, but He speaks of the character of her love as He reads it. In origin it was from Him ; in communion it was lavished upon Him. And how appropriate the figure—two young roes—to aptly set out the sensitive love that delights alone in its object.

And what of our love—is that undivided ? Are we striving to bestow a portion upon Him, and a portion upon the things of the world ? "Love not the world" we are exhorted. Unfeigned love, first love, suits the heart of our Lord. May we permit nothing to come in to divert the even flow of our hearts, the proper reply "in answer to His constancy."

And dwelling upon the glory of her person, her neck is likened to a tower of ivory, her eyes to pools, and her nose as the tower of Lebanon. In the former reference to her neck the prominent thought was strength, but here the

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added thought of strength purified—glory. Grace confers strength and then adds glory. The “eyes like pools in Heshbon,” seems indicative of inward purity, the clear eyes reflecting back, like a pool the sunshine, the glory gazed upon. The clear eye is also suggestive of spiritual discernment. And in another way, the nose too; for whilst adding majesty to the countenance it is also as a defence. By it dangers are discovered and averted. Ill odours as well as sweet savours are by it detected. A part of her punishment, when Jehovah set His jealousy against her, was to be the removal of her nose (Ezek. xxiii. 25). Power to discriminate gone—what a distressful condition. But all shall be restored in the day of her blessing, and in comparing it to “the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus” we have it as a tower on an enemy’s border, as a sentinel at his post, a guard against the entrance of evil. It may be that there is a reference here to a tower of the house of the forest of Lebanon (1 Kings vii. 2), built by Solomon. The neck of ivory portrays the purity of her strength; the pure eyes, inward discernment; the nose, outward discrimination. In the day of departure, strength had been sought from a corrupt source (Isa. xxxi. 1), and in departing from God the eye had dimmed, and the nose had been removed, and they erred in vision, and they stumbled in judgment. But now the day when “they also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding” had arrived and the King comments truly on the work of His hands.

And do the spiritual verities shadowed forth by these natural features pertain to us? How real is the necessity for the exercise of judgment and discretion, approving things that are excellent, or trying things that differ (Phil. i. 10). Decline in soul is shown by the absence of this ability.

“Thine head upon thee like Carmel.” Carmel, with its

beautiful clothing of evergreen oak, beneath which are found flowers of various hues and glories, may well stand for the emblem of stateliness and feminine beauty. "The excellency (or beauty) of Carmel" is given to her (Isa. xxxv. 2). "To the rich foliage clothing the sides and summit of Carmel are compared the abundant tresses on the head of the spouse; its softer beauty is contrasted with the sterner majesty of Lebanon, with its cedars, to which the King is compared." Supremacy was properly His; queenly glory and beauty her Well-Beloved associated with her, saying, "Thine head upon thee like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple."

And entranced with her beauty we read of Him as "held captive in the tresses." Now, what can this mean? Gazing upon her in her glory He loved her, and it means that she was a suited object for His heart. His love set upon her, He counts her as the apple of His eye (Zech. ii. 8), and rejoices over her with joy, if silent in His love. For it is as though another voice gives expression to this—"The King is held captive in the tresses."

We would again remark that the figures are natural ones; the truths expressed by them are spiritual. Now when Divine love, all loves excelling, is set upon an object who shall turn it aside? The blessed One who is here the Speaker, knows what it is to receive hatred for love (Psalm lxix.), to have the stream of that love bayed back until it flowed forth with irresistible might in His baptism of sufferings, and the new covenant was sealed with His precious blood. Hence He views her invested with the glory conferred by grace and is "*held captive*," by it.

We are prepared, then, for the next utterance which shows how deep and real His appreciation was.

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, in delights."

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The depth of our appreciation depends upon the measure of satisfaction our hearts receive. To be truly in love, then, is to have truly found a satisfying object for the yearnings of the heart. The spouse was full of delights for Him. Every feature of her fair form yields its measure of joy to Him. All her ways were in entire accordance with His desires. These are Divine estimations after grace ~~has~~ accomplished its good purposes. "Fair and pleasant"—pleasing and delightful. Fairness of form, grace of speech, charm of manner, all these appeal to men; yet they are as the eventide to the dawn, as the rose in contrast with the thorn, when put beside the spiritual realities.

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, in delights." Be hushed every earth-born sound that the heart may clearly hear this precious declaration ringing through its recesses. Overburdened soul, lay aside for a moment thy anxiety and ponder this stupendous, astounding truth, that in *you* Jesus your Lord finds satisfaction. Troubled heart, weary with brooding over evil and repeated failure, and tempted to renounce the path in which you find so much exercise, just cry halt and, renouncing all this brooding, listen to what your Saviour says, and then in His company walk, and as His voice attracts so will your eyes turn from self to Him; and, as surely as light dispels darkness, so will occupation with Christ disperse the frettings that continually arise from self-occupation. The words are the Lord's. Rejoice then in the cornucopia, the horn of plenty, of His love.

"This thy stature is as a palm tree," He exclaims, combining His summaries of her features. The palm is the striking Scriptural similitude of the believer—the righteous. We say striking, for so it is. Upwards, heavenwards it wends its way, seemingly indifferent to every other purpose but that. It hastens, as it were, to rear its crown sufficiently

high to display its fruit. In appearance it is the very embodiment of order and calmness. Given a degree of moisture the palm will flourish in any soil, and so in this way also the figure is very fitting; for that stature was produced, not by the character of the soil—a wilderness is barren enough surely—but by the supply of living water and the abundance of grace continually vouchsafed.

“Thy breasts like grape clusters.” Her love, then, was like His in this that it had many ways of expressing itself. “Better than wine” was His (i. 2). “Much better than wine” her love was, He asserts (iv. 10). The *grape-clusters* speak of the numerous manifestations of it; and, laying hold of them, He appropriates for Himself. Love, always in connection with obedience, He counts as the open display of fruitfulness. Uprightness, as the palm figures, is the first characteristic. The upright stem bears up the crown of fruit, and as it preceded the latter so does fruitfulness for Him follow on the reception of the truth.

His resolve is next stated. “I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof,” and thus taking possession, the King in the earnestness of His love exclaims, “Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine.” The grape-clusters borne on poles by the spies returning from Canaan were the silent but eloquent witnesses of the fruitfulness of the land to which Israel was going; and so grace finds in them the figure to set forth her love, which, though in itself perhaps as a drop in the bucket, was precious to Him.

“The smell of thy nose like apples.” Inward life must show itself in some form of outward action, even as the costly perfume makes its whereabouts apparent. And as into the nostrils the breath of life was breathed, so in figure we have the effect of life breathed out again. Christ was

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the apple tree whose fruit was sweet to her taste (chap. ii.), and consequently the out-breathings that He perceives are the result of her having been brought into communion with Him. What is received from Christ in the blessings of grace return to Him in love and service from grateful hearts.

“And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine,” He continues. “*The best wine*”—such is its character to Him. And immediately the spouse breaks in with, “*For my Beloved.*” All is for Him—the clusters of grapes, smell of apples, and the best wine. And these stand for the outward signs of the hidden activities of grace, revealing the life beneath, and the object of that life. They are not so open as the lips dropping honeycomb and the smell of the garments, but none the less perceived and commended by Him. Whatever flowed from her pleasing to her Lord, was for Him; and after many wanderings, many forgetfulnesses, it was now “Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end.”

And if this be so for us also, we must of necessity arrive at the point when with truth we can say—

“Thee will I love, my Joy, my Crown!

Thee will I love, my Lord, my God!

Thee will I love beneath Thy frown

Or smile, Thy sceptre or Thy rod:

What though my flesh and heart decay,

Thee shall I love in endless day.”

In the exuberance of her joy she exclaims, “*For my Beloved.*” “That goeth down smoothly,” declares the character of the joy intimated by the “best wine.” In the language of the figure it was well refined, pure, and calculated to raise signs of responsiveness, even where there was the semblance, at least, of entire indifference to it. She thus

imparts to it all the worth her King puts upon it, anticipatively stating what He would have uttered.

And now His heart is out, and she reaches the zenith of knowledge in that direction as fully realising that the out-breathings of that heart were towards her. "*I am my beloved's, and His desire is towards me.*" This shadows forth true growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Safety is followed by certainty, and certainty by enjoyment.

His desire is towards me! What deep satisfaction can be marked here. "His desire"—the deep, tender yearnings of a perfect heart. "Towards me"—an unworthy object. The truth expressed was a matter of revelation, but she had learnt it through experience. "A peculiar treasure" she certainly was to Him, and His painstaking love proved it.

And can not each one of His beloved saints take up these words and say, "His desire is towards *me*." He deigns in love to wash the feet of His own—that *part with Him* they might have. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." He makes us meet and keeps us clean for that eternity of bliss awaiting us. Though in the glory now He has a present service there for us, and hence we can each assuredly declare, "His desire is towards *me*."

(To be continued, D.V.)

GATHERED THOUGHTS ON HAGGAI.

SPEAKING generally the subject of this prophecy is the glory of the House in the last days. The Lord says of it: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former" (ii. 9). According to the decree of Cyrus the people had returned from captivity for the purpose of building "the

Gathered Thoughts on Haggai.

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house of the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra i. 3). Pressed by their enemies they ceased building (iv.), but the real reason was that self was before them instead of God, and consequently self-interests came before God's.

The people are called to consider their ways (chap. i. 6), and when "fear being awakened, the conscience being reached, the fallow ground of nature being ploughed up, the same voice of God by Haggai begins its ministry of comfort and encouragement." "I am with you, saith the Lord."

Thus encouraged they began work again (Ezra v.), receiving presently the king's decree to do so. "The Lord, indeed, did dispose the heart of the king; but this was not till His prophet had disposed the heart of Israel. The fresh spring in the heart of the people was found to have been in *God*, and not in *circumstances*. It was God's voice by His prophets that set them on work again, and not the royal favour of the Persian. The Lord turned the heart of the king their master to countenance them when they had taken again the place of faith and obedience."

"'I am with you,' is the saving principle for faith in the weakest possible day; and, let me repeat it, what had they better in the brightest day? Nay, what else so good as having the Lord with them? To have the most blessed servants would have been small if they had not the Master Himself. This was the great safeguard and unfailing source of supply and counsel when Israel came out of Egypt. How gracious to have his presence reassured after Babylon, when all was apparently gone and broken. 'I am with you, saith Jehovah.' The words were few, but they implied every help and succour and blessing; and they sunk deep in pious hearts."

Another thing comes out in chap. ii. Those who saw the

house in her first glory would be very inclined to despise what they had now got. "Be strong," is the exhortation. The question of material was not rightly theirs at all. He would care for that: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

And the remnant are also cast back upon the Word of the God that most surely does keep covenant with His people. The word He had given when they came out of Egypt should remain (verse 5). "So My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."

"The silver and the gold were Jehovah's. But the nations, overthrown, oppressed, and oppressing one another, not knowing where to look for happiness, strength, and peace, shall find in that One who alone should establish the glory of Jehovah and bestow true peace—in a word, shall find in Christ alone blessing and deliverance; and He shall be the glory of the house which the poor remnant were building." "The desire of all nations shall come." The next prophecy deals with the question of defilement (ii. 10-19). A consideration of their ways, and a consideration of Jehovah's ways would lead to blessing. "From this day will I bless you."

"Who can fail to see that this (vers. 10-19) is most applicable to the present day. The common notion is that you can cleanse the world by going into it and by associating with it; instead of which you cannot fail to be defiled yourself."

"Negatively we are bound to separate from what is dishonouring to the Lord. Positively we are bound to follow after what is good, according to His will, with those who have His glory and will at heart. To separate from what is evil in the Lord's sight is an imperative duty for the Christian—to separate in order to unite, according to God's

word, with those that call on Him with a pure heart. The notion of this day that you can benefit or set to rights what is evil by association with it is not only a fallacy which must end in disappointment, if not in dragging you where you think not; but in itself the principle is really nothing less than a giving up of God. It is a practical abandonment of His holiness, and of our obligation to walk as Christ walked, under the plea of doing good. What more ruinous?"

The last message (ver. 20) deals with the shaking of heaven and earth, and the consequent overthrowing of everything opposed to Jehovah. Then we have also "the establishment of David's heir as the object of God's love and the vessel of His power."

"Zerubbabel, though but governor, is clearly the type of Christ as King; as being David's son and heir in his own day, it was the more natural that he should be. Messiah alone will fully set up and for ever maintain, while earth endures, the kingdom of Jehovah here below."

THE LORD'S MESSENGER.

"WHAT then answers to a messenger of Jehovah now? The man who uses the testimony of God for His glory—who unflinchingly holds to it, yet perseveringly seeks the good of God's people, and who bears all odium, and scorn, and rejection, yet cheers others as well as his own soul with the bright anticipations of glory and triumph with Christ at His coming.

"But he who is helping on the delusive hopes of the world, and the vain dream of Christendom's improvement is, I think, a very different messenger. Of one thing be assured, no truth avails unless you are prepared to carry it

out in every day's practice. The world will let you hold and even say anything, provided they see that you have no serious thought of being faithful, and so calling them to be the same.

“He, then, has not the smallest resemblance to Jehovah's messenger, who says one thing and does another, who denounces the world and yet seeks it for his family, judges rightly, yet never thinks of acting out his convictions. Is this living so as to give effect to a divine testimony? He who is the living spring of the truth is also the Holy Spirit. What can be more calculated to destroy the truth than practical inconsistency with it?”—*Extracted.*

THE LORD'S DAY.

“AND when we think of it there is peculiar force and blessedness in the first day of the week being the Christian's day. What is the idea of the Sabbath day? I take the first six days to myself, to the world, to earthly things, and then at the end of it, when I may be tired of serving myself and other people, I finish up with the Lord and give the last day to Him.

“But now, how beautifully the Christian form of the truth comes in! It is the first day. I begin with the Saviour. I begin with His grace. I begin with Him who died for me and rose again. I am not a Jew, I am a Christian, and therefore let us not forget, it is the seventh day which is the Sabbath, for the one; but the first day, which is the Lord's day, for the other; the day of Him who by His own blood, death, and resurrection has acquired a joint title for my eternal and heavenly blessing.

“He had it in His own Person; He was Jehovah the

Lord of all, before ever He came into the world ; but now He is Lord on another ground—that of redemption—because He has died and risen. There is at once the open door of my blessing—of your blessing—divine blessing to every poor soul that is brought by grace to receive Him and bow to Him.”—*Extracted.*

“GOOD IN THY SIGHT.”

“ WHEN I consider how my light is spent,
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He returning chide.
 ‘ Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ? ’
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, ‘ God doth not need
 Either man’s work or His own gifts. Who best
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
 Is kingly : thousands at His bidding speed,
 And post o’er land and ocean without rest ;
 They also serve who only stand and wait.’ ”

—*Milton on his Blindness.*

“ God holds the key of all unknown,
 And I am glad.
 If other hands should hold the key,
 Or if He trusted it to me
 I might be sad.

“ What if to-morrow’s cares were here
Without its rest ?
I’d rather He unlocked the day,
And, as the hours swing open, say
‘ My will is best.’

“ The very dimness of my sight
Makes me secure ;
For, groping in my misty way,
I feel His hand ; I hear Him say,
‘ My help is sure.’

“ I cannot read His future plans ;
But this I know—
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below.

‘ Enough ; this covers all my wants,
And so I rest ;
For what I cannot, He can see,
And in His care I saved shall be,
For ever blest.”

Dr. Stoughton in his history of “The Church of the Restoration” (1664), writes :—

Some of the ejected ministers, reduced to extremities, were discovered under the concealments which from poverty they contrived. Mr. Grove, a man of great opulence whose seat was in the neighbourhood of Birdbush, in Wiltshire, in consequence of his wife’s dangerous illness, sent to the minister of the parish. The minister was riding out with the hounds, when the messenger arrived, and he replied that he would visit the gentleman when the hunt was over. Mr.

Grove, having expressed his displeasure that the clergyman should follow his diversions rather than attend to his flock, one of the servants took the liberty of saying, "Our shepherd, sir, if you will send for him, can pray very well; we have often heard him in the field." Upon this the shepherd was sent for, and Mr. Grove asking him whether he could pray, the shepherd replied, "God forbid, sir, I should live one day without prayer." Upon being desired to pray with the sick lady, he did it so pertinently, with such fluency, and with such fervour as greatly to astonish all who listened. As they rose from their knees the gentleman observed: "Your language and manner discover you to be a very different person from what your appearance indicates. I conjure you to inform me who and what you are, and what were your views and situation in life before you came into my service." To this the shepherd rejoined, that he was one of the ministers who had lately been ejected from the Church, and that having nothing left, he was content to adopt the honest employment of keeping sheep. "Then you shall be my shepherd," rejoined the Squire, and immediately erected a meeting-house on his own estate, in which Mr. Ince (for that was the shepherd's name) preached and gathered a congregation of Dissenters.

First as to *blood* and *life*. The word is sufficiently clear that the blood is the life. (Gen. ix. 4) "But flesh with the life thereof, *which is the blood thereof*." Again, "It (the blood) is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof" (Lev. xvii. 14).

Then as to *blood shedding*, certainly under the law it did not require blood to be *spilt* for a man to have *shed* it. The

man was a murderer—had *shed* blood, if he killed a man with a blow of *his hand*, or thrust him of hatred, or dealt him a blow with a stone of the hand (Numb. xxxv. 17-21). Many a man has been murdered—his blood *shed*, without one drop being spilt. And the land, Numbers tells us, could not be cleansed of the blood that *is shed therein*, if a man even was killed maliciously by a blow, but by the blood of him that *shed* it.

A man is hung—witness the sons of Rizpah (2 Sam. xxi.). Was not their blood shed? According to Mr. ——'s contention, if one is hung his blood is *not shed*, for not a drop of it in that case need be spilt.

You will remark he says, "The animal was first killed, *then* the blood was shed." He can hardly have thought what it was that he was writing. It would be useful for him to endeavour to furnish Scripture authority for his belief, that the piercing the Lord's side by the soldier was needed for the making propitiation. That he will find impossible, for nothing of the kind is stated. Not that the Word is silent on the teaching connected with it. The evangelist who witnessed it has told us what it teaches—truth about the divinity of Christ, viz., that life is *in* the Son, because when dead that which spoke of life and propitiation flowed forth from Him (1 John v. 6-11). To John, apparently, it was quite new that blood could flow after death. He would not have endorsed "first death of the animal, then the blood shed."

I believe Rom. viii. 13 looks on to what is final, indicating the end of the road along which anyone may be outwardly travelling.

C. E. S.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. vii. 11—viii. 4.)

PERFECTLY assured, then, of His heart's love the spouse invites the Beloved to accompany her to the fields, the villages, the vineyards, to receive from her the many manifestations of her loves. Truly "perfect love casts out fear," and now that His love with her is made perfect, that is, she is convinced of it and able to rest satisfied in it, things that would before have been shunned are faced, and together they are to enjoy the fruits of grace in the bliss of communion. Such is grace.

Where there is failure known, and the heart of Christ very imperfectly apprehended, there must be a measure of reserve, and companionship with Him not sought. But when all is out the heart rests completely in One who knows all things. Oh! the gentle probing by love of that heart that had strayed, after the question of the conscience had been privately settled, by "Lovest thou Me?" Love beamed in the eyes of the One who spoke, and love pervaded every word in the question. But no qualms of conscience were there. The opening out of that heart had dispelled them, and the answer comes, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Blessed Master! so Thou dost. But sure I am of this, Thou lovest me. Not else could'st Thy care be so ceaseless, nor the ministry of Thy Word so abundant. Grant Lord the grace that, being obedient, we each might have the full joy of Thy presence.

"Let *us*," says the spouse. She is no longer alone nor desires to be. Her King is her companion. It is not now Moses, but One immeasurably greater. "Let us go forth into the field" for communion; "lodge in the villages" for

rest; and "get up early to the vineyards" for service; for "there," says she, "will I give Thee my loves."

The flourishing vine, the opening grapes, and the budding pomegranates would all testify to the blessed effect of sunshine and shower, as the exercises and bitter experiences tended to bring forth the products of grace hidden within. Fully knowing Him, the long pent-up heart finds free outlet, as the earth in that day shall yield its full increase, the wilderness even blossoming as the rose. Deep, deep shall be the gratitude manifested by Judah then. He loves much to whom much is forgiven, and conscious of the depths of failure, "What fruits of gratitude, what peculiar feelings, will be those which the people of Israel have kept for the Lord alone, which they could never have for any other, and which, after all, none but themselves could have towards the Lord, viewed as come on earth."

"There will I give Thee my loves." The place of fruitfulness is the place of service and worship; for it is not mere saying or doing that is pleasing and acceptable to Him, but the production of fruit. True service is fruitbearing, and consequently it is in the vineyard that she bestows her loves upon her Beloved. Ah! what is doing if the vine flourish not. Many are busy and bustling, but their hearts are sterile. Truth they refuse to have; their object is to gain a name through doing, and not to glorify the Lord. So no "blossoms appear" showing truth active within; and no "pomegranates bloom" for grace has not been effectual in their souls. Self is the beginning and end of their works, and hence they have no loves to give to Him. They are at home in their doing, but ill at ease where Christ alone is exalted.

"The mandrakes (or love apples) yield fragrance" she declares. These fruits emit a smell that is offensive to most

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except the people of the East. By them they are prized very highly. How significant is this. The odour of love is obnoxious to those who have it not. The joys of love are by them unappreciated. But love answers love, and the fragrance is for Him.

“All manner of choice fruits are at our gates” she continues, and the new and the old both are laid up for Him. Past gatherings have yielded abundantly, and the well-kept vines still produce more fruit. In the renewed heart truth is ever active, and all thus produced is for Him. He has been in view all along the way, and the moment when her loves should be given to Him she has continually anticipated. How well she knows what suits Him!

Do we? What are we laying up *for Him*? The love, simplicity, dependence of the child are sweet to Him. The strength of the young man, wherewith he overcomes the wicked one, is pleasant, and displaces not the characteristics of the little one. In spirit meek and lowly, in action strong and obedient—such marks true progress. And likewise the knowledge and patience of the fathers are choice to Him. The love that trusts and the love that labours, the faith that appropriates, and the faith that increases, the hope that looks up, and the hope that looks on never wavering, are alike precious to the heart of the Lord. Youthful zeal and mellowed experience are both delightful to Him.

“Choice fruits, new and old, I have laid them up for Thee, O my Beloved.” Transposing that into the language of Paul we hear him saying, “For me to live—Christ.” This means that life is life for service of which Christ is the centre and the sum; for it certainly is very true that “those are the best and most acceptable services in which Christ is the solitary aim of the soul, and His glory without any admixture whatever, the end of all our efforts.” Let our

business be, then, the laying up of fruits for Him, our earnest desire to be acceptable to Him both here and up there.

“Thou art our triumph and our joy ;
We find our all in Thee ;
Thy glories will our tongues employ
Through all eternity.”

And now the yearning of her heart comes out. How could she with propriety bestow upon Him openly and without shame the sign of the love she bore Him? With the kisses of her mouth she would kiss Him then, and who should despise her? who look upon her as a shameless abandoned one? And hence her heart desires, “Oh, that thou wert as my brother.” Did she then find Him *without* she would kiss Him. If He only stood to her in the known, recognized relationship of brother then could she openly and in the most precious way avow her love and be above all criticism.

That He recognized such a relationship His tender breathings of love clearly show. “My sister, spouse,” He has more than once called her, and her heart too in its imperfect measure, has responded; but here it is, and this reveals true progress, the desire for the public avowal of love whilst maintaining her true place. “Should I find Thee without I would kiss Thee; and they would not despise me.” Her failure had before this led her into collision with the watchmen, and they had by removing her veil certainly despised her. Her affection drew her there in quest of her Beloved, but it was an impropriety, and from the consequences of that even her love did not save her. We must remember that it is exercise of heart, not conscience, that we have brought before us; she is learning the fulness of His heart, the perfect love and grace that is there, and the

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littleness of her own—though He gives us His own estimate of the value of that.

It is surely well when the heart bubbles up with strong desires towards Christ; and it is well when we have learned the untrustworthiness of them. Past failures may teach us some lessons, but they are not to quench affection. Nor is love to be hid any more than light, and spite of cold critics the costly box of spikenard is broken and poured out on *Him*, and His approbation is so marked that a lasting memorial, a memorial that time cannot efface, is erected to her memory. Still, discretion is a virtue that has His approval too; not the discretion of fear and the flesh, but that which faith and grace imparts.

And further. “I would lead Thee—bring Thee into my mother’s house,” are her continuing words. In that day, no longer refused but joyously welcomed, Judah’s Messiah shall receive a glad introduction; and, actuated by love, she will adoringly sit at His feet and hear His words. “Thou wouldest instruct me.” Always ready, always willing, how wondrous will be His impartations of divine things when the ear is both open and receptive. Notice the contrast: “*I* would lead Thee,” “*Thou* wouldest instruct me.” Such shall be her dual blessing. And what joy after confusion of face; what fellowship after long distrust and refusal. The ear, long closed, will then be widely open to drink in the unfoldings of divine fulness. “Thou wouldest instruct me.” He is the gracious Instructor; for we should read “Thou” instead of “who.” And such surely is the most precious sense. The mother’s house is the place of communion, and there at home with her Beloved, He is the Teacher and she is the taught.

Oh, blessed portion! To be instructed thus is the “good part which shall not be taken away.” It is the one thing

needful, and never, never will He allow a care-worn Martha to snatch it away; nor will He by any word force any from it who elect to be there. It is granted in the blessing of grace: "They sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words" (Deut. xxxiii. 3). May we truly receive Him home to our hearts, and prove in very truth that to hear Him is indeed "*the good part.*"

But has she nothing to impart? Nay, there must be the suited return. In the very nature of the thing communion must be mutual, and love must outflow towards the object upon which it is set, even as the Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus is the same Mary who has no scruple about "wasting" the precious unguent, already referred to, upon Him. And so here too His heart was to receive its refreshment, for she would provide "Spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." And this would be to Him delectable, the very essence of a fruitful walk. How He loves that. Grace produces this "spiced wine" and devoted love presents it to Him.

And after another word bespeaking settled joy and bliss our canticle ends with the charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Why should you stir up, why awake my love till He please." Why, indeed! The opening words are, "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (ch. v. 2), but now divine love has wrought, has conquered, and what was once lost through her own lethargy she would not now be robbed of by the activity of others.

H. F.

RESTORED, OR OTHERWISE.

REGARD being given to God's institutions, even in days of the enemy's greatest apparent triumph, as brought before us in Luke xxii., yet what unfoldings were vouchsafed! The

Passover with its sober and solemn injunctions—the Supper with its unspeakable joy—He, the Lamb appointed for Sacrifice—the One to suffer who took not the cup—appointing to His own whom *He graciously regarded as persevering with Him*, to eat and drink at His table, in His kingdom, and to occupy thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel !

There is something so natural, so simple (yet reading in the Old Testament the necessities for the Passover not absolutely required in connection with that feast, for wine is not mentioned in Ex. xii. or Deut. xvi.) in Him taking a loaf, giving thanks, breaking it, giving to them ; yet consider what is set forth by these humble materials in His hand. What is unfolded in those words, for He gave to them, “*saying.*” Oh ! my soul, dwell upon what He has to communicate, for never such was heard before. We who can say “Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed,” must needs hear : “This is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me.” In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying : “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.” What a basis for a covenant to rest upon ! How expressive the love—“given for you,” “poured out for you.” A loaf, something which the most humble handle and partake of, and wine, the common beverage of the land, who would have thought that a day would dawn when such materials in His hands should be coupled with what He has been pleased to reveal : “This is My body which is given for you ; this do in remembrance of Me.” Are we always reminded, by these ever-present means, of Him who gave Himself ?

We are in days when strife is common ; such broke out among His own. It is solemn to read, after such revelation of His unspeakable love and grace expressed in those words :

“ This is My body which is given for you ; this do in remembrance of Me ”—that “ *Moreover*, behold, the hand of him that delivers Me up is with Me on the table ; ” more solemn to hear “ *Also* a strife among them which of them should be held to be the greatest.” The dark doings of that night are again referred to in 1 Cor. xi. : “ The Lord Jesus, *in the night in which He was delivered up*, took bread, and having given thanks, broke it, and said : This is My body, which is for you ; this do in remembrance of Me.” What a matter to receive from the Lord ! and we have delivered to us what His disciples heard from Himself. Was it retained ? Did the wealth of His heart’s unfoldings preserve them ? And do we with the Holy Ghost given, give that supremacy of place to Him ? Alas ! the many names of persons and places to which those bearing the Christian name rally and gather, tell again the tale of strife, of Himself slighted and displaced. “ Remember me ” were the simple words—the memorials as simple to ever keep before the heart that which is unfathomable, that which surpasses knowledge—His love—Himself. If His heart was revealed as bursting to disclose such rich contents to His own, our own pettiness and littleness was made manifest in the presence of such love and grace. There is another who is brought forward as having desires—and that one can only appear ready at hand when permitted to do necessary service. What more calculated to defeat what had been so marvellously expressed by Him than among His own strife to be heard for supremacy. “ Self ” alas ! in some form is referred to after He has spoken, and shall we not say at the suggestion of a deadly foe ? The lowly example of Him going down to death, of Him serving, does not in itself check the outbreak. What is so solemn comes out whether in His disciples, in saints at Corinth, or in ourselves—to reveal to us still the malice of

the enemy, and that we supply material for Satan and sieve—a humbling, cleansing process being required previous to a position of true service being held. We are shown that our blessed Lord's intercession prevails; an unrelenting foe is not allowed indefinitely to hold as prey or prisoner one who has confessed Him. As no permission had been given to think of self we see that one who did so must be broken of self-confidence and later be rebuked for interference. "I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren."

Have you and have I known that heart better through humiliating strayings, having experienced the bitterness of death by coming under temptation? Have you and I experienced the sweet solace after sorrow which threatened to overwhelm, or restoring grace—fruits of His availing and prevailing intercession? What words to hear from Him whom we had failed and falsified, "And thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren." The circumcision have no confidence in the flesh—however religious the dress—but it is this One, who at the first was testified to as "who takes a place before me, because He was before me," whom Simon Peter had heard and acted upon by following Him. This is the One then for the circumcision to rejoice in. What is open to that army of debtors to grace, to restoring grace, who have their feet released from snares, who have had the water of the Word applied, who hear of part with Him, yea of trust reposed, to all undeserving ones, of doing Him service. Oh! may this army of restored ones be awake to what His grace reveals; for if ever a time of strengthening, confirming and of putting in mind was called for it is now that languishing and departure, when so much that is contrary and perverse, has been given expression to. Oh! may many be recalled,

released, restored to swell the number of those who labour in faith and by love serve Him, and have at heart His people and His interests—His mind and will known from the Word—preserved from misleaders and making for confusion, by hearing and by following Him. “Confirm thy brethren.” How positive. How definite. Easy indeed to brood over the unhappy past, show a false humility by nursing our failures, and plead unfitness by our falls and inconsistencies; but oh! let it be true humility that rises up as His Word invites to do His pleasure. Public servants who have failed, upon true brokenness and sorrow, when converted are sent of Him to serve Him. Whom He forgives and restores such are forgiven. Chilling suspicion, repelling and uncharitable reference to the past is not permitted.

W. B.

CHRIST'S WORK.

CHRIST has made peace by the blood of the Cross. Christ has done all, and has left us nothing but thanksgiving and praise. If some one has paid my debts, my sorrow at the folly that contracted them, or my joy at their being discharged, adds nothing whatever to the payment of the debt, though both be natural and just. It is sometimes hard to return all our feelings as nothing, but it is only a remains of self; but only think what it cost the Son of God in undergoing the wrath of God, and we shall feel on one hand the perfect security of our justification, and the nothingness of all our feelings compared with what our sin really was in the sight of God; but He *remembers it no more*, as He has said. If Christ had not completely discharged and effaced it, He could not be in Heaven, for He could not sit at the

right hand of God charged with our sins, though he was charged with them on the Cross.

If your heart demands, but how do I know that I have part in all this? I answer, with the word of the Lord which abides for ever, that whoso believeth in Him. That all might be grace, God has willed that it should be by faith, and though faith produces immense effects, it adds nothing to the thing it believes. Christ and the efficacy of His word must be, and be before God, all that I am called to believe them to be, before I believe it.

J. N. D., 1843.

PRIDE ABASED—OBADIAH.

IN this, one of the briefest of the prophets, the great moral lesson for the soul to learn is that the proud God will debase. Babylon may rear its head to heaven, but low it shall be brought, never more to be restored; and Edom with whom the Lord has a controversy, may despise "the God of blessing," and feel secure in his rocky fastnesses, nevertheless "though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord."

The subject of this prophecy, is the destruction of Edom, and the eventual possession of Mount Seir by Israel, that people also being the instrument Jehovah uses for judging Esau at the last (ver. 18).

"Profaneness or infidel suffering, pride, hatred of Israel, these are Edom's common marks, the posts upon Esau," and hence they are the people whom the Lord is against (ver. 1), and "against whom the Lord has indignation for ever" (Mal. i. 4).

Pride deceives and is deceived, and hence the nations with whom they were confederate fail them (ver 7), and “are the first instruments of Jehovah’s vengeance.” “I have made thee small among the heathen” (ver 2). Their boasts availed them nothing, and the foolishness of pride was theirs (ver. 7).

Then He who alone can read hearts, reveals the reasoning of Edom. “Who shall bring me down to the ground?” They had dwellings, “and not uncomfortable dwellings cut out of the yielding sandstone of Petra and other places of Idumea. The climate being remarkably dry, and the stone exceedingly suited for such works, great or small—private dwellings as well as public reception rooms—they used these caves to live in. The remains are remarkable even to our own day. The Edomites coveted such a natural fortress as suiting well their destiny,” and there they were the proud defiers of the Lord.

Jehovah answers the challenge: “I will bring thee down, saith the Lord”; and they too have proved, and are to prove again, that “all His works are truth and His ways judgment: *and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.*” How becoming, then, it is to be “clothed with humility.”

They would be utterly desolated, their hidden things searched out, and as they had meted so should it be measured to them again. “They had lived by the sword, and by the rapine which generally follows the sword; and so should be their punishment.” Thieves generally leave some treasures undiscovered (ver. 5), and the grape-gatherer usually leaves some clusters unplucked, but “how are his hidden things sought up.”

And what was Edom’s special failing, calling for special retribution, has been already remarked. “There is nothing that exhibits more malice and wickedness than to take

advantage of another when he is ruined or sorrow wastes the spirit and divine chastening. It is a heart altogether depraved that could take advantage of another's fall to trample yet more on him when he is in the dust." Hence the refrain of ver. 13—"the day of their calamity." "He made merry in the day of Jacob's captivity. He looked on his brother with congratulation and malice 'in the day that he became a stranger.' He rejoiced in the fall of Jerusalem under the sword of the Chaldean. Even Moab might have been a dwelling place for the captives of Zion (Isa. xvi. 4), but Edom stood in the way to cut them off."

Still, the One who 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" (Ex. iii. 7), notes this, and the irrevocable decree, to receive its execution after this day of grace has run its course, is here uttered—"Thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (ver. 15).

And consequently deliverance is wrought: "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance." "It is not the beginning that decides a war, but the end. And this is a grave thought for us to keep in view habitually in all our ways. One often sees a good deal of ardour for a while; but they are wise who look on for another day, yea, who labour for eternity; they are wise who look not to what things appear now, but what they will be in the estimate of the Lord at His coming."

"The Lord hath spoken it" (ver. 18), is the word that conveys the assurance that so it shall be. Faith grasps the word of God, and believing His testimony sees somewhat of the end from the beginning.

"Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion," a reference to

those instruments that shall be honoured of God in that day as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah in theirs.

“And the kingdom shall be Jehovah’s.” To Him it belongs. Then shall His King rule, and evil, hatred, envy, and all forms of wickedness be put down, and all things be made subservient to God’s glory. The Administrator of Jehovah’s kingdom is the One who bowed before the pride of man. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The proud He abases, is the lesson of Obadiah.

GATHERED THOUGHTS.

**“THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH
KNOWLEDGE.”**

Eph. iii. 19.

GREAT was Thy love, Lord Jesus,
For sinners such as we,
That brought Thee from the glory,
Down to the cursèd tree.
Leaving that home so beauteous,
Thy much loved Father’s side,
To dwell on earth a stranger,
And to be crucified.
Led as a lamb to slaughter,
Patient, Thou didst endure
Insult, and scorn, and mocking—
Jesus, the spotless, pure.
Taken by hands ungentle,
Nailed to a cross of wood,
There be made sin for sinners,
Thou who wer’t only good.

Extract from Letter by the Late C. E. S.

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Dying, alone, forsaken,
Hidden the face of God ;
Suffering ! but words express not
Its depth of meaning, Lord.

Such was Thy love, we wonder,
Gaze on Thee, and adore,
But fail to comprehend, Lord,
That sea without a shore.

Yet soon with Thee in glory,
Thy ransomed Church shall be,
Knowing thy love then fully,
Evermore praising Thee.

A. S.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER BY THE LATE C. E. S.

Zech. xiii. 6 refers to the false prophet of the future. The break in the chap. begins at verse 7. From xi. 15—xiii. 6 is a section, setting forth events following the destruction of Antichrist, and xiii. 7—xiv. 2., events consequent on the cutting off of Christ.

Antichrist's cutting off predicted in xi. 17, we read of the *last* siege of Jerusalem, when the Lord appears for her final deliverance—xii. 1-9. Then we read of the work in the consciences of the people, the true day of Atonement for them, mourning for their sin in rejecting Him. Christ also has now appeared personally in power. This is followed by the destruction of idols and the cutting off of all false prophets, no subterfuge being allowed, by which any will survive. So if any one has the marks in his hand which thus shows what he has been he will be cut off, whatever excuse he may make.

Next follows xiii. 7—xiv. 2. The cutting off of Messiah in the past and what followed—the sheep scattered—and the nation not gathered, but a remnant preserved. Then great trial, which will more than decimate those who remain. Thus the *first* siege of Jerusalem, in the future, when the city will be captured, followed by the intervention in power of the Lord, xiv. 3, which is detailed in a moral order in xii. For xiv. 1-2 precedes in time xii. 11-9.

I have long held that xiii. 6 had no reference to the Lord. It is an old interpretation. But the context, I feel, is against it.

- “THERE was a King of old,
 That did in Jewry dwell;
 Whether a God, or Man, or both,
 I’m sure I love Him well.
- “Love Him! why, who doth not?
 Did ever any wight
 Not goodness, beauty, sweetness, love—
 Not comfort, love, and light?
- “None ever did, or can;
 But here’s the cause alone
 Why He of all few lovers finds,
 Because He is not known.
- “There are so many fair,
 He’s lost among the throng;
 Yet they that seek Him nowhere else
 May find Him in a song.
- “This God, Man, King, and Priest
 Almighty was, yet meek:
 He was most just, yet merciful;
 The guilty did Him seek.

Christ the Key to the Bible.

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“ He never any failed
That sought Him in their need :
He never quenched the smoking flax,
Nor brake the bruised reed.
“ He was the truest Friend
That ever any tried,
For whom He loved He never left,
For them He lived and died.
“ And if you'd know the folk
That brought Him to His end,
Read but His title—you shall find
Him styled the sinner's Friend.
“ His life all wonder was,
But here's a wonder more,
That He, who was all life and love,
Should be beloved no more.”

ANON, 1680.

CHRIST THE KEY TO THE BIBLE.

“CHRIST” is the key that unlocks the whole Book, the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. He is the very *heart* and *centre* of the first verse of Gen. i. 1. Yea, the very *heart* of the first *word* or *name* that greets us as we open up the sacred Scriptures.

“In the beginning” is a coming out of the *past eternity* as a boundless sea; and placing our foot upon *terra firma*, the name of “*God*” greets the reader, a *plural name* of the Godhead embracing *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*.

The name of the “*Son*” is the central figure in this great work of Gen. i. 1 (John i. 1-14, Col. i. 15-17, Heb. i. 1-3).

As we enter the study of this peerless volume, with the spirit of a disciple, like Mary of old, we find ourselves at the feet of the *Master*, and the "disciple indeed," will ever exclaim, as one of old, "*Who teacheth like Him?*"

In Gen. i. we see His majesty and glory as the *Creator*.

Then, as we pass through the various pages of the whole Book, we can trace a rich unfolding of His glories.

In *type*, in *prophecy*, in the *Gospels*, *Acts*, *Epistles*, and also *Revelation*, it is *Christ, Christ, Christ* that is revealed—Christ as *Sacrifice*, Christ as *Saviour*, Christ as *Judge*, Christ as *King*, etc., etc. His glories, personal and official are all fully given. We cannot afford to pass one verse by unread, *not even a word*.

Then as we reach Rev. xxii. 21, and emerge from the fields we have passed over in the reading and study of these sacred Scriptures, we feel *sanctified* and *blest* as no other reading produces (John xvii. 17).

And as we close the Book we are yet in the company of the One who greeted us in Gen. i. 1. He conducts us through the whole Book, and as we rise up in Rev. xxii. 21, we feel more at home in His presence; we know Him as we did not at first in Gen. i. 1; we know Him as we could not then. Then we were amazed, yea, confounded before Him as we beheld His *glory*, *majesty*, and *power* in creation (Job xxxviii. 3-7).

But, in Rev. xxii. 21, we know Him now as *Saviour* and *Redeemer*. The passage through the whole Book has given us *never to-be-forgotten lessons*. The story of the *fall* of man, *sin*, etc., as in Gen. iii., led to repentance and confession; then the Gospel message was a welcome sound for *our ears*—*Christ*, the Saviour of *men*; we heard the blessed news, received the message, received the Saviour, and we pursue the rest of the journey until the end in His fellowship, and

as we reach the last *book*, the last *chapter*, and eventually the last *verse*, we are about ready to begin the whole journey over again. Here it is we look up into His face, fall down at those feet and exclaim, "Unto *Him* who *loves us* and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father: to Him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages (eternity itself). Amen" (New Trans., J. N. D.). We have crossed the whole Book, and then as a sweet heavenly benediction there falls upon the devout and reverent reader as precious dew from heaven, the closing word, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

A. E. B.

THINE AND MINE.

LORD, I am thine, and Thou art mine,
 Together linked are we;
 On Thy great love may I recline
 Until Thy face I see.
 I am not mine, but ever Thine,
 And Thou art now and ever mine.
 I love to whisper Thy sweet name,
 So full of charm and power;
 Jesus, eternally the same,
 Gilding in darkest hour.
 Peace, rest, and joy—full, rich, and free—
 In endless store are found in Thee.
 As I am Thine, and Thou art mine,
 Oh, never let me stray!
 But keep me ever at Thy side
 Throughout my pilgrim way.
 Doing each little thing for Thee—
 Thy servant, Lord, oh, may I be.

I am to sit upon Thy throne,
 I am to walk with Thee,
 I am to share Thy glorious home,
 And all Thy glories see.
 Help me to love Thy cross and shame,
 Faithful and true to Thy dear name.

F. R. W.

We had a good time, I think. Brought to God (1 Peter iii.) was the opening subject. Then followed what He is—a God who raiseth the dead (Rom. iv.). After that we were reminded that He is the Creator who ministers to the faint (Isaiah xl.).

In the evening we were directed to the disciples, and their prayer (Acts iv.) to God, who was carrying out His purposes, and fulfilling His word by what was taking place. The effect on the disciples was, that with *great* power the apostles witnessed of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and *great* grace was upon them all. Next we were taken to Exodus xxxiii., the intercession of Moses for a people who had failed, and God's response, His presence should go with them. And Moses the mediator accepted, he asked to see God's glory, and had all His goodness passed before him. After that we were recalled to 1 Peter iii. to sanctify the Lord in our hearts, and activity and interest in the Lord's work pressed upon all. Then Mark ii. 1-10 was read, and commented on by the reader and another; the four bearers showing what ministry on behalf of others in sympathy with Christ could do; and finally we had read to us God's encouraging address to Joshua i. 1-7.

C.E.S.

GOSPEL OF JOHN, XV.

(Continued from page 8.)

THE symbol this chapter opens with is the vine. The subject pressed on the disciples is fruit-bearing.

Israel was Jehovah's vine. But we read, "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself" (*Hosea* x. 1). There was no fruit that would suit the owner. He had done all He could to it, but it brought forth nothing but wild grapes (*Isaiah* v. 4). He abandons it as unfit for any use. It cannot be improved.

What is Israel but man under the Divine hand in order that every means may be used if perchance there can be found in him anything that will yield good fruit, meet for Him by whom it is dressed. There was nothing that the husbandman could gather after long years of patient sending of one servant after another. There was no reception in man of the mind and will of God. Last of all God sends His Son, saying, "they will reverence my Son"—but He is recognised as the heir, and they cast Him out and slay Him (*Matt.* xxi.).

The Son of God is seen taking the place of Israel as the Vine—"the real Vine." No fruit to God apart from Him. The vine speaks of fruit-bearing, but no fruit is found on the branches apart from real connection with Christ. Branches in the vine must be connected livingly—not only by profession or what is seen to our eye. We have not before us under the symbol of the vine what is taught us in the words of *1 Corin.* i. 30, "of God are ye in Christ Jesus," or in *Col.* ii. 10, "Ye are complete in Him." These words speak

to us of a Divine act entirely, and the "in Him" of a condition *in heaven*, but known now by the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us. The condition in our chapter is on *earth*, and sets forth the responsibility of those who are professedly disciples of Christ. The remembrance of this makes the Scripture easier of apprehension. Some one has said "Vines do not grow in heaven." To us it is a symbol of bearing fruit during the Master's absence. Fruit for God is produced by our abiding in Him who is the Vine. The fruit borne on the branches will be the same in character as that which was ever to be seen in Him. *It is not simply service.* If right service, there will be fruit in the service. There may be service and much of it too, but little of Christ's spirit and ways to be seen by the Master's eye on the branches. The servant evidently has to watch that *fruit* for the husbandman is the result. It is not only souls being converted, but Christ exhibited. His spirit and ways are the principal thing to God.

When there is no fruit on the branches, we are told, the husbandman removeth them. When there is fruit the branch is specially looked after by the same unerring hand in order that there may be more fruit (2). How blessed for the saints of God to be possessed by the thought of fruit-bearing. Fruit is what the Spirit of God produces in the soul. We are told in Gal. v. 22 that "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Fruit is for the husbandman we repeat. He is the judge if it is produced, and we have the authoritative statement that we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Christ. We do not look for fruit from a branch if it is disconnected from the tree—this is affirmed in verse 5, that severed from Him, who is the living source of supply, we can do nothing. It

is not simply without His power. This is very often, I fear, all that it presents to many minds. All the activity that is of value to God, and which has fruit to Him, comes from the link with Christ being livingly maintained. Observe it is, "He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (5). It is not "if He abides in us, and we therefore abide in Him." It is from our side the step is taken. Still it is by dependence on Him that it is accomplished. It is my privilege that all my thoughts should take their start from and revolve around Him. No desires but those which flow from acquaintance with His mind. No plans but those which He leads me to think of. Alas, alas! what do we know of this? In the early days, for a short period it was so, but soon diverse interests obtained hold and permeated everywhere. The Apostle Paul was able to write, "To me to live *is Christ*." Any child of God can say "to die is gain." Not only what he will enter upon, but what he will be for ever done with. To *die* will be gain.

Still it is here in these last hours the same—"Christ is all." What a favour to have these three words filling heart and mind, "Morn, noon and night, through days o'ercast or bright"! Were this so, with what power would the word of Christ be found in our souls. We should then ask what we will and it would be done to us (7).

In bearing much fruit "Christ's Father is glorified" and our Lord and Master adds, "So shall ye be My disciples" (8). Are we His disciples? If so we will be marked by believing what He says, and because He says it. We will be reckoned by Him as "*faithful*," and His friends, if we do whatsoever he commands us (14).

If He tells me He would like to see me, when scorn or wrong falls upon me, take it patiently, then I must aim by

His grace to do so, and if I am assailed by will in another, to meet it in His spirit instead of my own.

What an amazing word we have in verse 9! "*As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.*" How insignificant everything outside this circle becomes when such a word is enthroned in our hearts. I feel I can do nought but call attention to it. Happy service to be like the Baptist, "a Voice," if these words should be so uttered as to cause anyone to run more quickly after the Master.

Verse 10 makes known to us how we may abide in this love. It is by keeping the Master's commandments. If we are obedient, "we shall abide in His love." *He* walked in this path while here, as He tells us, "Even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Is it thus we judge of love? If we are disobedient to what has been made known to us, love is not present. This will greatly help us, therefore His will is to be our object. We are His *friends* (14) if we do whatsoever He commands us. He died for His friends, as well as for His enemies (verse 13; Rom. v. 10).

No longer does "He call them *bondmen*, for the *bondman* knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (15). "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you (16).

They have been with Him, and being about to leave them for "a little while" He desires that they "occupy" until He returns. In their service He wishes they may bring forth fruit, and that it may remain. Constant dependence

is what is pressed—*asking* in the name of the Son, the Father we are assured will give it to us (7, 16).

A lovely instance of service and fruit-bearing combined is presented to us in John i. 35-39. We read that John, the forerunner of Christ, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, "Behold the Lamb of God"! Five words! But what words, and that there was power in the *utterance* of them we know, as we read (37) "and the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus." Christ increased!—John decreased. It must be that we live at a great distance from our Lord when the effects are not the same to-day. There is no difference in the subject—the difference is in the servants. It is indeed service, but John is not thinking of *work*, but his heart is full of the joy brought to him by the perception faith gave Him of the Saviour's glory. John is here before us as the *saint*, may we not say, not as the Forerunner in the wilderness. Christ, the Lamb of God, is "his own soul's delight."

D. S.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. viii. 5-7.)

WE now enter upon the closing portion of this heart study, and find somewhat of a retracing of the thoughts already laid down. We have not now the exercises—their work has already been accomplished; but rather the foundation upon which all rests, and the after results when Ephraim too shall have been gathered and purged, and earth's peace, having been inaugurated by the judgments of the Lord, all nations shall serve Him (Ps. lxxii.).

A fresh vision bursts upon the sight, and the question is

again asked, "Who is this?" In chap. iii. 6, the same query is put, but there the way in which she is brought across the desert sands is dilated upon; there it is the wondrous character of the provision made for her safe conduct. But here how much more blessed. There Solomon's chariot, here the Beloved Himself—"leaning upon her Beloved." Hide yourselves, all ye attendants, and let the gaze be rivetted upon this glorious spectacle! Here there is no mention of chariot to support her, no mighty men to guard her, but never had she been so secure, so supremely happy. She, entirely dependent, *leaned* upon her Beloved, and so emerges from the wilderness.

How sweetly simple is the description. When the King is there all surrounding objects are in the background. He is at once her joy, support and security. Our thoughts are by this carried back to the time when the people of old came up out of the wilderness, but *not* leaning upon the Beloved. Then, linked to self, they knew Him but distantly. Then it was law, now it is grace. Then it was self, now it is Christ. They essayed to come up leaning on that which could only condemn. Divine power brought them in to the Land, but all was lost again that presently they might come up leaning upon the Beloved.

"*Leaning*"—how much there is in that word for ourselves. The very act betokens no confidence in self. How we do try to get on without leaning, and fail and stumble, bringing reproach upon His Name, and sorrow upon ourselves. This leaning is the weakness that makes for strength. "When I am weak," and leaning sets this out, "then am I strong." Then, oh then! may our weakness be great that we may "lean hard" and be great in our weakness.

The spouse leans upon her Beloved. Well she knew His

Song of Songs.

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heart. What confidence, what heart fellowship is here implied. And since it is "the Beloved" we may in all trials, under all circumstances, lean upon Him. He will not fail us. We traverse the vale of tears in the "*to-day*" of that ever-comforting word, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii.), and realise, in fellowship with Him, that He has been through it before. Better off than the angels are we. They excel in strength, but know not the joy of leaning :

"The angels know His blessedness,
The way-worn saints His love."

Lean hard, but upon—not human props which snap like brittle reeds in the hour of severest trial—but upon the Beloved. Self-sufficiency and leaning do not keep company, but the All-sufficient is the Beloved, and it is upon *Him*, heart and arm and all that He is, that we lean. Who is this? The one who once finding strength within herself refused Him, but now the one who knowing her strength to be in Him, comes up out of the wilderness triumphantly because leaning upon Him.

A mighty change had thus been wrought ; and how had it been accomplished ? The way is implied in the words that follow : "I raised thee up under the apple tree." He does, in love and power combined, interpose, and brings life where only death was. Christ is set forth under the figure of the apple tree (chap. ii. 3), and life is derived from Him alone. Set aside, consequent on the refusal of the Messiah, it is His to awaken her out of her long slumber. All is in connection with Himself, and after deepest exercise and sorrow have been passed through He is accepted, travail is o'er, and the remnant becomes the spouse of the King. "There she travailed that bore thee." Christ refused, must become Christ accepted, and trust in self must be superseded

by trust in Christ alone. Aroused from deep sleep they open their eyes to find that the One esteemed as smitten of God, is the One by Whose stripes they are healed; that the One they found no beauty in is radiant with glory. Blessed discovery!

Well, then, may the spouse pray the prayer that she does, a petition that we have seen answered in the other chapters of this Song. What more could she need to know to reassure her then that His desire was towards her?

Twofold her prayer is: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm" (verse 6), and she can set out her reasons for desiring this. It may be that there is here a reference to the breastplate of the high priest upon which were engraved the names of the children of Israel, and by means of which Aaron bore them upon his heart before the Lord continually; and also to the onyx stones which were borne upon the shoulders for a memorial *unto the children of Israel* (Ex. xxviii. 12, 30). Two seals then there were—one upon the heart, an inward one and for the Lord; the other an outward one upon the shoulders and for the people. Those who have the heart of God towards them can count upon His power. "He that hath God's heart shall not want His arm."

The spouse appropriates the figures and intensifies them. She would possess and be possessed by both His heart and arm, for then His love would be hers—a love that had been tested to the utmost and proved the characteristics of love to be those which she now mentions.

The *strength* of love is first set forth. "Love is strong as death," she avers. A well-chosen emblem this! Love and death are set in contrast. What a mighty conqueror death seems. It makes itself felt in hamlet and in city, in cottage and in palace. It lays its dread hand upon rich and poor

alike. Youth and old age both fall victims to it, and sovereign and peasant are alike laid low by it. From pole to pole, from one extremity of the earth to the other, death marches, leaving its trail behind.

But there is a match for it in power. "*Love* is strong as death," and death but proved the irresistible might of the love of Christ. The power of darkness pressed with its utmost force upon His heart, only to bring out, however, this characteristic of *love*. Not all the terrors of death could dissuade Him from His mission. It could not quell the activity of love within Him, and "Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us." The sting of death—where is it? and soon death shall be swallowed up in victory. Love, mighty to save, has conquered, proving conclusively the truth of the saying that *love is strong as death*. "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart"—

"For Thy love remains that entered
Into death to make me Thine."

And equally forceful is the second figure used, setting out the unyielding character of love. It says, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave," for love and jealousy are really synonymous. The intensity of one is the intensity of the other; and jealousy is love claiming an object as its very own. So think of the figure. The thought embodied in it is that of hardness, firmness—"jealousy is firm as Sheol," and *love* never relinquishes its grasp when once its hand has been laid upon an object. How unrelenting appears the grave. The tenacity of the hold of the tomb has passed into a proverb. It certainly looks as though, when once in its icy grasp, it defies all to rob it of its victims.

And so with Christ's love. It is strong, and thus can obtain whatever it sets itself to get. It is unbending, it is firm, so that having obtained, it holds with an eternal hold

every redeemed one. Far, far easier would it be to rob the grave of its prey than to snatch one of His purchased ones from Him. There is power in her petition, "Set me as a seal upon thine arm." Who can stop death in its onward course? Who can say to the grave, "Unlock, and give up thy victims?" Neither could any power stay Christ in His course of love—"He endured the cross, despising the shame"—nor induce Him to spurn or cast away one for whom He died. Oh, blessed consolation! It is not what we are, but what He is. It is not love's offspring, our love to Him, but His own eternal love in which we read our security. The spouse knew that set upon His heart and arm once, meant being set there for all eternity. And so do we.

And passing to the next figure we have the *intensity*, the fierceness, if we may so speak—of love. Love must out; it must make itself felt like the piercing sunbeams; and here we have it flashing forth with a most vehement flame. "The flashes thereof are flashes of fire." Like a devouring flame so does it manifest itself. Tested by the very "flames of Jah" it proved equal to it—

"His love to the utmost was tried,
But firmly endured as a rock,"—

and is now clothed with those very attributes. Who but Christ could prove the kindlings of divine wrath? The intensity of those flames must have consumed all others. But Christ's love was triumphant. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and has verily shown that His love is as intense as the "flames of Jah."

And that love of His will yet again flash forth when, in delivering might, He shows Himself strong on behalf of His redeemed ones. "Violent fires soon burn themselves out," the poet says; but not so the fire of His love. It is fed from within, and so is self-existent, entirely independent

of any creature action to kindle it. In days of yore love's flashing was seen in Jehovah's compassionate dealing with His people, and is set forth by the prophet in an exquisitely tender and touching passage: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. lxiii. 9).

And how it will flash when He appears on their behalf to deliver from oppressors. What sublimity there is in these words—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Now, why this display, this wondrous flashing? Mark the association, "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come" (Isa. lxiii. 1, 4). His love makes Him their deliverer, and it hath a most vehement flame.

And yet another characteristic of love remains. If it will not burn itself out—can it be quenched? "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." Such is the answer here provided. And with it agreeth all the records of Jehovah's dealings with His people. Waters of murmuring and discontent and backsliding were poured upon it. Floods of unbelief sought to drown it. But above all it rose triumphant. He declares, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love;" and when constrained by reason of their ways and doings to contemplate giving them up His heart speaks, His love is victorious, and He argues, "*I am God and not man*" (Hos. xi.) "I am the Lord, I change not," and therefore His love is unquenchable.

And how the truth of this statement is verified by both the life and death of our Lord Jesus. In love and with love He came, but waters of hatred and billows of ungodliness were

let loose against Him. Despised by foes and betrayed by a friend was His portion. The waters of misunderstanding attempted, too, to quench that love of His, but it could not be. The deeper the waters, the stronger the billows, the higher rose that love. Floods of ignominy, shame, and woe rolled over Him, but love was victorious. He says, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." The fiercer the water-floods the more perfect the manifestation of love; and only at the Cross could the perfection of love be adequately set forth. There it was conclusively proved that "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Oh, may we prize the being on His heart and arm more than ever as we remember this. If it were otherwise would not *our* coldness, *our* indifference, unappreciative, and unresponsive often, have effected it?

But how to obtain this love—that is an important question. Can it be bought? It cannot. Love is unpurchasable. Unbought it came to us, and as a gift we must receive it. Let the wealthiest of the wealthy strip themselves of all and love contemns it. It is above all price. What joy is here for those who are poor but rich in faith. If a price were on it, never could it be mine, but now the fulness of Divine love is *given* to me, and spontaneously love flows in return. "He loved us and gave Himself for us," and now "We love Him because He first loved us."

Oh, precious characteristics of love! It is *strong* as death; *firm* as the grave; *intense* as flames of Jah; *unquenchable* and so eternal; *unpurchasable*, despising every price. We have, then, but to receive it and enjoy it. May the assurance asked for by the spouse be deepened in us, and as further realising that by indelible grace He has engraven us on heart and arm may love's fruit be more freely borne for Him.

H. F.

A WORD OF GOD.

EVERY thoughtful Christian must at times be struck with the fulness that there is in the Word of God. A merely human composition we read and understand, if fairly intelligent and attentive, and do not need to peruse again. But with Scripture how different! When could we ever say, or think—“*Now I fully understand that; I have bottomed that passage?*” Never.

We have been thinking a little lately of that familiar portion of the Divine word, often termed a parable, found in Luke xvi. 19-31. A parable it is not said to be. It is, we believe, a bit of real history. The Speaker who gave it was the blessed Son of God. Luke, the historian, penned it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Of what does it treat? Of the death of two men. It tells, as never before, of experiences entered upon at death—happiness in the one case; awful misery in the other. It does not tell us of the final portion of either, but it does unfold to us what each got at once, and whilst their bodies lay in the tomb. Of the separate state, then, we are here instructed; and, first, we may notice that death is not an end at all. It is an end of living here on earth, but the person is not ended. The person still lives. Both had died, and yet both were still alive; one was in the bosom of Abraham, and the other “lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments.”

Two persons had died, and yet these same two persons still lived. In the first case the personality is connected with their bodies. These were dead and buried. In the second, their personality is connected with their spirit and soul, and these had not died, and never will. Annihilation

is a fable. Then, too, we can see that each one carried with him the knowledge of facts with which he was acquainted during his lifetime, but neither showed any knowledge of what had happened afterwards.

Concern, real deep concern, was felt by the rich man for his five brethren, lest they also came into this place of torment; but he was a prisoner without any power to communicate with them. Does not this refute the wretched Satan-inspired thing called Spiritualism? A wicked man's spirit in real distress about his brethren, but unable to say a word or to give the least warning to any of them! He would have done so, but he could not. This settles the question for all subject to the Word. No lost soul can communicate with living persons. But the rich man asks that Lazarus might be sent to warn them. Abraham's answer makes it clear that only by resurrection from the dead could that possibly be effected. Lazarus even could not, as a spirit, visit these wicked men and warn them. If it were permitted him to come back from the dead, that is in resurrection, he could have done so; but this was not allowed. No one has come back on any such errand, and never will, for God will not supplement His own written Word. "They have Moses and the prophets: *let them hear them.*"

Christ then, proclaims the sufficiency of the Scriptures, turning men to Moses and the prophets—nothing from departed ones, whether saved or unsaved, was to be added. The rich man could call Abraham's attention to his misery, and ask for a drop of water to cool his tongue, but he could not awaken any sympathy in the breast of Abraham. Nor could Abraham have sent Lazarus to his aid even if so minded. A great impassable gulf had been fixed which could not be crossed. How awful to think of it! In sight

A Word of God.

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of happiness in which he could never share, in torment from which there was no escape, memory recalled his former happiness in which he neglected God and His Word, and spent his time in earthly pleasure. "Son, remember;" but the remembrance could only bring anguish. Well might he say, "What a fool I have been."

The spirit when apart from the body is capable of enjoyment, and is equally capable of suffering. It is not a perfect condition. Later revelation tells the Christian that "To depart and be with Christ is far better" (Phil. i. 23), and 2 Cor. v. will teach us that "Absent from the body" is "present with the Lord." There is no delay, no interval of time, and no purgatory to pass through. Purgatory is an invention of Satan's, and denies the blessed truth that "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Those who are perfected need no fire to purify them, seeing there is nothing to purify from. There is hell fire for those who die in their sins, but it does not purify them, and from it they will never be released.

How often is the question asked, "Shall we know one another in the future?" We may surely gather that we shall do so. The rich man knew Lazarus, and he also knew Abraham, whom he had, of course, never seen on earth. So it would appear that instead of knowing less than now, those who have passed away by death know far more. Interest, too, in those loved on earth continued, as is evidenced by the concern the rich man felt for his brethren; and we may venture to conclude that those happy spirits in Paradise with Christ are not less interested, though not in such a way as to desire any addition to God's Holy Word, nor to experience sorrow on account of those left behind. Happy are they and at rest, and with Christ.

E. R. W.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES.

JOHN XV. 1-17.

2 JOHN, 4-8.

3 JOHN, 3-4.

"CONTINUE ye in My love." We cannot continue in a thing we have never been in. Christ's life was a path of continuance. So also was the life of the Apostle Paul. It is refreshing to note among the servants of God those who continue. The love of God—we cannot earn it, we cannot buy it, but we can enjoy it. It is a buffer between the soul and the world. Paul says in the Epistle to the Galatians, "He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Here he is referring to the religious world—Judaism and Formalism. Continuing in love tends to reality. It is a corrective. Unless we go on with reality there can be neither life nor the power of life. Satan blinds people with formality, for he has lost none of his power yet. Faith worketh by love—this is the principle running through the whole Gospel of John. John iii. 16—"God so loved." John xi. 36—"Behold how He loved him" (Lazarus). John xiii.—"Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." John xiv.—"I go to prepare a place for you." "If ye love Me, keep My commandments, and if ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love." The commandments of love are not grievous, neither are they reckoned by tens. Abide in His love, and love one another—this is love, that we keep His commandments. As in a family the elder members show an example to the younger ones by giving respect to the head of the house, so with us. We should have a heart for the Lord, a heart for souls, and a heart for the word—we should have respect to the Head of the House.

“Continue ye in My love.” “Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” “Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Love must be mutual: verse 9—“As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.” Love is shown in obedience, and in ministering to the need of creatures.

II. John—Here the Apostle has joy because the children of the elect lady are walking in truth. “As we have received a commandment from the Father—and this is *love*, that we walk after His commandments.” The man of God is perfect, furnished to all good works. “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” saith the Lord.

A young man who was disdained by some of his hearers because he had not been to college nor ordained, answered his opponents by turning them to Matthew xi.—“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” “I have been to that college,” he said, “and the Teacher was meek and lowly in heart. As to my ordination, see John xv. 16—‘I have chosen you and *ordained* you.’ These are the words of the Lord Jesus.”

Love checks all insubordination. A certain young man, who had risen to a high position in a promising firm, and who now considered himself settled for life, was much surprised on coming to his office one morning to find on the table his quarter's salary and a note saying that his services were no longer required. In great distress he went at once to the head of the firm to get an explanation. “You shall have an explanation on paper, sir,” said that gentleman, and he wrote down the one word—“Insubordination.” Here justice alone was shown. God does more than that. When the children of Israel were most insubordinate, “He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did

not stir up all His wrath ; for He remembered that they were but flesh.”—Psalm lxxiii. Habakkuk—“ Remember mercy in the midst of wrath.” Oh ! that we may be subject to the skilfulness of His hands, and dwelling in the love of His heart.

H. P.

JOHN I. 29-end.

THIS beautiful first chapter of John carries us back into eternity.—“ In the beginning was the Word ”—that which reveals the heart of God to man ; the Son of God came to fully represent God to those who had rejected Him.

From the 29th verse to the end of the chapter three days are mentioned. The *first* day, the day of His sacrifice, points to the cross. Characteristic of this day are the words which John uttered when he saw Jesus—“ Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world.”

Verse 14—“ The Word was *made flesh*, and *dwelt among us*.”

Verse 18—“ No man hath seen God at any time ; the *only begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him*,” *i.e.*, the day previous to the cross—the day of Christ’s faithful witness here. At the end of that wondrous day He got the cross—from the hands of men.

The *second* day—that which follows the cross. The Lord Jesus received up into glory—the earth-rejected One is the heaven-accepted. The Lord had accomplished His work here upon earth, and now sits provisionally on His Father’s throne waiting to receive His own. Meanwhile we have the presence of the Holy Spirit here, and the gathering out of a people to His name.

In Acts i. we note that Luke speaks of Jesus as being “ *taken up*.” John says, “ I go to my Father.” Luke

writes of all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach. The Holy Ghost is sent to finish what He began. Note also Hebrews ii. 3-4—"the great salvation, which *at the first began* to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

Acts i. 9—"He was taken up." Acts i. 11—"This same Jesus which is taken up." Acts i. 22—"That same day that He was taken up." What does this mean? God would have forfeited the glory of His throne if He had not "taken up" Jesus on account of His finished work. John x. 17—"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." And this was only one reason for the Father's love. Prov. viii. 22-31. 30—"I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." In eternity His Father loved Him.

The foundation on which the work of the second day rests is the work of the cross. On the second day John again says, "Behold the Lamb of God," but this time he does not refer to the sacrificial lamb. Neither is he bearing witness. He has had a sight of the Saviour, and his heart is full. Out of the fulness of his heart John exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God." God not only sent the Light, but one to bear witness of that Light. John i. 15—"John *bare witness* of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of Whom I spake"—not as the Light, but as Son of God—the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. John i. 19—"This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? He *confessed*, and *denied not*; but *confessed*." (How prone we are to confess at one time and deny at another.) "I am not the Christ." Oh! Jews, why mistake the servant for the Master? "I am a voice." Let us be

content to be voices here in the wilderness. We learn God first as the Light—the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. A certain man on hearing the story of the gospel of the *free* grace of God remarked that he would have nothing that he could not pay for. “My man,” said the preacher, “the best blessings you have you get for nothing. What do you pay for the beautiful sunlight, and the fresh air you breathe?” God is a God that can afford to give. “The cattle on a thousand hills are His.”

John points to Jesus as the Lamb of God (the second day), the Giver of the Holy Spirit. John i. 34—“I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” What was the result of John’s testimony? Two of his disciples received his testimony so well that they left him and followed Jesus. They sought not something but Someone—their question was, “Master, where dwellest Thou?” We can only find Him as they did by coming and seeing. In John, no city is mentioned, we find the Master by His word. In Matthew His city is Bethlehem, the city of His nativity. In Mark, Capernaum, the city where His mighty works were done. In Luke, Nazareth, His adopted city. They abode with Him that day. Simon’s name was changed—same with us.

Second day is the day of the Church-Ecclesia (separate place). *Third day* is the day of the Kingdom. Nathanael said, “Rabbi, Thou art the *Son of God*, Thou art the *King of Israel*.”

Jesus saith, “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Be true to Christ, we know not how long we may have the chance.

B. C. G.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

THE cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sufferings He endured there, stand out before us in the Holy Scriptures as the *grand central* stem of the *golden lamp-stand*.

It has a *central* place in the purposes of God from a past eternity, and will be the wonder, admiration, and joy of myriads in eternity to come.

It occupies a *central* place in the midst of the dispensations, or ages of the Bible, placing three on one side and three on the other. During the past ages, from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, Abraham to Christ, *prophecies, promises, types, shadows*, all kept this great, grand, and wondrous subject continually before the heart and mind of God and man.

It lays now at the foundation of our Christian faith ; it is the foundation of all God's dealings with man, and the very foundation of the grand superstructure of eternal glory in which God and His redeemed shall dwell for ever. This solid, impregnable, rock-foundation is the cross, the sufferings, the death, the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus.

The new heavens and new earth will find not only the cross as the foundation, but the cross shall furnish the inhabitants, garnish the scene and superstructure, and beautify the place and people. The Lamb of God shall take away the sin of the world (John i. 29), remove every blur that sin brought to the present heavens and present earth. And when this is done and we behold the great change and shape the new heavens and new earth will take—eternity, we shall turn to Him who suffered upon the cross, who died for our sins, who shed His blood, and own Him as the Holy

Spirit presents Him in Isaiah ix. 6, "The Father of eternity" (R.V.).

When we see this great central truth of such importance in the Scriptures, we need to keep the cross before us and give it a prominent place in our thoughts, and also in our preaching and teaching.

We preach a Person, and that Person the Son of God—"the only begotten Son." He became flesh and dwelt among us (John i. 14). "That *holy thing* that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). Palestine was graced by His visit of grace and tender love; yea, the world beheld Him but knew Him not.

And now, not in Palestine, not on earth, but upon the throne of God in the heavens we see "the *Man Christ Jesus*." "In Him dwells all the fulness of the *Godhead bodily*" (Col. ii. 9).

As we read the four Gospels we trace His footsteps across the burning sand, and at the close we stand beside the cross and there we see His sufferings and His death.

We view Him as a victim suffering for our sins; as the great Antitype fulfilling all the types that preceded; and then carrying out the purposes of eternity concerning our redemption. In all this we see the sufferings and work of the Lord Jesus for us. We preach this, we preach the cross, the death, and blood-shedding of Christ. We preach His person, we exalt the glory of His precious, peerless name; we announce to all mankind the glorious good news concerning Jesus the Son of God.

We preach also His atoning sufferings. We know He has gone to heaven, and abides in the sanctuary above as the Great High Priest with all the value of His atoning sufferings for His people. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

The Cross of Christ.

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Yea, more, we know He shall come again—"a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry," but these truths which follow and have their place must not take the place of the cross and sufferings of Christ. Christ is the grand and precious theme of the whole Word of God—Christ's person.

And next to this the cross of Christ where He suffered, where He died, where His blood was shed, all, all meeting the claims of infinite justice ; all, all meeting the need of the human race.

Here is where the breacher finds what fully equips him for service, what man's conscience needs, what the anxious sin-burdened heart yearns after—the truth of the cross.

It pictures man's hatred and enmity to God and His Son on one side, and therein we find the first great lesson of the whole Bible for men to-day to learn, to know themselves. Man crucified the Saviour, and for three hours His sufferings were from man's hand.

But when the dark cloud fell upon the scene and enveloped the cross for three hours we behold sufferings now deeper, sufferings from God's hand, atoning sufferings, which end in death. Two lessons shine out amid all the darkness of Calvary ; first, "God is light," and hence the victim must undergo all the judgment due to the offender.

But then God *planned*, God *provided*, God *gave*, God *sent*, is again and again the unerring testimony of the Scriptures ; His throne *demand*ed, but His heart His love provided, and hence in this we behold His love, the love of a Saviour God. "God so loved the world." At the cross we have all this fully and perfectly expressed. "God is love."

This truth gives men a true estimate of themselves, gives light for the weary conscience, full relief for the heart, and also gives a right and proper conception of God Himself.

The cross of Christ spreads out before the Christian what will give solidity to life and walk, and provides the preacher with material to go forth in His service and lay in men's consciences and souls a solid foundation for permanent and good work, which will be manifest now and abide for eternity.

A. E. B.

“CHRIST HIMSELF.”

No words can ever express the gratitude we owe to Him who loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins : the *love* of Jesus is unutterably precious and worthy of daily praise. No songs can ever fitly celebrate the triumphs of that salvation which He wrought single-handed on our behalf : the *work* of Jesus is glorious beyond compare, and all the harps of angels fall short of its worthy honour. Yet I do believe, and my heart prompts me to say so, that the highest praise of every ransomed soul and of the entire church should be offered to the blessed *person* of Jesus Christ, our adorable Lord. The love of His heart is excelled by the heart which gave forth that love, and the wonders of His hand are outdone by the hand itself, which wrought those godlike miracles of grace. We ought to bless Him for what He has done for us in the place of humble service, and for what He suffered for us as Substitute on the altar of sacrifice, and for what He is doing for us as Advocate in the place of highest honour at the right hand of the majesty on high : but still the best thing about Christ is Christ Himself. We prize *His*, but we worship *Him*. His gifts are valued, but He Himself is adored.

While we contemplate, with mingled feelings of awe,

admiration, and thankfulness, His atonement, His resurrection, His glory in heaven, and His second coming, still it is Christ Himself, stupendous in His dignity as the Son of God, and superbly beautiful as the Son of Man, who sheds an incomparable charm on all those wonderful achievements, wherein His might and His merit, His goodness and His grace appear so conspicuous. For *Him* let our choicest spices be reserved, and to Him let our sweetest anthems be raised. Our choicest ointments must be poured upon His head, and for His own self alone our most costly alabaster boxes must be broken.

“He is altogether lovely.” I suppose at first we shall always begin to love Him because He first loved us, and even to the last His love to us will always be the strongest motive of our affection towards Him; still there ought to be added to this another reason less connected with ourselves, and more entirely arising out of His own superlative excellency, we ought to love Him because He is lovely and deserves to be loved. The time should come, and with some of us it has come, when we can heartily say, “We love Him because we cannot help it, for His all-conquering loveliness has quite ravished our hearts.” Surely it is but an unripe fruit to love Him merely for the benefits which we have received at His hands. It is a fruit of grace, but it is not of the ripest flavour; at least, there are other fruits, both new and old, which we have laid up for Him, and some of them have a daintier taste.

There is a sweet and mellow fruit which can only be brought forth by the summer sun of fellowship—love because of the Redeemer’s intrinsic goodness and personal sweetness. Oh, that we might love our Lord for His own sake, love Him because He is so supremely beautiful that a glimpse of Him has won our hearts, and made Him dearer to our eyes

than light. Oh that all true and faithful disciples of our beloved Lord would press forward towards that state of affection, and never rest until they reach it! If any of you have not reached it, you need not therefore doubt your own safety, for whatever the reason why you love Jesus, if you love Him at all, it is a sure pledge and token that He loves you, and that you are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation.

Still covet earnestly the best gifts, and rise to the highest degree of devotion. Love His person, love Himself; for He is better than all He has done or given: and as from Himself all blessings flow, so back to Himself should all love return.—*Spurgeon.*

ON FEET WASHING.

MY DEAR A,—

I have been reading lately a paper on John xiii., and the servant of God who wrote the paper has given quite a fresh suggestion as to the feet washing—at least it is fresh to me. He suggests that one of the disciples themselves should, before the supper commenced, have done that lowly act of service for the rest. And when we remember the customs of the East it stands to reason that one of them should have done it. Now why was it not done? It is suggested, and it seems to me with reason, that as there was a strife among them as to who should be the greatest (see Luke xxii. 24), not one of them, no, not even John, was willing to lay aside his dignity and take the lowest place.

So He who had come from God, and was going to God, rose from supper and gave His wayward disciples that beautiful object lesson. And what point that wonderful

On Feet Washing.

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action gave to His words to them which Luke records—"He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve"; and, "*I am among you as he that serveth.*" How ashamed they must have felt!

But I have been pondering lately the ways of the blessed Lord with His own; and this suggestion fitted in so nicely with what I had been thinking. How gently He corrects them; just by doing the work they had left undone, and then saying, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." It is so beautiful to see the way in which the Lord deals with one and another; not indiscriminately, but meeting each individual need. We see it after His resurrection, as well as before His death. The appearing to Mary Magdalene, the private meeting with Peter first, then His public restoration among the other apostles. The word of comfort or rebuke, each in its time and place. For He could rebuke even His own when needed.

One thing which to me is very sweet is the way He appears first to Mary Magdalene. It shows how He appreciates our love. We might have thought Mary of Bethany would have been the first to see Him; but no, that Mary, without doubt, was quietly waiting for Him, and *she could wait*, and He knew it. Very blessed that! There was perfect confidence between them. He had been with that Mary much that last week. Do not we covet to know Him so? For Him to know that whatever happens, we shall not doubt Him because we know Him so well. But oh, the love that notes the grief of Mary Magdalene, and hastens to comfort her, and makes her the bearer of that most wonderful message to the disciples. Then again, His appearance to the two

disciples going to Emmaus, and many other instances will occur to you I am sure.

Well, we have to learn of Him; to learn to act to one another as He acts to us; for He is the same to-day. A brother said lately, "We do not half understand what feet washing means," and indeed we do not. I think there are many ways of doing it. Any way in which we really help each other spiritually would come under that head I daresay. We do want more grace with one another; more care for one another. But I believe we may do a great deal of that work unconsciously if we are only enough in company with the Master. If we are occupied with His work, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and His word will do its own work. But we want to *study* each other more, then we shall not make blunders. The Lord knew each perfectly. We have to learn, and that sometimes means trouble, but *love* does not mind trouble. Oh, for more of His love! "This is my commandment," He says, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John xv. 12). There is much on this subject I should like to say, but must not make my letter any longer.

Yours in Christ,

S. B.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND MINISTRY.

(Reply to a Question.)

My feeling about the whole service is that we are in the joy of heavenly places, risen ourselves, and look back to the sufferings of Christ as that which brought us there. It is a body given and shed blood—it is death. We are occupied

The Lord's Supper and Ministry.

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✓ with a bruised body in the Supper, but it is those who are risen and in blessing by it who are so. Hence the joy flowing from our position has nothing amiss in it; but the more we are thoroughly at home there, the more shall we, as dwelling there, contemplate the sorrows and sufferings of Christ. But they are past, and He is at the right hand of God; so that, though occupied at the moment by how much He has suffered, when occupied with the act itself, there is the sweet consciousness that it is all over for Him, and we are risen in spirit with Him. In the Supper itself (I do not say all that accompanies it) we are surely occupied with Christ's death, but it is viewing it not from outside the cross, as coming to it, or human interest in suffering human nature, but from the risen place in which our worship is carried on. We shall enter much more deeply into His sorrows, not now measured by our need, but contemplated from God's side of it—a much deeper feeling I believe; it is a divine or heavenly contemplation of the cross. It is not coming to—not while it is accomplishing—but remembrance of Him, when suffering for us, which has obtained peace for us, Who is now at the right hand of God. As to which comes first, we must have life before we know what death is, or our reckoning ourselves dead to sin, which is another thing. But it is the applying death to ourselves that enables us to realise rightly life and glory.

The “excellency of the knowledge” makes me count all but as dross and dung, but it is as “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” that we are enabled both to rejoice in the things the Spirit shows to us, and to manifest the life of Christ in our bodies. I desire that the believer may grow up to Him who is the Head in all things, contemplating His glory; but there is a judgment of self and of all the details of our life which, keeping down the

movement of will in details, keeps up a practical separation from the world, which is a testimony. There was more of this at the first. Now many come in fresh converted or enjoying the fulness of truth. Up in our parts I cannot say there is much worldliness, but in houses and other things much is, in many places, taken for granted which is of the world, and I think something is wanting in very many. I should be very glad to see retrenchment in many worldly symptoms; and I do not think the revival course of testimony tends to this. It looks for testimony in saving souls, all surely right, but it tends to overlook testimony in the path of Christians.

The death of Christ which I contemplate in the Lord's Supper, is not exactly my death with Him, though if realised it leads me to it. It is *His death*—the love in it. It supposes indeed death to the world and sin in me as my place, but I dwell on Him so dying in love. "My body, which is for you." I feed on this (though not only there); but it is seeing the grace and perfectness and absolute giving up of self, and obedience of Christ, I get Christ, though it will lead my heart away from the world and sin.

My having died with Him is something else, and bearing about the dying, though it is a kind of seal and spring and key to this—to the heart. The ministry of the glory gives the energy which casts off the world, when the Word is received with faith—as Philippians iii. The lowliness of Christ—His self-humiliation realised in heart, makes us and disposes us to be lowly. That you have in Philippians ii. But Christ becoming everything in the inward life of the soul can alone bring this about. Philippians iii. and ii. puts these things in their place.

J. N. D.

MY PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

A MEMBER of a fallen race,
 A guilty sinner too,
 I strayed away in paths of sin,
 My will, not God's to do ;
 My tendencies to evil led,
 My heart within was vile,
 He made me seek His blessed face,
 He made me crave His smile.
 For He, my God whom I forgot,
 Yet loved me spite of all ;
 For me He gave His only Son,
 And by His grace did'st call
 My heart to Him, my wandering feet
 Back to His arms of love,
 He drew me by His matchless grace
 To Him who reigns above.
 He showed me what was in His heart,
 And also much of mine ;
 Was ever love so sweet as His ?
 More sweet by far than wine !
 A wretched vagrant once was I,
 But now I am a son,
 I reap in splendid measure too
 What Christ my Lord has done.
 His cross of agony and shame,
 His death upon the tree,
 His body given, His blood was shed,
 Yes, shed for me, for me !
 Oh, Jesus ! what am I to say
 To Thee, my Saviour Lord ?
 Just this—O make me even now
 Obedient to Thy word.

There is a style about God's grace
Of more than regal kind ;
There is an affluence, too, of love
Too much for heart and mind ;
For I shall see my Saviour's face,
His glories shall behold,
Share in His vast inheritance,
And walk the street of gold.
The Father's house, Thy home O Lord,
My home shall ever be ;
My title is Thy precious blood,
And I shall be like Thee !
And with Thee, too !—enough, enough,
What can I ask beside ?
Whilst Thou shalt have Thy heart's desire,
Thy fair and glorious bride !

E. R. W.

SONG OF SONGS.

(Chap. viii. 8-14.)

THERE is liberty to think of others when we are ourselves in possession of full assurance. It is so with the spouse here. Israel divided, after the death of Solomon, into Ephraim, the ten tribes, and Judah, the two tribes ; and eventually both were sent into captivity for their idolatries. Both are again to be brought back and into full blessing, having, according to the terms of the New Covenant, the knowledge of God and forgiveness of sins (Jer. xxxi. ; Heb. viii.). This, however, is not effectuated for them in the same way, nor at the same time. Judah, guilty of the rejection of the

Song of Songs.

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Messiah, suffers for that sin *in* the land; but Ephraim is by trial purged *outside* the land and then brought in and there accepted (Ezek. xx. 35-40).

So the "*little sister*" here is not the Gentiles brought in to form the Church with the Jews, as is so strangely taught by some; nor yet the Gentiles brought into blessing with re-gathered Israel—they come in further down—but the ten tribes, Ephraim, here made mention of by Judah, whose affections, already formed and developed, and set upon Christ, go out in desire towards her still captive relation. But Ephraim, as already intimated, is to share in the results of Christ's death. These facts provide us with the key to this section of the Song.

The plural term "*we*" here used, as well as the reference to "*Amminadib*"—my willing people—in chap. vi., show that in the spouse of the Canticles we have a corporate body. But fitted for the Lord and happy in His love, envy and jealousy are for ever banished, and each heart in accord they individually speak and say, "We have a little sister."

"And she hath no breasts," that is, her affections are undeveloped, not having been called into activity. But the day of enquiry for her should come; she is to be taken up and owned, and the query is put, "What shall we do for our sister" in that day?

The answer also is given: "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace (turret) of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar." The "*if*" here is not the hypothetical "*if*," but has rather the force of "*since*" or "*seeing*." A wall is the outward sign of divine acceptance and security. Thus Ezra speaks of God's mercy in giving a reviving, and "to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem" (ix. 9). Hence, "*seeing she is a wall*," electing mercy having been extended to her, divine favour bestowed

upon her, "we will build upon her a turret of silver," and thus signify their willing acquiescence in Jehovah's doings. Judah's joy and surprise at the return of Ephraim is markedly shown in Isa. xlix. 18-23, as well as the way the Lord takes to bring them back.

The turret of silver is the figure of open testimony that grace alone is the source of strength, privilege, and true ornament. And how true is this testimony always? We say now for ourselves and all saved ones,

"Not to ourselves we owe

That we O Lord are Thine,"

and thus build upon the wall of divine favour and choice a turret of silver.

Then by the door we have signified the fact that divine love had been active and had begotten an openness for Christ, Jehovah's King. And that was but the prelude to glory. So those boards of cedar, fragrant and unrotting, may well set out the glory and delights, satisfying and eternal, by which she shall be surrounded, her heart, too, in entire accord with Messiah's heart. Grace precedes glory, and "grace is glory begun, glory is grace made perfect; grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace."

And the words of the spouse bear out what has been said; for looking back she can say of herself, "I was a wall and my breasts like towers," telling of divine choice and the answer to it, the development of her affection, thus becoming "a door." And she was then accepted, receiving the seal of His approval: "I was in His eyes as one that findeth peace." The light of His countenance He lifted upon her and sealed His approbation thereby.

And when His people are in the enjoyment of His love and glory "many nations shall be joined to the Lord"

(Zech. ii. 11). So fittingly now follows the allusion to the vineyard at Baal-hamon. The Prince of Peace, the true Solomon is alone the "Lord of multitudes;" for "all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. lxxii. 11). To them His vineyard is let out and tribute is rendered to Him in season. He is recognised and owned as King and Lord, "The kings of Tarshish and the isles render tribute," and so fulfil their responsibility.

The spouse, too, will show how she values Him, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me," and now it is kept, in direct contrast to what is stated in chap. i. 6, and the revenue laid at the feet of her Beloved. Should others render to Him the thousand pieces and she not do the same? That could not be. "Thou shalt have the thousand," whilst at the same time there accrues blessing to others through her, for the keepers of its fruits should receive two hundred. In this way she becomes the medium of blessing to others.

But will this rendering of a present satisfy His heart? From what he has already said, from the ardent breathings of his heart towards her we can unhesitatingly answer, No! "Let me hear thy voice," He implored her when inviting her away to regions with Himself, giving as the reason, "For thy voice is sweet." And His opinion was unaltered, for in Him there could be no change; and here He reiterates that desire—"Let Me hear it."

It is His closing desire. She spoke to the companions, and doubtless of the One so very dear to her, and about whom she could say such excellent things (chap. v.), but that, though pleasant, did not just meet the craving of His heart. "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice; cause Me to hear it." Willing listeners she had to what was doubtless beneficial conversation. A willing listener He would be.

To speak of Him is one thing; to speak to Him far more blessed. Oh, what a condescending and precious invite to fellowship with Him is here. Evidently this is of more worth than the thousand pieces of silver. Let that be rendered, but let not this be forgotten. Here again we have communion and service, privilege and responsibility, in contrast. Obligations must be met; privileges shall, through grace be responded to.

And our souls can surely appreciate this desire. Are we not to make melody to the Lord? and blessed be His name, this holy, precious, profitable intercourse is not limited to one day nor to any place, but it is for every day and all places. In the wilderness of Judah, with barrenness around, David exclaims exultingly, "O God, Thou art my God," and his soul was lifted up. Let us notice here that the spouse is addressed as "Thou that dwellest in the gardens." She was in the midst of fruitfulness and blessing, the very presence of the Lord, and David was truly a dweller there, too, as that Psalm (lxi.) so very unmistakably intimates. "Thus will I bless Thee while I live." "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips." And consequently, dear believer, we can respond to this gracious invite, and our communications to others will be the more profitable and edifying. In the home, by the wayside, in praise, in prayer, in sorrow, in joy, cause Him to hear thy voice. He invites, and response there shall be.

And what is her response? One desire surely would be uppermost in her heart, and that would be to see Him actually. That must first receive utterance. He hears her voice: "Make haste my Beloved." His words draw out the yearning of her heart. How is it possible to know Him and not long for Him? The new-born soul begins to *wait* for Him, and with others raise the ever-seasonable cry, "Even

Song of Songs.

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so come Lord Jesus." He is now on the "mountains of spices," in heaven, with all the infinite merits of His Person and work. But quickly He will come. Such is His last message, His final affirmation to His own, "*Yea, I come quickly.*" Be it so!

Make haste, O Lord,
Our hearts for Thee do yearn;
Haste, haste, blest Lord,
We wait Thy sure return.

Let this but be our patient, constant cry. From the throne of His glory He will arise. From the mountain of spices He will come. Patience shall soon be over, and the Spirit-raised desire receive its fulfilment, and then, oh precious fact, for ever with Him, for ever like Him, joy only we shall know, "and only live to praise."

His desire is expressed, her response is given, and the song closes. And here our musings come to an end. Our aim has not been to give an orderly exposition, but to seek to lead the heart into the full assurance of Christ's love. It is the Song of songs, a love sonnet indeed, a word for the heart; and we are left with the yearning of the spouse upon our lips. An increased knowledge of Christ, and the reception of His communications can but lead to a more intense desire after Him; and who can perceive the unfathomable depths of His grace, the unalterable character of His love as shown in this book without being moved to desire to see Him as He is—

"Oh, tarry not but come!"

H. F.

In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 8, 9.)

SATAN had seen in the first temptation that the dependence of Jesus upon God was unlimited; He had refused to change stones into bread, so entirely confident was He that His Father possessed both the power and the will to supply Him. Imagining that now he had discovered the weak point of His character—that He possessed more love than prudence, more zeal than wisdom, more ardour than discretion—Satan arranges his new temptation accordingly; and having placed Him upon this high and dizzy elevation, the extremest point of the temple, “he saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee to keep Thee;” he does not add, as the Psalmist from whom he quotes the verse has added, “to keep thee in all thy ways”—all the ways which God had appointed Him to walk in—for this did not suit the devil’s purpose; he, therefore, misquotes the passage, as if it were a general promise of safety in all ways, whether ways of duty, or ways of folly and of sin; and “in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” As if he had said, You were willing to trust God for your food, although He must have worked a miracle to supply that food; now show that you can trust Him equally for your safety; throw yourself boldly over into the courts of the temple, and there amidst its worshippers, proclaim by this act at once the strength of your faith, the completeness of your dependence, and the reality of your Sonship; thus tempting our Lord, as it were, by the very excess of that grace which He had before so beautifully exhibited. Observe, then, the consummate wisdom and holy meekness of our Lord’s reply—“Jesus

The Second Temptation.

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answering, said unto him, It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God."

He who, as we have seen, could trust God with all the confidence with which a child can trust the most affectionate father while in the plain and obvious path of duty, and therefore would not help Himself supernaturally even to a loaf of bread, but left it to God to help Him, now would not for the sake of appearing more abundantly to trust Him, incur danger where no duty called; and therefore refused to lift a foot from off that pinnacle at Satan's bidding.

How valuable a lesson to the Christian! You cannot trust God too simply, or too exclusively, or too largely, when in the assured path of Christian duty. Mark well, my brethren, the difference thus exhibited between faith and presumption. To expect the largest degrees of help from God, when plainly following a direct command, is only a justifiable exercise of faith; to expect even the smallest when contrarily engaged, is an unwarrantable act of presumption.

Bearing this distinction in mind, how obviously does it mark the separation between the enthusiast and the sober-minded child of God. An enthusiast would have been delighted with such an opportunity of evincing his unbounded dependence upon God; and had Satan presented him with the temptation with which he tried our Lord, would have sprung from the pinnacle, and have been dashed to pieces.

It is at the present time, brethren, especially desirable to attend to these distinctions; for while the people of the world are disposed to treat all simple, child-like faith in God as mere presumption, a large number of the saints are equally disposed to mistake the wildest flights of presumption, only for higher degrees of acceptable faith; forgetting that true and Scriptural faith can never travel beyond the record

of God's promises, and that the moment faith terminates presumption begins.

We cannot leave this second temptation of our Lord without endeavouring to derive from it a lesson of encouragement as well as of instruction. Take comfort, then, from the assurance which it offers, that the power of Satan is limited, far more limited than many at the present day are apt to imagine. He was our Lord's tempter, nothing more; and his power is equally limited to every human being whose faith hath made him a son of God.

He cannot compel the weakest followers of Jesus into the smallest sin. He may entice you, beguile you, delude you, but compel he cannot. He must have the consent of your own will, the aid of your own inclination, before he can possibly succeed. He may, indeed, have power to place you, without any fault or crime of yours, as he placed Joseph of old, upon the very brink of sin, upon the extremest verge of the precipice of temptation; but there he has reached the length of his chain, and can advance no farther. There, even on the topmost pinnacle of danger, one faithful appeal to the written Word, one look to Him for succour who was Himself tempted, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted, and you are safe.—*Extracted.*

God's design is to glorify His Son alone and to debase the excellence of every creature.

God's children must not expect always to lean upon His bosom. He sometimes sets them down on the cold, frosty side of the hill, and makes them walk, barefooted, upon thorns. Yet does He keep His eye of love upon them all the while. Our pride must have winter weather to rot it.

CHRIST IN THE MIDST.

(Rev. i. 13.)

ON the evening of the day in which Jesus rose from the dead, He was found in the midst of His assembled disciples, solving their doubts, stilling their fears, giving them peace, and filling their hearts with gladness and joy. He Himself was in their company. Wonderful fact! The heart of the risen One had undergone no change in His regard for them. He ministered to their immediate need and showed to them His hands and His side—proof that it was Himself. He engages their services on His behalf: “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” He gives to them authority to remit or retain sins, having first breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

Thus they were fitted to act for Him when He no longer was personally present on the earth. Israel, as such, was done with. A new thing would soon begin, and until that new thing was completed, Israel, as such, would not be openly owned of God. The Holy Ghost was coming to earth. The risen and ascended Christ would receive Him from the Father, and would baptise all true believers in Christ into one body, of which He, although in heaven, would be the Head. The Holy Spirit would also be the indwelling Spirit. Blessed fact!

The assembly of God is variously viewed and spoken of. As the body of Christ the great idea is union, and tells of the nearness in which each member, however small, is to Christ. Would that we knew, as we surely ought, the blessedness of this union with Christ—a part of Himself!

The Church, or assembly, when gathered together unto Christ's name, and no other can be allowed—" *My name* "— is the centre to gather unto. It is not a question of numbers, many or few. Be there many, not one whit more will they have of the special promise than ever so few. What is the promise? or we may say, What is the fact? "There am I in the midst" (Matt. xviii. 20). An assembly composed of only two so gathered has Christ in the midst; be there two hundred and it is but the same.

He is as truly in the midst as He was on the evening of that first day of the week, the Resurrection Day. Our eyes cannot see Him as theirs did, nor our ears hear His voice as the disciples then did. With them He was present in body, with His gathered saints now He is spiritually present, and therefore our perception of the fact depends upon our spiritual condition. Much activity often indicates an unspiritual condition, a lack of the conscious sense of Christ's blessed and controlling presence. "*There am I*"—glorious fact! Oh, to be engrossed with Himself! There is no restlessness then; no wanting something to be done; but simple delight of heart in the Blessed One. Each could say, "I have Jesus here." The meeting is His and His alone. The servant is nowhere. The only man to be occupied with is the Man Christ Jesus. Intelligence in the Word, which is much to be valued, often obtrudes itself and hides the far greater thing, the presence of Christ in the midst.

"He showed unto them His hands and His side." That was literal, no doubt, but are spiritual things less true, less powerful? No, no; a thousand times no! The heart that has tasted the joy of Christ's realised presence cannot be satisfied with poor imitations or with any substitute. HIMSELF! Literally we are to gather unto His name;

Christ in the Midst.

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morally we go to meet the Lord ; for we know He will be in the midst. He has lost not one whit of His loveliness, nor of the power to satisfy His own. Dear fellow-believer, what is Christ to you ? He is the Holy and the True. If we are individually careful, and corporately too, as to what will suit Him, we shall not miss the sense of His blessed presence in our midst when gathered unto His name.

In Rev. i. we have the same Person in the midst, not in the midst of each local assembly, but simply walking as it were in the centre of the seven different assemblies named ; not inside for blessing and enjoyment, but rather from without, from a point of vantage, where He sees all that is going on. His attire and whole appearance speak of judicial glory. He is judging as to what use has been made of blessing already given and of privileges already possessed. He gives no guidance on ecclesiastical matters, nor does He minister to spiritual need. He is there to speak of what He sees ; to cast the light of God upon each assembly. He is there to approve what He can ; to condemn what is wrong ; to encourage the faithful ; to warn ; to exhort ; to hold out special promises of blessing to overcomers ; and finally He announces that He will spue out of His mouth lukewarm, self-satisfied Laodicea.

John, the beloved disciple thus saw the Lord. The sight terrified him ; he fell at His feet as dead. Thus the saintliest of men find no power to stand in the presence of Christ as Judge. John became *as dead* ; not dead, but as dead. But He who had produced this fear could and would remove it. The Judge Himself can protect and can comfort. “ He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not.” John was as dead, but He who spoke will wake the dead, and John heard that voice which not only spoke comfortable words, but communicated to him the power, when he was

as dead, to hear and understand what was being said to him. The Judge could say, "I am He that liveth and *was dead*." He had really died, and we know why He died. He died to save, "and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death."

Power was His, and alive for evermore He would care for His servant; for John, though a saint and also a son of God, was a servant of the One who stood before him. The Master gives His orders: "Write the things which thou hast seen." The servant obeys. The Master in the full truth of His Person was God and Man; but it has often been remarked that in one instance only is He spoken of as the Son of God in the whole Book. He was a true and real man and thus appears One who could die, who had died, and was now alive for evermore. Death He had passed through; no such experience would ever again be His.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants," etc. He was then so truly a man that He was dependent upon God for the revelation He gave unto His servant John. Viewing Him as Divine, as the Second Person of the Trinity, He knew all things. Viewing Him as a man, He had the needs of a man; was so truly made like unto His brethren, save the taint of sin, that He could feel for and understand all that His people felt. As human He grew from a babe to a lad, from a lad to a man. He grew too in wisdom and stature; felt hunger and thirst; loved the comfort of friends; for in the hour of His sorrow He said, "I looked for comforters but I found none." He grew weak from agony of spirit and an angel was sent to strengthen Him. His heart was like wax melted in the midst of His bowels. He had as a man, an Israelite, "Fathers"—"Our fathers," said He, "trusted in Thee and were not confounded; but I am a worm and no man."

Oh, what a mystery is this ! Human wisdom seeking to unravel proves its folly ; logic, human reason, are all at sea. Mystery is the premise it starts with, and no true conclusion can it reach. As a Divine Person He had no father—it were blasphemy to say so. He could not die—"Who only hath immortality." He who was, and is, and ever will be God, became flesh and died, died as man, "was put to death in the flesh ;" "Suffered for us in the flesh ;" "Bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Believers are perfected for ever by His one offering. By God's will such are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once (Heb. x.). Shall we dare to add to the Word and say it was through the offering of His Deity ? that the value of His sacrifice lay in His Godhead ? We dare not make such assertions. The God who provided the Sacrifice accepted it. The blood, which is the life of the flesh, was shed. It was His blood, the blood of God's Son. Do not let us reason and say it was the blood of God. The idea is preposterous and shows a lack of any true sense of what God is. It was the blood of Him who was God, but His blood as a man. "The bread which I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world ;" "Except ye eat the flesh of the *Son of Man* and drink His blood ye have no life in you ;" "This is My body which is given for you ;" This is My blood which is shed for you," are Christ's own statements.

A person dies and so we read of the death of God's Son, and of not sparing His own Son. The manhood of Jesus is stated in the clearest terms, and His experiences as such are recorded. And He is addressed as such. As God the Son, we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." As a man we read, "God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." As a man He said, "O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days,"

and is reminded that He was a Divine Person: "Thy years are throughout all generations." Creator and creature united in one!

It is as man that John saw Him, and the effect we have noted. Our eyes have not seen the vision that John saw, but he was to write of it, and we, believing his testimony, are to be acted upon by it, and in our measure we shall feel as John felt. Had he never thus seen the Son of Man what he would have missed. Grace was deepened, or rather the sense of it, in John's heart through what he saw and heard. May it be ours to learn experimentally from this record what God has designed we should.

E. R. W.

JOHN XVI.

(Continued from page 65.)

THIS chapter brings us to the close of the wonderful ministry to "His own," which the Lord commenced, as given us in chap. xiii. The fruit of this ministry in the life of His disciples which He desired to see, would bring out open enmity towards them from the religious leaders. Of this He makes them acquainted that when the storm should break upon them they might remember what He had foretold them. He instructed them ere He goes away, telling them that they should be put out of the synagogue, and that the time would come that whosoever killed them would think that he did God service. He tells them also that the cause of this enmity would be their ignorance of the Father and of Himself (3). He shielded them from all ill while

with them, such instruction not being required while He was on earth. As "His own" whom He had received from the Father, He went before them. He met every evil that was levelled at them because of their being His followers. He allowed nothing to hurt them, but soon they would not have His personal presence, and have then to endure afflictions and open persecution for His sake.

They were in great sorrow because He was going away, and being so much under this grief were not asking *where* He was going (5, 6). Still He thought of them, providing to such an extent that He could assure them that it was expedient for them that He should leave them (7). If He did not go the Comforter would not come to them. The presence of the Comforter whom He on His departure would send to them would compensate for His absence until He would return to take them to His Father's house. He, in this and the two preceding chapters, speaks to them four times of the coming or sending of that other Comforter.

(1.) In chap. xiv. 16, the Lord tells them that He would pray the Father, and He would give them another Comforter that He might abide with them for ever. The great characteristics of His presence would be "dwelling with them and abiding in them" (17).

(2.) In verse 26 we are told the Father would send Him in the name of the Son. He would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them. This is specially to the disciples who had followed Him in the days of His flesh.

(3.) xv. 26—He assures them that when the Comforter is come whom He would send to them from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He would testify of Him. Then we have an enlargement from what has preceded, as He adds (27) "And ye also shall bear

witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." We have the Holy Ghost here as the power of their testimony. He would give them suited words to utter on His behalf and recall to them what they had seen and heard.

(4.) In this chapter (xvi.) He acquaints them as to the presence of the Holy Ghost in its bearing or effect on the world. When He is come (8) He will reprove (convict) the *world* of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment :

"*Of sin*, because they (the world) believe not on Me;" not here, in order that they may believe and be saved, but because *they believe not*.

"*Of righteousness*, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Righteousness was once here. A perfectly *righteous* man was once beheld on earth, and because He was so, He was put to death—but God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. Now righteousness is seen in that Man, the Son of God being asked to sit by God at His right hand until His foes are made His footstool (Psalm cx. 1).

"*Of judgment*, because the prince of this world is judged. Satan had been working against God from the beginning, but never until he led man up against the Son of God, and got man to imbrue his hands in His blood, is Satan called "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2), and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4). Consequent upon his act against the Prince of Life he is said to be judged Satan fully manifested himself. His perfect hatred against the seed of the woman was disclosed in Gethsemane when the Lord says a little before, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (ch. xiv. 30).

How little does the significance of these three short verses appear to us!—how little have we received the teaching of our Lord and Master as to their meaning!

He had many things to say to them, but they were unable to bear them. They were still in the age of law, but the Holy Ghost, *the Spirit of truth*, was coming. He would guide them and us "into all the truth (R.V.). Alas! alas! now near 2,000 years have gone since these words were uttered—2,000 years nearly run since the promised gift of the Holy Spirit *became a fact*, but instead of the Word of God being cleaved to and delighted in by that which is, responsibly, still "the pillar and ground of the truth," *it* is giving up the treasure. Professed servants of Christ proclaim that this part of the Word of God is a myth, and the other part a myth, and had we to find the way of life and blessing from them we should, in listening to them, soon discover that no Scripture was left to us.

How cheering the words of the Lord as He surveys the state His church is in, to hear Him say to the individual, "him that overcometh" (Rev. ii. and iii.). May it be given to every true believer to "*hear Him.*"

When He would leave them and go to the Father they would have liberty to go directly to the Father, and anything they would ask Him would be given them in the name of the Son (23 R.V.). This privilege they never had while He was with them. But in thus asking and receiving, their joy would be full. We may well stop and enquire if we have proved this ourselves. Do we know what it is to go to the Father and receive in the name of the Son the answer to our prayers? Have we understood these things, we should ask our own hearts?

The Lord desires that we have practical entrance into the grace that He opens out in these verses. Thus praying, it is not grace and mercy for wilderness sorrows, but the words of the Lord opening to us those hidden treasures of counsel between the Father and the Son, which He would make us

partakers of. He would have them understand that the Father Himself loved them, *because they loved Him*, and believed that He came out from God. But it was the Father that sent Him, and His mission being fulfilled He was leaving the world and going back to the Father (28). The Lord's teaching at this moment convinced them that He knew everything. He needed no one to inform Him (30). They say, "We believe that Thou camest forth from God." But did they believe? The sequel to be witnessed in a very little would prove that they did not. He tells them, the hour cometh, yea had already fallen upon them, when they would be scattered, every man to his own, and leave Him alone (32). Zechariah xiii. 7, would have its accomplishment. The Shepherd of the Jewish sheep would be smitten, and the sheep would be scattered, but Jehovah would turn His hand upon them and protect them in that unexampled hour of desolation.

What gracious consideration for His followers! They were dear to Him. He had unfolded fully the provisions for the new path He had in view for them while He would be absent in heaven.

Tribulation because of the Word would abound, but in Him they would have peace. He did not deceive them as to "the way." Still they would always find *in Him* that quiet and rest which no adverse power could deprive them of.

"He would 'guard them safe from every ill,

And all His promises fulfil.'"

They were to follow Him in the faith of His victory. Appearances would, no doubt, be used to suggest that it would end in nothing but disaster, but faith would prevail in them. So they were to hold as His last word, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world" (33), and this is taken up in the Epistle by the same writer: "Who is he that

overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

Like other portions of the Word, this chapter has by many of us been little studied, but "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. xii. 6).

D. S.

"BEHOLD THE MAN."

(Zech. vi. 11-13.)

IN His controversy with His people respecting their idols Jehovah expressly stated that He alone was God, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isa. xli. 9, 10). And by the lamp of prophecy God casts light upon the future, revealing above all the future of His beloved Son, in whom all things are to be headed up (Eph. i. 10). Hence the mighty import of prophecy to our souls.

For whatever concerns our adorable Lord is surely of deepest moment to our hearts, and calls for more than a passing notice, first for His own sake—who He is and what He has done; and then because in grace divine the interests of the redeemed are inseparably associated with Him. And God evidently anticipates, so constant are the unfoldings, that His saints will receive with delight such revelations, whereby they are *now* enabled to go over in fellowship with Him, the future mapped out for the once despised and rejected Nazarene. Faith believes that not a word of God can fail. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" He has said.

And in the Scripture before us, we have foreshadowed a part of the things that concern the Lord Jesus, a revelation that told, ere His first advent, of what was in store for Him; and which still tells of what awaits Him on and after His second advent.

For plainly Joshua, the son of Josedech, was not the One who was first and foremost in Jehovah's thoughts then. How little of the truth vouchsafed in the declaration could apply to Him. He, crowned with the many crowns, did but stand forth as the type of the *Man* whom God would delight to honour; the picture, if only a dim one, of the glorious personage to whom God could direct all eyes with, "Behold the Man!"

"Behold the Man!" The words as they strike the ear recall the saying of Pilate when he led forth Jesus from the Hall of Judgment crowned, but with thorns, and wearing a purple robe, mock tokens of what was properly His due. But the words were uttered long before, and in a totally different connection. The governor, it may be, hoped to awaken some feeling of sympathy in callous hearts, but without avail. His words were drowned by vehement cries of "Crucify Him." Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, speaks to raise notes of adoration, and to bow hearts in homage before the One in whom His soul delights (Matth. xii. 18). How different!

And of the many glories that cluster so thickly round the Lord Jesus, how precious it is to contemplate the glory of His manhood. This brings Him so near to us and makes Him so intimate and accessible to us. And that it is in connection with Him as a Man that the Lord of Hosts here speaks is seen too from the title bestowed upon Him—The Branch. "Behold I will bring forth My Servant the Branch" (ch. iii. 8), is the declaration of Jehovah. The highest place

of honour is His, and in His own blest Person He unites the scattered, broken, and peeled people of God. From Isa. xi. 1, we gather that in this character He is the offspring of David; for that word states that “a branch shall grow out of his roots.” Viewed as a Divine Person He is the *Root* of David; but as a Man, Jehovah’s Servant, He is the *offspring* of David (Rev. xxii. 16), the seed of David (2 Tim. ii. 8).

And as the seed of David, too, He is to come from the glory to reign and rule here. “The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David” (Luke. i. 32). Such was part of the angelic announcement to Mary. David’s Son yet David’s Lord—who shall fathom the mystery of His Person? Faith listens, bows, and adores.

Ushered in as The Branch, He comes to perform the important work of building “the temple of Jehovah.” And the statement respecting that is emphatic, repeating, “Even He shall build the temple of the Lord” (Ver. 13). The glorious vision of Rev. xix. shall then have been fulfilled and His enemies trodden under His feet. To Solomon was committed the work of erecting the first temple. To great David’s greater Son, the true Prince of Peace, is given the task of raising the last one, a temple that shall exceed any other in magnificence (Hag. ii. 9; Ezek. xl.-xlvii.).

“And He shall bear the glory.” Yes, for He has borne the humiliation, and He alone is worthy. Ah! track His blessed pathway from the manger to the cross and say was there another such? He was the root out of a dry ground, branching up where failure and barrenness were fully (Isa. liii. 1). But His path of service and His death on the tree, both full of glory to God, vindicated His right to the perfect, peerless name of Jesus, and to the glorious position He now occupies. For faith follows Him in His upward course through the clouds to the throne of God, and sees

Him there crowned with glory and honour. But He comes again. Here, where crucified, He is to bear the glory. Honouring God in the midst of a God-dishonouring people, He is by God's just decree to be honoured by all, and is destined to bear the glory sitting upon His throne and ruling.

The character of His rule is set out in many passages. His throne shall be established with judgment and justice (Isa. ix. 7), righteousness shall be its sceptre (Ps. xlv. 6), and the girdle of His loins (Isa. xi. 5). What a day will that be for the poor of His flock! Grace will not then reign, but in view of the glory which He bears, a displayed glory, inflexible righteousness, will be a characteristic of His reign.

But not that alone; for in a dual character He will be upon His throne. A King He is, but a Priest also—“He shall be a priest upon His throne.” As King He will reign; as Priest He will be the Refresher of His people. For then the ministry of His Priesthood will accord with its order. Now, as in the heavenly sanctuary, He is the great Interceder, “ever living to make intercession” (Heb. vii. 25), sustaining in conflict amid wilderness journeyings. But then, when conflict is over, He comes forth to bless as Melchisedec met Abraham, providing the bread and the wine (Gen. xiv. 18; Heb. vii. 1). What a day that will be, we again repeat, for the poor of His flock! Protected by His power, they will also enjoy the ministrations of His love and grace.

And this reference to His priesthood is a distinct testimony to His humanity, He being *called of God* to fill that office. (Heb. v. 10; vii). What glories, what excellencies, will shine forth in the Man to whom Jehovah calls attention. Perfection marks His every action, and every office He fills

is graced and magnified by Himself. The priestly office added dignity to Aaron, but Christ in His superlative excellence will add dignity to the office. "Behold the Man!" "He shall sit a priest upon His throne."

And entire accord there will be between Jehovah and His Servant the Branch: "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Thus blessing for the earth is secured, and secured to God's glory. "This Man shall be the peace," a blessed guarantee of its abiding character. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

What expectations are centred in Christ! Creation awaits the day of His glory for relief from its long travail of toil, pain, and sorrow. The eyes of "the prisoners of hope" are up to Him also. To them He brings emancipation and joy. He will be all their desire. "Behold the Man!"—"How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" And blessing follows in His train, for "corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids" (chap. ix. 17)—two forceful figures setting out the joy and refreshment that those shall have who through His goodness enjoy the bliss of Christ's reign.

H. F.

Christian, hath not God taught thee, by His word and Spirit, how to read the short-hand of His providence? Dost thou not know that the saint's afflictions stand for blessings?

As for crosses, He doth but cast us down to raise us up; and empty us that He may fill us; and melt us that we may be vessels of glory, loving us as well in the furnace as when we are out, and standing by us all the while.

CRUSHED AND BROKEN.

"BREAD corn is *bruised*" (Isa. xxviii. 28). The bread corn crushed between the upper and nether millstones gives us material for food; *crush, bruise* the corn and you can have "bread to strengthen the heart" (Ps. civ. 15).

In this we get *Christ*, the corn of wheat that was placed in the earth and *died*. But that *corn* of wheat was *bruised, crushed*. The full weight of both upper and nether millstones were made to meet upon Him.

(1.) He was crushed upon the cross. Man put Him on the *tree*, and he suffered from man's hand as a MARTYR. Then the dark cloud for *three hours*, and the sufferings from God's hand, while bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, was as the *upper millstone*, and under the full weight of this heavy judgment when the *corn* was *bruised* and *crushed*, we hear the Holy Sufferer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No sorrow, no suffering can be compared to this bruising. "He was *oppressed*, and He was afflicted;" "He was *bruised* for our iniquities" (Isa. liii. 5). Then the fire prepares all for the table as food for God's people *for ever*. The fire (*God's holiness*) prepared the bread.

What a cluster of thoughts fills our vision as we meditate upon the *Cross of Calvary*!

The crushing from man, and then from God. The fire preparing the *food* (the *bread*), the victim bearing our sins, taking our judgment, and suffering the just for the unjust, and then dying in our stead. This is all past and over, but we have a table spread, and *bread to eat*, "bread from heaven." "Lord, evermore give us this bread to eat," is the language of our hearts.

(2.) The vine *crushed*. Next we contemplate the *vine grape*; this must also be *crushed* in order to get the *wine* that cheers both the heart of God and man (Judges ix. 13; Ps. civ. 13).

Jesus, the true *vine*, was crushed, and again we view the *cross* as the great *winepress*, when He was *pressed*, was *crushed*, and we see the *blood* of the grape flow from that awful *press*. But that crushing and pressing fills the cup now for us, a *cup of cheer*, a cup of blessing. We see God contemplating the sufferings of the cross, and the perfections of Him who was there, and a cup of cheer is placed in His hands, and so God's heart is cheered. We contemplate that cross, as His redeemed people, and we hold in our hand a cup that gives us cheer, and a cup of blessing, and the language of *faith*, and of *communion*. "I have drunk my wine;" "eat, O *friends*, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved" (Songs v. 1).

Thus we see that cross has not only prepared *bread* (*food*), but *drink* (*wine*) to cheer the heart of God and man. Thus out of the eater came forth meat and drink to be ours for evermore.

The blood made *atonement*, procures *forgiveness*, *redemption*, *nearness* to God and His Son, *access* to the Holiest, where Jesus now has gone, and it shall be the theme of our *praises for ever*.

(3.) Then we behold the precious and lovely bloom of the *rose*, but in order to get the *full fragrance* we must see the *rose crushed also*, and when crushed, in man's hand. Oh, how it pours forth the sweet fragrance of heaven! The sweetness of the rose was poured out when our Lord suffered, and the *more* it was crushed the sweeter and stronger the fragrance. Crushed He was, but the crushing of the *wheat* gave fine flour for bread. The pressing or crushing of the

Vine prepared the wine, "wine, on the lees well refined." And then when the rose was crushed all the sweet fragrance of His *perfect* and *heavenly* life and nature was manifested.

"He was reviled and reviled not again." They buffet Him—He prays for them. These sweet graces give the positive and the negative side of His nature; all, all emit a *sweet savour*.

Thus we are indebted to the cross, His sufferings, for the *bread*, the *wine*, and sweet perfume of the rose.

(4.) Now we will look at the "*broken box*." This was the possession of a woman (John xii.), one who loved His company, and His ministry of love: "She sat at Jesus' *feet* and heard His word," it is recorded. Sorrow also had crossed her path, had entered that sweet home at Bethany, and she fell down at His *feet* when she saw Him now for comfort and consolation (John xi.), as previously she had for light and truth (Luke x.). Those feet, "beautiful feet that brought glad tidings to Zion," had a peculiar charm for Mary.

Now His end on earth had come. She perceives this, and so she gathers all the accumulated money and buys a box of ointment to anoint Him for *His burial*.

At the suited time she *draws near*, and all this precious ointment *must* be spent on Him. It was not waste in her estimation. She *broke the box*, it is said, and, in John xii., she "anointed the feet of Jesus." He was the choice object of her heart, and when this precious service was done in that little company, the Spirit records the fact, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

In this we get a very precious lesson of what the Spirit had wrought in a sinner saved by grace, a child of God, and wherever this Gospel is preached this also must be told

what this woman did, as a memorial of her. Precious this appreciation on the part of her Saviour and her Lord!

The other disciples evidently did not understand *devotion* and *intelligence* so real in her, but the Lord did, and that was the all-important thing for her.

She sets forth in figure what each believer yet may do, gathering up the *praises, thanksgiving*, and homage of hearts touched by His grace and tender love, until the heart *is full*. Then *we break the box*, as did this Mary of Bethany, and all is poured upon Him—His *head* (in Mark xiv. 3), His feet (John xii.). It is the Spirit's presence in us that enables us to gather this *ointment*, and when full by *diligence* and communion of heart, the Spirit it is who breaks the box and Jesus gets what belongs to Him. Yea, there is worship to both the *Father* and the *Son*. If there is no ointment poured forth, no sweet fragrance in the house, a lesson is told already. There has been lack of *devotion* to Him in past days, and lack of *diligence* in sitting at His feet. Hence the precious graces of the Spirit are not filling *the heart, the box*. "A broken and a contrite heart," a broken *box*, Jehovah of old did not despise, nor Jesus now. This woman then sets forth, with her broken box, what we ought to be continually at home, and in the assembly, true *worshippers*.

(5.) A broken "*vessel*" comes next in our study (2 Cor. iv. 6-12; Judges vii. 15-20). Gideon with his *three hundred* men set the example. They had a vessel, as in 2 Cor. iv., an earthen pitcher, but there was *light within*. Here we see devotedness and *service* true and real; but while the light was there the vessel needed to be *broken*. We have as they the vessel. There is light within; there is life also—"the *life of Jesus*;" and there is a treasure; "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, but as Gideons we need to break the *vessel*, and then men see *the light, the life, the treasure*."

We poor creatures cling by nature to the earthen vessel and care not to have it *marred* nor *broken*; but God puts the light within, and His purpose is that the same may *shine out*, and so the pitcher must be *broken*. Here we pause. *A broken pitcher*, a will not our own, "not my will but thine be done," "a broken and a contrite heart," in the world an unselfish heart, a whole-hearted heart for Christ and His interests upon the earth. When there is this, that precious treasure within will be seen—a life resplendent with the glory of the Lord Jesus. Such is His work—the work of the Spirit in us. This is *life, testimony, and service* of a divine and heavenly order.

These last two, *a broken box*, and a broken pitcher (vessel) set forth the two sides of the Christian's life. The inner side and the outer side: worship all for God and His Son, testimony and service before man.

In the *broken box* we see the Holy Spirit's work in us gardened. *Worship* rises up to the Father and the Son; worship in spirit and in truth. This will be part of our sweet and happy employ for *eternity*.

In the *vessel* (pitcher) *broken*, an *unselfish, whole-hearted* life, "a broken and a contrite spirit, and one who trembles at God's word," we have the powerful work of the Spirit also. These are themselves the *graces* of the Spirit that characterised Christ Himself, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

"Always bearing about in our bodies the *dying of the Lord Jesus*, that the *life also* of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal bodies."

A. E. B.

A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue.

PHILEMON.

THE Epistle to Philemon is a personal communication from Paul, brimful of the savour of Christ. It is a precious pathetic appeal on behalf of—a runaway slave, and this fact enhances the sweetness and tenderness which breathes through it. “We have here,” writes one, “only a few familiar lines but so full of grace, of salt, of serious and trustful affection, that this short epistle gleams like a pearl of the most exquisite purity in the rich treasure of the New Testament.”

Grace had reached the slave and made him Christ's freeman (1 Cor. vii. 22), and Paul had been the instrumentality used of God for the purpose. Hence this letter. In it the pulsations of the Apostle's heart are clearly discernible. Some find a difficulty in reconciling the thought of the instrument being manifest with that of inspiration; but truly to let the human element pass unnoticed is to miss much, whilst to note it, is to note one of the most blessed characteristics of God's revelation. This marks, not mars, its perfection. God deigns to use the heart moved by a love begotten by Himself. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the words, the wisdom, the truth expressed are His, but issuing from a heart aglow with a deep sense of God's grace.

Here we have not the unfolding of doctrine, but the practical application of Christian doctrine to the heart; and we behold the *propriety* of Christianity, for Paul makes no claims upon Philemon, save the claim of love, sending the slave back a slave still, yet for love to receive, if it will, as “a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee?” One comes who will set all things in order by the power “whereby He is able to subdue all things unto

Himself" (Phil. iii. 21), and until then each redeemed one is set to glorify God in the circumstances grace discovers each in; and hearts are left free to recognise the wonders of God's grace, and thus recognising, to respond, not of necessity, but willingly. Thus all is of grace, and the glory all for God.

Scripture gives no licence to any to trade upon the relationships formed through grace, except to render the more willing service "because they are believing and beloved partakers of the benefit" (1 Tim. vi. 2). And this brings out the elevating character of Christianity. The poor man rejoices in that he is exalted; and this exaltation, not socialistic in any way, provides a motive for service which dignifies every act performed with the desire to fulfil the exhortation "therefore glorify God in your body." And here we are, since bought with a price, what Luther said—"We are all the Lord's Onesimi."

And well, then, we can understand Onesimus returning to Philemon, his heart bowed with the great load of grace that he had received, "as a brother in Christ indeed, but also, and for himself as the *first* thought, to be, in Christ, a willing, faithful, devoted bondservant, willing to take up every once repellant task (should it be ordered) not only without a murmur, but with a happy heart, embracing the old position (should it be continued by his master's will) as no longer a degradation but now a great occasion for the most joyful of occupations, willing the will of God, delighting to do it, coveting *this* as the ambition of life, 'that Christ may be magnified in my body.' "* Weighty words are these. Oh! that this were the occupation of every blood bought one; this the ambition of every heart so cleansed.

* Moule.

But we turn to the epistle itself. It divides into the salutation, 1-3; thanksgiving, 4-7; intercession, 8-20; conclusion, 21-25.

Writing as the prisoner of Jesus Christ not as an apostle, for the main point with Paul is love rather than authority, yet he can mention the fact to give weight to the love with which he wrote, and motive to the love to which he appealed (verse 8, 9). Paul associates Timothy with himself in the salutation, and addresses both grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ to beloved Philemon, to the sister Apphia, evidently Philemon's wife, to Archippus a fellow-soldier, and to the assembly meeting in the house of Philemon.

Thus Paul would seek, by interesting all in the displayed grace of God, to heal every wounded feeling. It is so easy for natural feeling to rise and carry the heart away from what is divine; but by divine wisdom the Apostle speaks to awaken true spiritual sentiments. It would surely not be lost upon Apphia, who might have been a sufferer by Onesimus' absence, that she was remembered in this communication from "Paul the aged." Archippus, a labourer for the Lord, and by some thought to be their son, though of this there is no evidence, would be moved to aid by prayer and counsel in this matter, and feeling, for the wrong done to Philemon, would be disarmed. The assembly, by whom Onesimus would eventually be received, knowing of his wrong, would be moved to have hearty fellowship in the home-coming of a once fugitive slave saved by grace. "Grace and peace"—"Sweet bonds that unite all the children of peace!" Receivers of the kindness of God must be givers on the same principle, after the same fashion (Tit. iii.).

And next we have a burst of thanksgiving from Paul for the fruit of grace already seen in Philemon. And the

recognition of this by the Apostle would doubtless tend to produce in his heart the very fruit desired by Paul. Of his love to all the saints, and of his faith towards Christ Jesus we have mention. But the number of the saints had been increased. Onesimus, his slave, was now one; and thus enrolled would surely be an object of interest to his master. Would not "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ" if still active, graciously lead to this and the entire setting aside of selfish thought and consideration? For he would have the love which springs out of faith thus exhibited.

And not only so. But the "faith which works by love" would recognize the good in others also, and become operative, as Paul says, "in the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in us towards Christ Jesus" (verse 7). Grace meets grace and love flows freely. Great joy and consolation had been ministered to Paul through the ministrations of beloved Philemon towards the saints. Were they refreshed? Paul was also. How tender and courteous is the wisdom which is from above, how gentle, yet withal how strong.

And now the way is paved for the introduction of what was upon Paul's heart, and he pleads the cause of one who was before unprofitable indeed. He could have commanded; for love's sake he beseeches. An apostolic order would doubtless have received its proper consideration from Philemon, but the natural feeling about the injustice he had received from his bondservant would still rankle in his heart. He would have obeyed, but such obedience would possibly have left the heart entirely outside the action. That was far from Paul's desire; and consequently he seeks to knit the heart of the master to the heart of his slave—because of grace.

The appeal from "Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner

Philemon.

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of Jesus Christ," on account of his son Onésimus, begotten in his bonds, is full of the pathos of love. True, a good master had had an unprofitable servant, but all that could be now lost sight of; for though he had run away, yet "perhaps he therefore departed for a season that thou should'st receive him for ever."

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform ;"

and the fugitive, brought into contact with Paul, heard Christ's message, and receiving it became Christ's free man, and Paul's son in the faith. Still it was true, through God's grace, that "the poor had the gospel preached to them," and Paul and Onesimus are bound up in the same bundle of life. Precious grace of God !

What mighty effects are produced when God's Word is truly received. Onesimus, the unprofitable one, Paul would gladly have kept with him that in the stead of Philemon he might minister to the apostle. Very profitable he was now, and that, too, in the service of the Lord. But Philemon's rights as master are respected, and, besides, Paul's desire was that grace should again be productive of fruit. God loves a cheerful giver, and hence this wisdom and grace on Paul's part that "thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly" (ver. 14). Compulsion would have stifled love and left the heart cold and unsatisfied. Grace displays a superiority to evil, quenching the risings of the flesh and acting in opposition to it. Thus is Christ manifested and God glorified.

"Receive him, that is, my bowels," pleads Paul. "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me ;" for he would recognise every relationship that was formed by grace. Gained for Christ, the runaway was regained for his master, and that, on the reckoning

of grace, for ever, and in an entirely new relationship.

But another appeal Paul has to make. It may be that Onesimus had, on absconding, robbed Philemon. How shall that count be settled? "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account" (vs. 18-19). Paul had not forgotten the One who had undertaken for him—"The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me"—and he now undertakes to repay for Onesimus. Here is a little of the Master reproduced in the servant, surely. And along with this goes the gentle reminder of how Philemon owed even himself to Paul. A trophy of grace was he. Could he then fail to respond? "Refresh my bowels in the Lord."

And Paul's confidence would, we may be sure, meet with an answering response; and more especially as it is so fully expressed. He counts upon being given to them through their prayers, and so can speak of coming to them. And what joy there would be when they met!

And now with a few salutations the letter closes. It sets out the power of true Christianity, a power so foreign to the spirit of the old dispensation. "The epistle thus shows strikingly the true exalting power of Christianity, not intended to release from the duties or disadvantages of an earthly place—not to be a lever to lift into earthly position or ease—but to fill with a competency to serve in the lowest and lowliest, like Him whom we all serve." May God stamp these things upon our very hearts that the formative power of grace might be clearly set forth by each.

H. F.

There is not a round in the ladder to heaven which does not give every one that steppeth upon it just occasion to sing Grace, grace!

KING SOLOMON.

IN the time of Solomon the kingdom of Israel reached the zenith of its glory. How soon it faded, and became but a splendid recollection! reminding us of the early days of the Church of God, as recorded in the close of Acts iv. For that too was evanescent and has passed away. It was a lovely picture, telling of what the ungrieved Holy Spirit effected. The heart of the true Israelite would yearn for the outward, manifested unity of the people and the kingdom; but that never returned, and never will until there is a repentant people, and then Solomon's glory shall pale before that of Christ's as David's greater Son.

Let us ponder for a little while over the history of Solomon. Who was he? A son of David the adulterer and murderer, and his mother was Bathsheba, the very woman with whom his father had so grievously sinned. Divine mercy had preserved both alive, and to them was born a son whom his father called Solomon, but Jehovah named him Jedidiah, and we read that the Lord loved him (2 Samuel xii. 24, 25); and when the time came for David to die it was this son whom he chose to succeed him.

Adonijah, an elder son, aspired to the throne, and carried the people with him, as we learn from his own lips. Speaking to Solomon's mother he says, "Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and become my brother's: *for it was his from the Lord*" (1 Kings ii. 15). David, therefore, in proclaiming Solomon king, had the mind of God. What a triumph of grace it was! David forgiven and his sin covered, and covered so completely that the second child born to him by Bathsheba was loved by Jehovah and became, by divine choice, the ruler of His people.

To him Jehovah appeared twice. To him the work of building a temple for the Lord his God was entrusted. To him wisdom, and honour, and riches were granted, eclipsing all that went before him. Surely gratitude alone will compel this greatly favoured man to be true to his God! The temple completed, the work was accepted, for Jehovah filled the house with the cloud of his presence, "So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings viii. 11). Was ever a man so highly favoured, or so publicly honoured? Yet he grievously sinned. Beloved of his God, chosen by Him to reign over His people, endowed with all that heart could wish, called to do a great work for Jehovah, and that work publicly accepted in the presence of all the leaders of the people, his prayer heard, and to him Jehovah appeared twice. Who would have dared to hint at that time, or even to have thought it, that the day would come when his heart would depart from the Lord and he would become a worshipper of false gods? But come it did; and if we would profit by the history which God has caused to be written for the instruction of all who should come after him, we should endeavour to discover the steps that led to his terrible fall.

Now, whether these steps be few or many, the first is by far the most important; for if the first had not been taken the second and so on could not have been. But when once the first is taken the others will surely follow, unless God interferes to prevent, or the failing one sees his sin and judges it, returning morally to the point of departure.

Let us look at 1 Kings iii. 1: "And Solomon made affinity with Pharoah king of Egypt, and took Pharoah's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord,

and the wall of Jerusalem round about." Was this wrong? Yes; it was the first step to ruin. Israel as a nation were Jehovah's people—"The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." He was holy. They were to be holy also. Marriage was strictly forbidden with any of the seven nations of Canaan, for they were idolators (see Deut. vii. 3); and the reason stated in verse 4 is, "For they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods." The idolator would win, whether man or woman; evil would overcome the good. God has said it, and Solomon's history confirms its truth. 'Tis true Egyptians are not mentioned here, for Moses speaks only of those nations whom Israel were to dispossess in the land of Canaan. But the Egyptians were idolators, and so "*they will turn away,*" etc. The result will be the same. Holy Israel were to the Lord God. He had separated them. He had chosen them "to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (verse 6).

Their separation Jehovah had effected. It was theirs to maintain it practically. We have, however, one instance that seems to clash with this. "When thou goest out to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to be thy wife, then thou shalt bring her home to thine house: and she shall shave her head and pare her nails: And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month" (Deut. xxi. 10-13). After that she should be his wife. Let us note this fact well. It was God *allowing*, but not *commanding*. It indicated how far,

under certain circumstances, a man might go, and tells what must be done ere his desire could be accomplished. This woman, already a captive, her god having failed to defend her people against the Israelites, her home gone, links with the past broken, she bewails her father and mother a month, and then became wife to a man who loved her. She could not return to what was gone; even her hair was cut off and her nails pared. Her only chance of happiness now would be to thoroughly identify herself with her husband and his people. Thus the danger of her leading her husband to worship a false god was reduced to a minimum, for that god had proved itself unable to protect its worshippers. An exceptional case then is this, and in nowise sanctions inter-marriage with the worshippers of idols. It was allowed only after a war in which victory was theirs, and could not apply if they had been defeated, nor at any time during peace.

Now if we turn to Ezra ix. 1, we shall find amongst those with whom the Israelites were not to mingle nor to marry, the Egyptians are specifically named, and in ver. 14 he says, "Should we again break Thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldest Thou not be angry with us till Thou hast consumed us?" Solomon then was doubly guilty—he had made affinity with Pharoah king of Egypt, and had also married Pharoah's daughter. What should he have done? He should have written for himself a copy of this law in which God's mind for the king of Israel was contained (Deut. xvii. 18). "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as *the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.* Neither shall he multiply wives unto himself, that his heart turn not away: neither

shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold " (verses 16, 17). The copy of the law which he had to write was to be with him, " And he shall read therein all the days of his life : that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them " (verse 19). Whether Solomon ever wrote the copy for himself we do not know ; but this we do, that he disobeyed its injunctions. Obedience to God's will is our duty ; and not only so, but that it is positively unsafe to depart from it in any respect whatever. Had the Israelite whose passion was stirred by the beauty of a captive woman been imbued with a sense of God's mind, had he realised the value of that separation which Jehovah had effected, he would not have allowed it to master him ; for a woman of his own people there surely was who would have made him a good wife. Let us not then mistake what God may allow a man in his weakness for what He Himself would have chosen for him. An Israelite was allowed to put away his wife, but it was not God's mind. " From the beginning it was not so," said *Jesus*. One woman for one man was God's order ; never more than one. We may find conspicuous examples to the contrary, and even proof that more were allowed to the Israelites by God, but God's mind it was not. It completely falsifies the divine idea.

The Creator knew perfectly Adam's need, and met it by giving him a woman for a *companion* and a *wife* ; these two so one that their interests are identical, no rivalry. If companionship only had been provided for another man might have met the need, but the Creator's design for the increase of the race could not thus have been fulfilled. We see then the divine idea of marriage was a double one, and Israel's sin in that connection Malachi is given to press home (chap. ii. 14, 15) : " The Lord hath been witness

between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously : yet is she thy *companion* and the *wife* of thy covenant. And did he not make one? . . . And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of thy youth."

God having brought His people out of Egypt would have the door shut. Wife or no wife, horses or no horses, the people must not go down into Egypt. So far, to outward appearance, there was no indication of what years would bring. There was no immediate rebuke from the Lord. Solomon had made affinity with Pharoah, king of Egypt and married his daughter. Silently Jehovah looked on. He appeared to him in a dream by night and said, "Ask what I shall give thee," and his request pleased the Lord, and He granted it, graciously adding what Solomon had not asked for—riches and honour. His days too should be lengthened if he would walk in Jehovah's ways and keep His statutes and commandments.

We next see his wisdom as a judge at the close of chapter iii. ; and in chapter iv. he is wiser than all men, a splendid botanist and a naturalist, the author of three thousand proverbs, and of songs one thousand and five. His fame had gone abroad into all lands, "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom" (verse 34). In chap. v. he makes known his purpose to build an house for Jehovah, and his heart was in the work. In chap. vi. the foundation was laid and the work begun. Seven years of real good work, perfect in all the details of it, and at last it was finished. In chap. viii. Jehovah took possession of the house, publicly owning it as His. "Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness.

King Solomon.

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I have surely built Thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever" (verses 12, 13). He next blesses all the congregation of Israel and then said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which spake with His mouth unto David my father, and hath with His hand fulfilled it." God then had kept His word. In this faith finds rest and worships.

The king, standing before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, spread forth his hands toward heaven and prays. What a prayer it was! How full! how touching! We seem almost within hearing of it, and feel ourselves the fervour of it. We look at the man, at his position. We think of his service, of all his devotion. How highly honoured before all was he by the Lord God! We note his evident sincerity. Could anyone, would anyone dare to even hint that he was a breaker of God's law? Yet so it was. His sin was not upon his conscience. Evidently he was not aware of it; but anyone present, if acquainted with God's mind, any honest student of the law, must have known of it, and would also know that all the splendour and honour and glory could be but transient unless there came repentance and self-judgment. Solomon even exhorts the people in verse 61, "Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments, as at this day."

For a time all outwardly went well. The people, at the desire of the king, went to Egypt for horses and linen yarn. How easy it was! Then Solomon having married one strange woman soon added to their number, until we read in chap. xi. 1, that "King Solomon loved many strange women (together with the daughter of Pharaoh), women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the

children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you : for surely they will turn away your heart after other gods." Solomon clave unto these in love. The Lord was angry, and troubles began to come thick and fast, and no wonder. Solomon had fallen under the influence of his strange wives, and practised idolatry, and became the immediate cause of a rupture in the kingdom, deferred, however, in mercy until after his death. Division took place—an unmitigated evil some think—but what had caused it? Sin. Better then, and better now, to get at the cause and judge it if we can. A thousand divisions are better than sanctioning disobedience to God's holy Word. May it be ours to profit by His Word, to seek His mind, and to have faith that all must be well in the end to those who fear God and keep His commandments, although appearances may point the other way.

E. R. W.

"AND when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left," etc.—Luke xxiii. 33-43.

Thus, then, in spite of the grace of Jesus in intercession, Jews and Gentiles joined in mockery of the crucified; yet God had prepared even here consolation for Jesus, in a poor sinner. But no sorrow, no shame, no suffering brings the heart too low to scorn Jesus: a gibbeted robber despises Him! There is an instinct, so to speak, in every unrenewed heart against Jesus, which was not quelled even by that power of love in which He was going down

into the deepest humiliation, to suffer the wrath due to sinners. Say not that you are one whit better than this wretched man. "There is none righteous, no, not one: none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable." In two words, there is "no difference." You are as bad in God's sight as the railing impenitent thief. See now the fruit of grace in the other. Grace works in a man who was in as low a condition as he who, notwithstanding his own dying agony and disgrace, had pleasure in outraging the Lord of Glory; indeed both had done it (Mark xv. 32). But what more blessed and certain than the salvation of this thief, now that he bows to the name of Jesus? He is going to Paradise in companionship with the Lord whom he owned.

It is often idly said that there was one saved in this way, that none might despair, and but one, that none might presume. The truth is that this is the only way whereby any sinner can be saved. There is but one and the same salvation for all. There was evidently no time for him to do anything, had this been the way; but all is done for him. That very day his knees were to be broken. But how could he get into Paradise? Christ wrought his deliverance through His own death, and his eye was opened in faith of what Christ was doing.

Nor was it only that Christ's work was wrought *for* him—the ground on which his soul rested for salvation. There was a mighty moral work wrought *in* him, through the revelation of Christ to his soul by the Spirit, who convinced him of his utter sinfulness. "Dost not thou fear God," is his rebuke to his railing fellow, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly." It was not all joy. Conscience had its place. There is a real sense of good and

evil; for he has got in spirit into God's presence, and this, making him forget circumstances, elevates him into a preacher of righteousness. And if he owns the rightness of his own punishment in honest confession of sin, what a wonderful testimony he bears to Christ! "This Man hath done nothing amiss." It was just as if he had known Christ all his life. He had a divine perception of His character. And so with the Christian now. Have you such jealousy about the spotlessness and glory of Christ that you cannot help crying out when you hear Him slighted? He believed that He was the Lord, the Son of God, and so could answer with assurance for what He had been as a Man. As completely a man as any other—the holy obedience of Christ was divine. "This Man hath done nothing amiss." What a response in the renewed heart to the delight of sinlessness! His eye glances, as it were, over the whole life of Christ; he could answer for Christ anywhere, because he has learnt to know Himself.

Then he says, turning to Jesus, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

As soon as he can get rid of what was sad, when he has done with his testimony to the other thief, his heart turns to Christ instinctively. How undistracted he was! Was he thinking of his pain? Of the people around the cross? As is always the case, when God's presence is realised, he was absorbed. In the extremity of helplessness, as to outward appearance, he hears the Shepherd's voice, and recognised Him as the Saviour and King. He wants Christ to think of him. The judgment of men was that Christ was a malefactor. The weeping women saw not who He was. But no degradation of circumstances could hide the glory of His person who hung by his side.

He owned Jesus as the Lord, and knows that His kingdom

will certainly come. The other malefactor thought only, if he thought at all, of present deliverance; but this one saw the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. His mind was set, not on being free from bodily pain, but on the loving recognition of Christ in glory. He looks not to earth, nor nature, but to another kingdom, where death could not come. There was not a cloud, not a doubt, but the peaceful, settled assurance that the Lord would come in His kingdom. And the Lord gave Him more than his faith asked. There was the answer of present peace. It was not only the kingdom by-and-by, but "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." As if He said, "You shall have the kingdom when it comes, but I am giving now soul-salvation; you are to be associated at once with Me, in a way far better and more than the kingdom, blessed and true as it is." For indeed that was accomplished on the cross, which could transport a soul into Paradise. If the Saviour had taken the sinner's place, the sinner is by grace entitled to have a place with the Saviour. The poor thief might know but little of Christ's work and its effect, but the Holy Spirit had fixed his heart on the person of Christ. The words of the Lord (verse 43), imply the atonement, by virtue of which we are made fit to be His companions in the presence of God (Heb. iii. 14). The work of Christ is as perfect now for us, as then for him; it is as much accomplished for us as if we were already caught up into Paradise. How distinct this is from anything like progress of the soul to fit it for heaven! And how wonderful that such a soul should be a comfort to the Saviour! He had come into the condemnation; yea, and judgment was on Him to the uttermost. Now the converted thief was a bright witness of perfect grace and eternal salvation through the blood of Christ.—*Writer unknown.*

CHARACTER OF PAUL'S MISSION.

PAUL was the witness of the calling of grace and the perception of supreme glory. The manner of his call was declarative of both. He was in the career of opposition to Christ, and was arrested to be the witness of His glory, and of whatever had been revealed to him—not of His earthly career, to that he had been a spiritual stranger: not of His fellowship, when risen with His brethren—from that he had been a careless outcast or bitter opposer to it—but of His ascended glory. Not the patient tracing with slow understanding the unfolding glory of the Man Jesus conversant among them, till it followed Him through the apparent death of all their hopes by the resurrection—"being seen of them forty days"—into the known certainty of His exaltation; following Him to the clouds in which He should one day appear again as coming, and the witness of where He was, because the Spirit had been sent down from the Father: but the sudden and unlooked-for perception of the heavenly glory of the Lord above the brightness of the sun; and finding that *this* was Jesus—that is, beginning at the glory, the heavenly glory, and aware that he saw and heard the Lord speaking from heaven—he asks and finds that this glorified One, the glorious Lord, was Jesus whom he was persecuting. Hence his mission was wholly of the glory in its source, not a witness of the sufferings and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, but a witness of the glory and a partaker of the sufferings; and so ever preaching this mystery among the Gentiles, "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. i.). This then was the calling of Paul, a sovereign calling by grace.

J. N. D.

I believe the entering on His High Priestly office to make atonement was quite independent of and anterior to either His resurrection or ascension. For He was raised for our justification. Hence the making atonement, of which propitiation was an essential element, was completed ere He rose. Nor is there any real difficulty about it, when we remember that whilst in body on earth, He was the Son of Man *who is in heaven* (John iii. 13). And if we, whilst on earth, can enter the holiest as priests, I can see no difficulty in the Lord entering the Holiest as High Priest ere He ascended. If bodily presence is not needed for us to enter the holiest, why was it for Him? Though of course He is in heaven *now* in body.

C. E. S.

Mr. M—— forgets that you could not have atonement without the burnt offering. Both burnt offering and sin offering were required, as Lev. xvi. shows. He also forgets that propitiation was made not by the blood of the burnt offering, but by that of the sin offering, and the blood of the latter it was which was sprinkled *before* the Mercy Seat. He forgets, too, that all that was burnt on the altar was a sweet savour (Lev. i. 9; iv. 31). So you cannot dissociate the sacrifice from the excellency of Him who was it. And His resurrection and present place in glory tell us in a fuller way than types could, of the excellency of His person. But we see in the Old Testament that the two go together.

It is death which ends a nature. The Lord has appeared to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The *ground* on which we shall be free from the old man, sin in the flesh, is the sacrifice of Christ. The *time* for that deliverance is when we die or are caught up.

Aaron entered in with the cloud of incense between him and the Mercy Seat—"that he die not." It was because of what he was in himself that he needed that cloud. The Lord did not need it. He entered in by His own blood, not by virtue of it, but taking in His own blood characterised His entrance, as the high priest taking in the blood of bulls and goats characterised the latter's entrance.

Mr. M—— confounds his person with the old man. He as a person is a fallen creature, and he has, in consequence, an evil nature. He will be, I trust, in heaven, his evil nature will not. His statement confounding the two would shut him out of heaven altogether. . . . The old man has been judicially dealt with, but whilst in me (and rampant if allowed to act, alas how often it does) it is not terminated.

C. E. S.

Discipline I have looked at as connected with the *assembly* not the *Body*. Saints gathered in assembly act (1 Corin. v. 4-13). And as there is but one assembly viewed in its general character, their local act, unless rightly challenged, should be accepted everywhere. The ground of its ratification in heaven is Christ in the midst (Matt. xviii. 19-20). But independency, and clericalism, and sectarianism offend against the truth of the Body (1 Corinthians xii. 14-26). We meet on the ground of the assembly (1 Corin. xi. 18), and also on that of the Body (1 Corin. x. 17), at the Lord's Table, I take it, though discipline obviously has to do with the former. For there can be no evil in the Body.

No worldly thing seems great to him that minds eternity.

TESTING TIMES.

WE are experiencing in our day what was known by Adam and those who followed after him. We would, however, with joy of heart linger over such as gave occasion to our blessed God to express His delight in, though touching here and there upon individuals who failed grievously under testing. Histories, in Scripture, were written for our learning, that we might not err by unbelief or inattention to that which He suitably addressed and addresses still to each. It is what proceeds from Him tests us all. And yet, alas, how little do we, with all the inspired records, devoutly give place and steadily affirm the supremacy and sufficiency of the Word of God. What pungency there is when we read His description of it, and of our blessed Lord's use of it when tempted in the wilderness. What spectacles of His displeasure has this wilderness world presented of such as hearkened not to it. But let us hear Him: "The Word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is not a creature unapparent before Him; but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes, with Whom we have to do" (new trans. Heb. iv., 12, 13). Men who revered God—who walked and talked with Him—set store by it night and day. "The words of Jehovah are pure words, silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. xii. 6). To say nothing of Ps. xix. 7-14; cxix.; and those choice samples in

Proverbs, which also uphold fully the relations He instituted, showing, on the same page, who should be communicators of His mind to those near and dear, and a true sanctuary value early and earnestly planted in the minds of those so favoured to receive divine communications from a father or a mother who feared the Lord.

On another page we read : “ Having purified your soul by obedience to the truth to unfeigned brotherly love, love one another out of a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the living and abiding Word of God*. Because all flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass has withered and its flower has fallen ; *but the word of the Lord abides for ever*. But this is *the Word* which in the glad tidings is preached to you ” (new trans. 1 Peter i. 22-25). Man’s ruin and littleness, how unerringly set forth—but what majesty and supremacy is here shown to be the property of God’s Word ! In Adam all died—frail, mortal man—walking in a vain show, uttering great swelling words—having no fear of God—what a poor, repellant, unlovable creature viewed away from God and insubjection to His Word. May these inspired breathings be so blessed as to hold up to us the richness of the gift bestowed—for He said, “ I have given them Thy Word.” Still man is here viewed in his frailty, although so in favour with God as to possess all that is requisite to carry him in safety and in triumph through a world of hostility and hatred to those realms of bliss on high where Christ is. What can compare with it ? When was it weak ?

Man can also be viewed in his estrangement, refusing to be reconciled ; sometimes in barbarism—wielding sword and spear ; at other times—skilled in art—eloquent and well clad—surrounded with books and instruments—scanning

the heavens above, penetrating the depths below. What sights can come within view as sacred history is pondered, and how dismal for the curtain to drop upon him and his doings with the truth stated, "None good; no, not one." "Man by wisdom knew not God."

Prophets and Apostles must be tested by it, as so beautifully set forth in the Word—for how could we suppose such an One as the God of Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Jonah, Paul, etc., to permit any to take liberty with Him whose messengers they were. It was the blessed God Himself who promised, "I will raise them up a Prophet . . . and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him" (Deut. xviii. 18-22).

How righteously require it of His creature if His servant, the Prophet, failed to express His mind? Hence we can see how much depended upon Him in upholding His servants on the one hand, and preserving His creatures on the other from such as would speak presumptuously, who would run without being sent—who would utter apart from being His mouth. So we have: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. viii. 20). There is a solemn "but" in that New Testament comment upon what was in Old Testament times. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many* shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter ii. 1, 2).

If there was nothing which had certain sound, if in the babel of confusion was only heard what was human, what hopelessness and dismay, trouble indeed without a door of hope—but oh, blessed be God that His Word still has place and there is still desire of heart to hear and obey it—a Voice well known—not weak because of Him having spoken in grace—how good to have been commended both to God and the Word of His grace!

It is surely to profit to view a person 1800 years before Christ, obedient to that which the Lord uttered and not found referring to himself as to its present comforts or near issues. God spoke—Abraham heard and obeyed. There was nothing extraordinary, surely, in this, nothing meritorious, but simply what was seemly and suited. Now that we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, He can take us to His side, so to speak, and turn back the pages of His own word and show us the pleasure He had when what He said was so regarded. He can tell us what He did on that occasion and unfold to us unmistakably the vastness of His blessing and the reason for it—“because thou hast obeyed My voice.”

That Voice was heard by Another and obeyed. It went all against Himself—He did not refer to Himself. The Father gave commandment and the Son gave the occasion for what these words express, to live and abide upon the sacred page; “Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.” (John x. 17).

How fared it with Saul? and what became of that prophet who listened to another voice, showing that His Word had not its proper place of supremacy over heart and conscience. We can recall the Apostle's words “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto

you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," showing that he was not open to the voice of a stranger to neutralise or nullify the Gospel he had from God to proclaim.

The commandment given to Saul to execute was very solemn, no sparing of man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel, ass—these layers in wait for God's people were not to be spared. A pious salutation for Samuel from Saul could not be allowed to disguise the true nature of the case. It was not that some portion of God's revealed mind to His servant had not been carried out—but Agag was spared, and the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle told its own tale. Yet how inventive is Saul is manifest in the attempt to shift the responsibility on others—"the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." And spite of proof a persistent claiming to have obeyed the voice of the Lord is clung to, eliciting those well-known but too little pondered words, put in the form of a question: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices *as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*" Beloved, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." The word in part carried out nevertheless disclosed the fact that he rejected the Word of the Lord, and became a rejected king. Our God must still have respect to His Word and not to persons.

How boldly and admirably did the prophet of God deliver the message given him against the altar Jeroboam erected in Bethel, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin, yet all that was commanded him (the man of God) was not carried out—in that simple matter of a meal, not allowed of God; disobedience was marked, deliverance to the lion was the

way our God expressed His displeasure with His unfaithful servant.

Daniel, we remember, who honoured God and set store by His Word, applying his heart to do His pleasure, was preserved from the fury and ferocity of hungry lions and the intense fire intended by man to do him harm.

The plain marks of the spiritual and approved given in that same Word we shall do well to mark. Paul and Silas, sent away by night in troublous times—found in the synagogue at Berea—what honourable mention is made of the Bereans' regard for Scripture and the abiding issues. May our indolence be reproved and a revived regard, reverence and delight be found in hearing and doing what our blessed God reveals. How good for his children to be manifestly in connection with that source of love and light. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." As an apostle would say: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, *let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*"

Our Apostle could also ask a question and give us helpful lines, whereby we might run and read: "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." How Jeroboam uttered a word that fell in with the people's readiness to sin against God; and how the Epistle to the Galatians discloses solemn things to us.

But we must not lengthen this, but earnestly desire of our God for our readers that His Word may be turned to, for He looks to such as are of a poor and contrite spirit, and tremble at His Word.

W. B.

“ WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS FAR BETTER.”

THE last brief chapter of the earth-life closed,
 All that remains of our beloved one we lay to rest;
 Our hearts are sad as from the accustomed place
 We miss the dear, dear face, the voice we so much loved,
 And steps that tread no more the old familiar ways.
 But what of him? O sorrowing heart be comforted,
 His spirit with his Lord has entered into bliss—
 The first grand chapter of the heaven-life openeth now
 Unto his wond’ring gaze, and he is satisfied;
 With Christ in Paradise he rests until
 That morning dawneth when the precious dust
 Here laid to rest, shall at the voice of Him
 Come forth in living beauty, glorified, and like its Lord.
 Then we who sorrow now shall meet again
 In everlasting gladness those we loved and lost awhile—
 Then Death shall ne’er again have power to part
 Those whom Christ purchased with His precious blood.

He hath removed the loved one from our sight
 For a brief space, and all is surely well;
 He hath but taken to Himself “His own.”
 And as He gently severs ties of earth
 ’Tis but instead to chain our hearts more firmly there
 To Heaven and Home. Hush! even now *we* hear
 His footsteps at the door calling *us* hence;
 But a short moment and *we* merge from out this vale of tears
 Into the splendour of that Home of Light and Love, and
 Rest.

A. S.

ARE BELIEVERS HEAVENLY?

WE have headed this little paper with a question. To answer it we can, of course, only turn to the Scriptures. Heavenly is a direct contrast to earthly. Once and once only do we meet with the term as applied to believers, and that is found in 1 Cor. xv. 48. The Apostle in this chapter is maintaining the great truth of resurrection, showing that if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; for both go together. All hope is gone if the dead rise not; for he will not entertain any future for the believer in which the dead do not share, and as the body is the only part of man that in reality dies, so it is the only part that can be raised from the dead.

"All that are in their graves," said Jesus, and that, it is plain to the simplest Christian, must refer only to bodies. Objectors there were in that day. "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" "Thou fool," is the reply, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest thou sowest not that body that shall be" (ver. 37). Death, then, must precede the coming up again from the earth, when that which comes up would be found to differ from what had been sown. It is an illustration drawn from natural things which manifests the folly of the objection that had been made; but it is not intended to portray the exact character of the resurrection, for it is a seed with a living germ in it which is sown, and death takes place after burial, not before.

A dead seed if sown would never spring up, but we do not bury living persons, and there is no germ of life in the body when put into the grave. Death releases the spirit from the body, which immediately is with the Lord: "Absent from

the body, present with the Lord." Differences there are in the animal world, different kinds of flesh; differences too between celestial and terrestrial bodies, and different glories likewise. Then those great luminaries the sun and moon, how different! the stars, too, differ from one another. So is it in the resurrection. A natural body when sown, it is a spiritual body when raised. What marked it when put into the earth was corruption, dishonour, and weakness; but what when raised? Incorruption, glory, and power, a spiritual body which will be incorruptible, glorious, and powerful, fitted for the heavens. What a difference! Is it a new body? *It is sown. It is raised.* The condition is new, blessedly so; but that is all. Christ died and rose again. We die and rise again.

On this side of death we are, as to our bodies, earthy, for we bear the image of the first man, Adam. In resurrection we shall bear the image of the Second Man, and then, and then only, will it be really true that we are heavenly, for we shall bear the image of the heavenly. But some one will say, the Apostle says: "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." And that is true now. We must ask, What is it the Apostle is contending for? Is it what believers are now, or what they will be? It is the fundamental truth of resurrection that is in question. All the race partake of the condition of the head. And so shall we by-and-by partake of the condition of the heavenly Man. All the race has been quickened together with Him, and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. This was said hundreds of years before we had a being. True it was in the eye and mind of God, but not true historically.

We had to be born one by one in the ordinary way, then each one had to be spiritually quickened, or born anew, and

receive the Holy Spirit ere he could be really in Christ. So what God could speak of as done will only be actually fulfilled when we are WITH Him where He is. The body of Adam was made out of the dust of the ground, but his spirit was in-breathed by God, and consequently we could not say it was earthy. Eccles. xii. 7, proves that it is not so: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it;" and as heavenly is in contrast to earthy, and as we have seen the spirit is not of the earth, so we believe that heavenly applies to the body. "Our earthly house of this tabernacle," writes Paul in 2 Corinthians v., speaking of the body, and says, "We have a building of God eternal in the heavens." The believer groans, desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven. Clearly, then, it is the body that is heavenly and not the spirit. He writes of it as a present fact, *We have*; but no sober Christian thinks he is now in possession of his house from heaven. When he does obtain it then that which is mortal will be swallowed up of life.

We are on earth, and in the body made of earth, and groan, being burdened, sharing the sorrows of a groaning creation; but the time of deliverance draws near. The future is certain, thank God. Already we are saints, beloved of God, children of God, sons too, heirs also, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Heaven is our destination. Our names are written there. It well becomes us to set our hearts and minds on things above, but it does not become us to call ourselves what we are not. Our aim to-day is to be like Christ. Occupation with Him in the glory will result in making us like what He was when on the earth. It is the mind He had down here that we are exhorted to have; and His blessed pathway of self-renunciation and obedience to God we are called on to imitate.

Dead in Trespasses and Sins.

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Called heavenly we are not ; called to heaven we are. The Lord grant us to be more in spirit there each day until the blissful moment arrives when He will come as the Saviour and change our vile bodies, (or better) our body of humiliation and fashion it like unto His body of glory.

E. R. W.

DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.

(Eph. ii. 1.)

DEAD in trespasses and sins ! Such is the description which Scripture gives of those who are strangers to God's grace and have no thought or care for their soul's salvation. The woman who lives in pleasure (or habits of self-indulgence—New Trans.) is described as “dead while she lives” (1 Tim. v. 6). The death of Christ also testifies to the fact that “all were dead,” and that “He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Just as a dead person is devoid of all sense and thought, so is an unbeliever—a natural man unquickened by the Spirit of God—oblivious of God's sovereign rights over him. “All his thoughts are, There is no God” (Ps. x. 4, R.V.), and hence he has few struggles, if any, with his conscience in connection with his daily affairs of life. He desires to live at peace with himself, and to carry out his engagements, or embark in his enterprises without any reference at all to Him who, in spite of whatever he may think or say, has given him every shred of which he is possessed, and on whom he is as dependent as the commonest beggar of the street for the air he breathes,

the water he drinks, and the health he enjoys. Job might well ask : "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth (or mirth), and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God : Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?"

Insensible to every claim of God, how pertinent and forcible are such expressions as "dead while she liveth," "dead in trespasses and sins." But the term "dead" has another and deeper meaning than insensibility which calls for further consideration. Under the law (which is God's standard for the natural man, or man in the flesh) death is regarded as of a most defiling character. He that touched the dead body of a man, or even a bone or a grave, rendered himself unclean for seven days. If a man died in a tent, all who entered it were defiled, and every open vessel became unclean ; and he who failed to purify himself after the prescribed manner, defiled the tabernacle of the Lord, and was required to be cut off from Israel (Num. xix.). The High Priest, by reason of his holy office, was forbidden to enter any place wherein lay a dead body, even though it was that of his father or mother ; so loathsome was death to God (Lev. xxi.). The hatefulness of sin made it so, and death is its due—its wages (Rom. vi. 23).

But the cry may be raised : "We are not now under law but under grace." This is true for those only who can say that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The law has never been

abrogated, so that unredeemed souls still come under its operations; and "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. xxviii. 9). How solemn! Is it sufficiently borne in mind? How many who profess Christianity are yet unconverted, and therefore "dead in trespasses and sins," and being so, all that emanates from them, be it prayer or what else, is polluted—a terrible thought! It may be considered uncharitable to say so, but is it not true? (See also Matt. xv. 18, 19). It would be a profanation for a Jew under law to offer a sacrifice with any blemish upon it, and fearful would be the consequences. With the fuller revelation of who and what God is, are men to enjoy immunity from all penal consequences of their indifference as to what is or is not acceptable to God and becoming His presence? A moments consideration would negative such a thought. Grace, so far from producing licence or carelessness in regard to the holiness and glory of God (which some might call liberty because it can be used for an occasion of the flesh) (Gal. v. 13), has a contrary effect. The more it is realised in the heart the greater is the care exercised as to one's worship, walk, and associations, etc.; and while it puts one's feet into a very narrow path, it at the same time enlarges the heart and broadens the sympathies; it provokes a greater reverence and godly fear for the name of the Lord; and it ever excites the desire of guarding that Name from being dishonoured by attaching to it what is evil, loose, frivolous, or unrighteous.

It was lack of the knowledge of God on the part of the children of Israel that caused them to depart from the ways of Jehovah (Hos. iv.), and which brought upon them the punishment of their captivity (Is. v. 13). The departure, at the present day from the great truths of Christianity is due

The sinless on the cross made sin,
By God forsaken too,
'Twas thus He would salvation win
And Satan's power undo.

I wish no more that I had lived
When He was here below ;
For I have seen His blessed face,
And 'tis to Him I go.
I have, when reading God's own Word
Heard well my Saviour's voice,
In gentlest tones declare His love—
This makes my heart rejoice.

My God has ordered all for me—
The when, the how, the where ;
To do His will, come weal or woe,
Should be my constant care.
Why should I vainly wish for what
His love to me denies ?
His very heart and hand are mine,
And He is good and wise.

Jesus has risen from the dead,
Sits on His Father's throne,
A little while and He will come
To raise or change His own :
A mighty meeting in the air,
A mighty love to tell,
Each shall to each exclaim with joy,
" He hath done all things well."

E. R. W.

A LETTER ON THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

"As to the unity of the body, I feel no difficulty as to Scripture, or the position of brethren. As to the danger of slipping into sectarianism, that is, making ourselves a body apart, I recognise it fully Human nature is always disposed to say 'we' if it cannot say 'I': He followeth not with us"

The principle of Scripture is as plain as possible. There was one body *on earth*, of which all are members. They do not heal in heaven, nor preach, nor use any of the gifts spoken of in 1 Cor. xii. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it": that is not in heaven. The body will be perfected in heaven (Eph. i. 23), but is practically always considered as on earth, and formed there: "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." And this was clearly down here (Acts ii.). The Lord's supper is the external sign of this unity: "One body, for we are all partakers of that one loaf." It was this, more than fifty years ago, brought me out of the Establishments; nor have I any other principle now. This obliged me to own every one baptised with the Holy Ghost as a member of the body. Only in the last days we are called on to distinguish those who "call on the name of the Lord *out of a pure heart*," which at the first was not called for: "*the Lord* added daily." This makes the brethren (so called) not the Church of God, but those who alone meet on the principle of its unity. The line between narrowness and fidelity is a very narrow one. But the Spirit of Christ can guide and keep us on it. The unity of the body cannot be touched, for the Holy Ghost unites to Christ; all those who have been baptised by the Holy Ghost (that is, received Him), are members of the body. It is "the unity of the Spirit" we have to keep;

that is, to walk in that power of the Spirit which keeps us in unity on the earth, and that needs endeavouring. I dread a gathering in any place being called the Church of God. They are the only assembly that meets on Scriptural principles ; did I not think so I should not go there, but it tends to narrow and sectarianise them.

All this seems to me very simple, but it is not so easy to keep the spirits of all here to it, both in fidelity and love, for we are poor creatures. I know those who tend too much to looseness, others too much to narrowness. The Spirit of God alone can lead us in both, and that requires us to walk near Christ. But as to principles I have no difficulty ; but without holiness and Christ being all, being emptied of self, we shall not practically succeed. God is light and love, but He alone can unite both and thus give a true and right unity.

Nov. 1879.

J. N. D.

MATTHEW VI. 34.

“TAKE, therefore, no thought for the morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” That is, He prepares us for this, that the anxiety which dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes, the evil may not be there ; if it comes God will be there too. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge in our own wills ; but if our souls are subject to Him, how often the evil that is dreaded never appears ! When the heart bows to the will of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness ! He is able to make the sorrow to be all blessing. Whatever be His will, it is good. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

"IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE."

How often do reflections similar to this (Jno. xi. 21-32), barb the arrow of affliction with a keenness which nothing else could give. These are the thoughts that in our wretchedness make us doubly wretched, "If we had taken such a course;" "If we had consulted such a physician, how different would have been the issue!" etc.

There can be nothing more unwise, perhaps few things more unholy, than reasoning thus. In dwelling upon secondary causes we overlook the first great cause of all—the God of heaven and earth, who alone ordereth all things, and doeth all things well. Has He had no share in the decision? Did He not permit our present disappointment? Or was He not present when our friend was taken from us? Is the departure of an immortal soul a matter of such trifling import as to escape the cognisance, or be unworthy the appointment of Him, without whom not a sparrow falleth? Or, have we not yet forgiven God for interfering with our happiness in a manner which we think might have been prevented?

Refrain, we beseech you, from all such reasonings, which are the fruitful parent of pain, and grief, and self-reproach, and which never yet have taught those who entertain them, to "hear the rod, and Him who appointeth it" (Micah vi. 9).

Be satisfied that this is the only course of safety and of peace, to seek earnestly and faithfully the guidance of God your Father, to act according to the Word which He has vouchsafed, and having done so, to leave the event with calmness and confidence in His hands whose word is pledged to you that all things shall work together for good to them

that love Him (Rom. viii. 28). Duties are ours ; events are God's."

" Precious thought—my Father knoweth !

In His love I rest ;

For whate'er my Father doeth

Must be always best ;

Well I know the heart that planneth

Nought but good for me ;

Joy and sorrow interwoven,

Love in all I see."

As to dealing with a suspect, I do not see in the New Testament any authority for what is called suspending a person once admitted as *in* till the case is clear and is dealt with. There is no hint of any such course with regard to the offending brother in Matt. xviii., though to the one sinned against and to the two or three his offence was clear before they told the assembly. Then as it is the assembly which receives, it is the assembly also that puts away. To refuse a person the privilege of fellowship at the Table, unless that is done by the assembly, would be clericalism, the usurping by one or more individuals the function which belongs to the assembly as such. If the assembly refuses them the privilege of fellowship, in whatever way it is done, that is virtually putting away from among themselves. If that were done before the guilt was proved, it would not be just judgment. We must remember in the case of the leper, that while there are principles for our instruction in dealing in discipline, there were sanitary reasons likewise which called for the isolation of the suspected one.

THE DEPENDENT MAN.

To the devout soul there is no more pleasing or profitable occupation than to trace the footsteps of the Lord Jesus through this scene ; to note the various characters in which He is portrayed ; to mark the perfection that pervades His every action. And to do this we have to turn to the Gospels, the inspired accounts of His life, death, and resurrection.

And these four Gospels each give respectively the life of our Lord viewed from a different standpoint. Thus if in John we have the Son, in Matthew the King and kingdom, in Mark the Servant, we have in Luke the dependent, perfect Man, the full expression of what a man should be.

Now prayer is the proper expression of dependence, and it is in this connection that we wish to follow our Lord through Luke's Gospel. Here, we have said, that He is before us as Man. The account of His birth and all its associations affirm this. The fact made known to Mary by the angel announcing His birth, and the genealogy given tracing Him up to Adam confirm it. Though "called the Son of the Highest," yet "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Luke i. 32). Scripture is perfect ; and were our thoughts formed in God's mould we should certainly not so speak as to make David the father of God. It were blasphemy to say so. Then let us be careful lest we infer it.

One is announced who should sit upon the throne of His father David, and by whom the sure mercies of David would be secured. Hence we here follow the One who was, *according to the flesh*, of the seed of David (2 Tim. ii. 8), and perfection marks every step. Note Him in His subjection at Nazareth,

for, though conscious of the business He had come to perform, yet from Jerusalem He returned with Joseph and Mary, "and was subject unto them" (Luke ii. 48-51).

Eighteen years run their course, when we read of Jesus leaving the solitude and subjection of Nazareth and going to John to be baptised in Jordan. All was of grace on His part. He had nothing to confess, yet would associate Himself with those who were taking right ground before God. And Luke informs us that as He was baptised He was *praying*, and prayer is, we repeat, the fullest expression of dependence. A Man amidst men, He would show forth what was fitting and becoming on the part of such, perfect as He was in every relationship.

And how deeply interesting this moment! God was about to put His seal upon the private life of the Lord Jesus; for the Word, "In whom I am well pleased," is retrospective, and intimates His pleasure in all that had gone by. He was praying, the heavens open, and the Divine testimony comes forth declaring the relationship in which He stood to God. A Man praying, and yet the Son of God. No testimony was needed to teach the first; a testimony from the heavens was vouchsafed about the latter.

Christ thus began His public life with prayer, thus plainly intimating what is proper for the servant of the Lord. And so beginning He continues, for turning on to chap. v. 16, we are there informed that "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed."

He had just shown that He was verily the God of Israel by exercising His prerogative in healing a leper. "I will: be thou clean," were His words. A wondrous miracle He performed, and great was the fame of Him spread abroad, multitudes coming to hear and be healed (ver. 15). But no fame could elate Him, nor lead Him to vacate the relation-

ship He had entered upon, and withdrawing Himself He is found alone praying, manifesting His perfect dependence as man.

Success in service, patronage and fame have led many of God's servants out of the position of simple dependence; but not so our blessed Lord. Great was the authority He possessed and exercised. On the one hand He says, "I will: be thou clean," and on the other to the palsied man, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (ver. 20). He prayed! What moral beauty is here. Well may we find our joy and delight in marking His perfections, remembering all the time that we are called to "*follow His steps*" (1 Peter ii. 21). It is so easy to become independent, and act as though possessed of rights of our own. What rights were His! Yet He prayed.

But passing on to chap vi. we have another instance. Here in vindicating His disciples to the Pharisees, He gives the declaration that "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath day" (ver. v.). "Son of Man"—"Lord of the Sabbath." What a combination! In grace God was working and the Son of Man, "with the rights and power of God," was there dispensing it. So healing the man with the withered hand, He gave proof of the goodness of God to His creatures; and, as Lord of the Sabbath, would give no countenance to the attempt to turn God's beneficent institution against man. It was for man, the very pledge of His goodness to His people.

But what then? His enemies withdrew, "and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus." Implacable hatred filled their hearts. Independency of God marked their every step. But Luke, in direct contrast, brings forward the fact, without fixing any definite time, that "He went into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer" (ver 12).

An important work was before him. He had come, sent from God, to manifest His love and grace, and the heads of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees, had clearly shown that they were unfit instruments for Him to use, both to dispense the power and communicate the truth He brought. Yet, ere acting, Christ enters upon a night of prayer. In the solitude of the night and the quietude of the mountain side He found His opportunity for it, and when morning came He called unto Him His disciples and chose twelve of them to be His special envoys. Ah! we need to ponder this scene much. How much failure there has been brought about through lack of asking counsel of God, and through forgetfulness of the fact that all service should be performed in communion with and dependence upon Him. In this Christ, the perfect One, marks out the path for us. He first prays and then acts, surrounding Himself with faithful ones to go forth and freely dispense as having freely received. He was their Lord, and inculcates obedience (vers. 46, 47), yet perfect in the relationship of man, He, Himself, prays.

But, continuing, we turn to chap. ix., where we meet with two other instances of the same character. He had just fed the five thousand, an act clearly declarative of the truth that One was present who could feed the poor of His people with bread (Ps. cxxxii., 15), but dependence, the proper, characteristic trait of a godly man, He manifests. This Luke brings out here: "And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him" (verse 18). Away from the busy haunts of men, alone, *He prayed*. The disclosure of His death is about to be given, and ere that He asks His disciples as to current opinion about Himself. The sense of rejection was before His soul. Was He discouraged, downcast? Prayer had preceded the question, and His

heart is rejoiced by the answer. Unbelief could say this and that; to faith a revelation was given, however feeble the faith present (Matt. xvi. 16). "Peter answering said, 'The Christ of God.'"

Following on this Christ speaks of glory. He, the dependent man, should be exalted to be both Lord and Christ (Acts ii. 36), and by and by publicly ushered into His glory, to the confusion of His enemies and deliverance of His faithful ones. The Son of Man is *set over* all the works of God's hands (Heb. ii. 7), and presently delivers up the kingdom to God (1 Cor. xv. 24). His dependence upon God for His introduction into this is markedly shown by the Evangelist Mark, who brings the Lord before us as the Servant-Son: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son" (chapter xiii. 32).

In Luke, ere the foreshadowing of the coming glory is given, we read that "He went up into a mountain to pray" (ver. 28). Expectations of glory were His, yet He prayed, and as He prayed was transfigured. What moral glory and perfection shines out here! As at His baptism so at His transfiguration. He was *praying* when the Divine acknowledgment of His acceptability to God was given. The blessed Lord acted consistently with all that was involved *in the relationship* He entered into. Did He in grace become a man? Then as a man, perfect in every act, He would walk here. Hence the design of the Spirit in calling attention particularly to this in Luke.

And again in ch. xi. 1 are we reminded of this, there once more reading that "He was praying in a certain place," and in response to the petition of His disciples He teaches them to pray. And how much we can learn from this. His *acts* reveal what His *teaching* here conveys, that His *desires* were

wholly for the glory of God. "Hallowed be Thy name." His acts made always for this.

Another instance and our little study closes. The end of His path of ministry drew nigh, and anticipation of the Cross came before His soul. In Gethsemane's Garden He passes in spirit through the trial that awaited Him. The awfulness of it He alone could measure, and His soul is poured out in prayer. "If Thou be willing," He pleaded. Would aught else be suitable? And so what follows, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." What follows marks graphically for adoring hearts the wondrous grace that led Him to take so dependent a place. Angelic agency is employed to minister strength to Him (ch. xxii. 43) in this His time of strong crying and tears. Nor was it refused—it came *from heaven*—and He prayed more earnestly. An infinity of sorrow was before Him, and here the reality and perfection of His manhood is conclusively proved. "Made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Heb. ii.), He is strengthened by the ministry of an angel.

What mysteries surround the Person of our Lord! Shall we seek to solve them? "No one knoweth who the Son is but the Father" (ch. x.). "God over all blessed for evermore" (Rom. xi.), He yet emptied Himself, "and took upon Him the form of a servant." "Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" is asked in Isaiah xl. 28; yet when here of Him we read, "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" (Jno. iv. 6) What a stoop in grace was His! and the reality of His manhood is thus affirmed. And in conclusion we would repeat, what is liable to be forgotten, that every relationship Christ entered into He took up perfectly. At Nazareth He was

subject to Joseph and Mary. In Gethsemane He was subject to His Father, willing only His will. So speaks the Scriptures which cannot be broken.

H. F.

USEFULNESS.

A QUESTION often arises about usefulness. Satan often beguiles by it. He may have suggested to John that he would be more useful if he were to compromise a little, and keep out of trouble for the sake of being free for his service to saints. Useful to whom? To God or to men? God may be able to show out more of His glory by laying men aside. The eyes of God rested on Paul a prisoner, seemingly useless (not even always allowed to write), as the field for the display of some of the greatest privileges of truth. The very point when your weakness seems to make you useless is often the very way in which God shows forth His glory.

People think it strange that old Christians, useless ones, etc., should be left, and young, active ones taken. Do not you be trying to settle God's house for Him: do not say, "What a pity for John to get to Patmos." The Lord wanted him there to communicate something that might serve His people to the end of time. A person may be in difficult circumstances, and you may have it in your power to get him out of them in the power of human nature. And you may do it and find out that God would have had him in them, because then he could have borne testimony; and you ought not to have measured things by your love for him and your comfort, but by the light of God. We often act on a set of thoughts of which the cord is bound to our own humanity instead of God's glory.

G. V. W.

MUSINGS.

THE feeblest of the feeble I,
The mightiest of the mighty Thou ;
Lord, at Thy feet I fain would lie,
Before Thy face my soul would bow.
Too full to speak, I would adore
Great God, true Man, for evermore.

The finite, and the infinite
Are both, O Lord, now found in Thee !
Creator and the Creature too,
Conjoined and will for ever be !
The Son of God and Son of Man,—
To understand it no one can.

The fulness of the Godhead found
Within the temple of Thy flesh,
And yet pervading everywhere
The universe. It tells afresh,
Immortal, everlasting God,
The power and virtue of Thy word.

Thou spakest, when at once from naught
Worlds into being quickly came ;
Each to its orbit is assigned,
Each, too, from Thee receives its name ;
Upheld in space, how vast the power,
Controlled and governed every hour.

The tiniest insects on the wing
Proclaim Thy wisdom and Thy skill ;
The song the feathered songsters sing
Of God, my God, most surely tell.
Nature, in all her varied dress,
Speaks loud of Thee Whose name we bless.

The Tabernacle.

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Thy body and Thy precious blood
 Were given up in death for us ;
 A sacrifice most sweet to God,
 Though He forsook Thee on the Cross.
 Oh mystery of love divine
 I know just this, Lord I am thine !

Thy human form I shall behold,
 God's glory shining in Thy face,
 My Saviour, all cannot be told,
 Divine and human, full of grace.
 As man Thou diedst on the tree ;
 As such upon God's throne to be.

E. R. W.

THE TABERNACLE.

IN its *structure* it foreshadowed the history, in connection with earth, of one Man, the Lord Jesus, the like of Whom had then not been seen by men, and whose history in connection with earth commenced nearly nineteen centuries ago, is not yet finished ; having this peculiarity, which can be read in the particoloured curtains, and in the veil, that the day of His triumph and power was only to come after that of His death.

It set forth in the *services* which went on at its altars, and in the holiest, various aspects of the death of Christ ; the ritual in connection with it portraying, in type, that the way of approach to God for any of Adam's race can only be by the death of the accepted sacrifice ; and that entrance into God's presence for such could only be by blood—the blood

of the sin offering. Yet, whilst the Tabernacle ritual was in force that way was not made manifest.

It represented in the *priesthood* connected with it the priestly service of the Lord Jesus in relation to His sacrifice, depicting in type, as Aaron moved through its chambers to the mercy seat, the entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holiest by His own blood.

It witnessed, too, of God's *delight* in the death of His Son, foreshadowed in the burnt offering, which typified it, burning on the altar all night till the morning.

It witnessed, too, of His *delight* in His redeemed people, in that He could dwell among them; yet its existence and continued use declared that the time for God to enter into rest, and for millennial blessing to be enjoyed upon earth was still to be desired. With Solomon, the Prince of Peace, on the throne, and the Temple's fixed structure in existence, the Tabernacle's use and service was ended. It was never again seen, or resorted to.

From *Remarks on the Tabernacle*. C. E. S.

EXTRACTS.

— says he reads that the soldier pierced the Lord's side *that the Scripture might be fulfilled*. He has not told us where he read that. He did not read it in John xix. Exodus xii. 46 was fulfilled. Zech. xii. 10 awaits its fulfilment. Nor is he more correct in supposing we hold that "It is finished" is confined to the acts of *man* toward the Lord before He died. It takes in *all* that He had to suffer before He died.

THE SABBATH REST.

WE purpose to trace out now a little the *Sabbath rest* spoken of in Gen. ii. 2, 3. and Heb. iv. 1—9; for we believe the scriptural thoughts are vague in the minds of many, but also that any light and help from the Scriptures will be welcomed by many lovers of the truth. "All Scripture is profitable,"—and we believe the lessons of Gen. ii. 2, 3, and what they foreshadow, are seasonable and wholesome for our study and meditation.

The lessons as applied in Heb. iv. open up the blessings God has in store for us, and these are worthy of our every thought, and the lessons when read aright and compared with other lines of truth are seen to *harmonize* and form a part of a complete, perfect whole.

The Word will bear searching: yea, we are blessed if we search it prayerfully and carefully with one thought before us—to acquire the knowledge of His will, to learn His truth. And as we open such a volume, we feel there is much of this good land not yet possessed, though the whole land flows with milk and honey, and drinketh in the rain from heaven. Let us who have been privileged with much light thus approach the Book before us, and great and fuller blessing will be ours. We will examine the subject before us under the following heads, which we believe give us the main lessons of the entire subject:—

First—The *historic* Sabbath.

Second—The *prophetic* Scriptures.

Third—The typical lessons of the *Sabbath*—the full answer to the Sabbath type.

Fourth—The *eighth day* and its place also.

First—As we open the book of Gen. chaps. i. ii. we get the account of the *six day's work*, and at the close of all that

vast work, a *seventh* day; and in that *God rested*. His work of creating and making was all finished, and He rested from all His work; then He *blessed* and *sanctified* that day.

This is the first *Sabbath rest*: but *sin* soon entered the world (Gen. iii.) and God's rest was disturbed, yea broken; and the testimony of our Lord is, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Jno. v. 17).

In Gen. ii. we get the first stage of the history—"God *rested*," but that is now a thing of the past; since sin entered God *does not*, and *cannot rest*. He worketh, and so does our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in Exod. xvi. we get another stage of the historic Sabbath. In that book God brought His people, Israel, out of Egypt, and in the wilderness He gave the Sabbath day to them for rest, and commanded them to observe and keep that day sacred. It was a sign between Jehovah and Israel, (Exod. xx. 8—10; xxxi. 12—17) and for them a day of rest; reminding them continually of God's rest (Gen. ii. 1—3).

But Israel failed, (as did Adam in Gen. iii.), in this respect as in all else: from Num. xv. 32—41 down through the prophecies we are reminded of this fact again and again.

This Sabbath day (the seventh) was never given to the *Gentiles*; and we never read in the pages of the New Testament that such was given to the Church or the Christian: they observe another day—"the *first day of the week*"—the "*Lord's day*." With these outlines of the historic seventh day, or Sabbath rest of the Old Testament, we may now further proceed.

Second.—Israel failed (as we have just said) to observe all that Jehovah had enjoined upon them, hence the blessings promised them under law they lost by their disobedience. The golden calf shows us how *soon* and how *far* they went astray, and other things follow.

But God abides faithful, notwithstanding all their failures and their sins. He sends His servants (the prophets), and they prophesy a *Deliverer*, a *Saviour*, to deliver them from their sins, and this places in their hands "the *prophetic Scriptures*." In them the dawn of a new day appears, and those who loved those sacred prophesies ever looked for this "day-dawn," when the shadows would pass away; yea, "the *bright morning* without clouds" (2 Saml. xxiii. 3, 4; Sol. Song ii. 17).

They are passing now through *the night* of their sorrow; but the prophetic Scriptures are as *a lamp* that shineth in a dark place until the *day-dawn*, when "the Sun of Righteousness will arise" (Mal. iv. 2). They look for this. The Church looks for "*the Morning Star*," and so heaven, *not Palestine*, is our hope (Rev. ii. 28; chap. xxii. 16).

This *new day* that prophesy opens up for *Israel*, and the earth is called "the day of *the Lord*." Their sorrows are now, and the siege of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) was the beginning of sorrows (Matt. xxiv. 8). The *tribulation* by-and-by will be for *the remnant*, their closing sorrows.

When "the Sun of Righteousness" ariseth, His feet will stand upon the *Mount of Olives* (as Zech. xiv. 4, predicts); the sorrows of the nation will pass away (Isa. xxxv. 10; lx. 18-22), and "the day of the Lord," the bright day of Millennial glory will begin. But here we need to pause and dwell a little, and examine those Holy Scriptures, lest we come to a *premature judgment* as to what that day shall be.

The Millennial age is the great period kept before Israel and the earth in the prophesies, *but* it is not the eternal state.

We get the Millennium in Rev. xx.; we further on get the eternal state in Rev. xxi. 1-5; and here there is a great difference. Israel and the Earth look for "the day of the *Lord*"—their prophesies open up this very fully for them;

but the New Testament carries us further on and tells of *another day*—"the *day of God*." They look for the first, we really look on to the latter (see 2 Peter iii. 10-12). To distinguish them in 2 Peter iii. is a great help.

The Millennium is "*the age to come*," but the eternal state will be the "*age of the ages*." Ephesians i. 21, and Hebrews ii. 5, refer to "*the age to come*;" Ephesians iii. 21, to the eternal state (see J.N.D.'s translation).

The Millennium will be the day when the Lord Jesus will rule and put down all His enemies, hence "*the day of the Lord*." The eternal state will be the age that will have no end, when "*God shall be all in all*," and God shall rest; hence "*the day of God*," "*the day of eternity*" (2 Peter iii. 18, J.N.D.'s translation).

The 1,000 years will begin by judgment and close with judgment; at the beginning the Lord will judge the quick, and at the close He will judge the dead. The nation of Israel will be delivered and blessed on the earth during the 1,000 years.

The *nations* converted at that time also will be blessed, and under Christ's rule and reign enjoy the days of heaven upon *the earth* (Deut. xi. 21).

Yet this *Millennial Age* will not give us the full sum of blessing; there will not be *perfection* then, and hence not *perfect rest*. This day, "*the day of the Lord*," will be rather a *preparatory age*, one that will precede the eternal state, or "*the age of the ages*."

The 1,000 years will begin by judgment and close with the same, and at intervals during the 1,000 years there will be judgment also whenever sin appears (see Psa. ci. 6-8; Isa. xxvi. 9; xxviii. 17-19; Zeph. iii. 5; Zech. xiv. 17-19). In view of this we could not rightly say God had His *rest*—the rest that Hebrews iv. speaks of, and the rest that Gen. ii. *foreshadows*.

In the Millennium righteousness will *reign*, and Christ will hold the *rod of iron*, and then some will give but "*feigned obedience*" (Psa. xviii. 44; lxvi. 3, marg.). But when we view the *eternal state*, "the day of God," "the day of eternity," the "age of the ages"—that is the very age that will eclipse every other that has gone before, even the 1,000 years; then we shall view a new heaven and a new earth, and in that righteousness will *dwell* (not reign as in the Millennium). And when we enter there we will be in a scene where sin shall never enter to *break or disturb* that rest of God that will abide for ever.

In the 1,000 years Satan will be bound in the *bottomless pit* (the abyss), but in the eternal state he shall be put in the *lake of fire*. In the 1,000 years sin will yet be in men's natures on earth. In the eternal state there will be *no sin* in either *new heavens* or *new earth*.

In that great and grand scene, when all will be peace, joy, rest, righteousness, holiness and perfection, we will know better the value of John i. 29, and Isaiah ix. 6,—"The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and "Father of Eternity."

As "*the Lamb of God*" He shall cleanse the sin of the world away on the basis of His work of atonement.

As "*the Father of Eternity*" He shall bring in the new scene, beautify it and fill it with those who shall be to His own praise and glory.

Here, and here only, could God rest; and rest for ever. A careful reading of the prophecies will be a great help here. Rev. xx. gives us the 1,000 years of *Christ's reign*.

Then "the little season" will follow when Satan will be loosed, and men will again rebel, and all will be closed up by judgment, and the last enemy will be destroyed,—death

itself. From this point we may pass on to the seventh day of Gen. ii.—the Sabbath rest.

Third.—The typical lessons of the *seventh day* we have now before us, and Hebrews iv. opens up this for us.

Whatever *rest* the people enjoyed in Canaan in the days of *Joshua*, yet that rest was not what the seventh day *foreshadows*: the Psalms are the proof as Heb. iv. shows us.

“There remaineth therefore a *rest* (Sabbath rest) for the people of God.”

This verse carries us on to the end of all labour, all work, in a world where sin is. Then God shall rest ; creation shall rest ; we shall rest : and for ever.

And it is clear that Heb. iv. does not point to the Millennium ; that was the theme of the prophecies for Israel : but now we have in this Epistle the *Christian's blessing*, and these are *eternal*. In Hebrews we read of *eternal salvation*, *eternal redemption*, *eternal inheritance*, *eternal covenant*, *eternal judgment*, etc., etc. And if Hebrews iv. is read aright, it is the unbroken, undisturbed rest of God for all eternity which we shall have without labour and toil such as now.

Now to get the proper lay of these lessons we will examine Gen. i. and ii. more carefully. If those days in Genesis are carefully noted we will see a contrast between the *sixth day* and the *seventh*. On the sixth day, the close of the previous five, and before the seventh ; and this we believe the first Millennium type of the Bible —the *sixth day*.

The sixth day Adam got *dominion* over the whole earth. Adam was a figure of Christ (Rom. v. 14). His dominion over the earth the sixth day as Psa. viii., was typical of the Millennium—*Adam, head*. His bride is with him the sixth day, and they receive dominion, and together are the persons of note that day. The seventh day, when all work is

finished, *God* rested. And here looms up before us the first type of *God's rest—eternity itself*. There is no need of pressing the seventh day in Gen. ii. as a Millennial type, it strains the lesson out of shape and will not fit.

But if the *sixth* day is taken as it is given, then we will see a beautiful type of Christ, the last *Adam*, in dominion and rule, and His companion bride with Him over the whole earth;—this is “the day of the *Lord*.”

Then the seventh day it is “*God*” who is foremost: He is the one who appears and He rests. It was *Adam* in dominion the sixth; but *God* resting the seventh.

The *sixth* day was the day of *Adam*.

The *seventh* day was “the day of *God*.”

One foreshadowed the Millennium; the other the “day of *God*,”—the eternal state. The Millennium will be partial blessing; the eternal state complete and perfect: and the seventh day points to *perfection* as well as *rest*, the sixth does not.

Then again it will be noted that the *sixth*, (as the other five), all have an *evening* and a *morning* (a beginning and an end), but when we read of the *seventh*, the typical day of eternity, there is no evening nor morning ever mentioned. And can we say this omission has no meaning when we see inspiration at every step and upon every line,—yea, with every jot and tittle? The omissions of the sacred Scriptures are as divinely inspired as what is given. As we approach the seventh day, and look at the lessons there given, we think of the vastness of eternity.

There never was a morning there,—never a beginning; and the sun will never set there,—never a night-fall, no night, a day perpetual, the day of eternity,—“*the perfect day*”—NO END.

When those days are arranged rightly, all drops into line

itself. From this point we may pass on to the seventh day of Gen. ii.—the Sabbath rest.

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When those days are arranged rightly, all drops into line

from Genesis to Revelation as the parts of a perfect whole, with no clash and no discord.

By a careful reference to 2 Peter iii. 7, 10, 12, 18, with the aid of the R.V. (or J.N.D. trans.), the two points are strikingly put before us.

First.—“*The day of the Lord*,” verse 10; this is “the day of judgment” of verse 8, and lasts for 1,000 years. It is “the day of judgment because it begins with the judgment of the *quick*, and closes with a judgment of the *dead*, and there will be cases of judgment or punishment, if evil rises; righteousness will *reign*.”

The last part of that day, “the day of the Lord”—at the nightfall—“the heavens shall pass away and the earth shall be burned up” (compare verse 10 and Rev. xx. 11). All will pass under the judgment and all evil cleansed away to give place to eternity—new heavens and a new earth. This shows us how that “the day of the Lord” will be one of preparation for a *grander* and more glorious one *beyond*.

And here the New Translation will help in verse 12, “Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,” *because*, or “by reason of which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements, burning with heat, shall melt.” This judgment itself will take place at the close of *the day of the Lord* for a special *reason*—to clear the way for *the day of God* now at hand. In this day of God—eternity itself—all shall be perfect and rest without alloy, and this is what the Christian looks for. And in the New Translation, verse 18, *the day of eternity* is the last word of the Epistle—eternity itself. To this glorious time the seventh day points in Genesis ii., and is the subject of Hebrews iv. 4-11.

Fourth.—Another point will bear examination now. It has been urged that the “*eighth day*” and not the *seventh*

gives us the thought of eternity. No part of Scripture need be kept in the background and hid, while giving another a place; as we have said, all forms part of a perfect whole, and all are but different touches on the same canvas and by the same hand—perfect the whole, and each part only brings out the whole more perfectly.

In examining the “eighth day” it will be well to observe at the outset that there is no eighth day in Genesis i. and ii. None is needed there to set before us *either* the *Millennial age*, much less the eternal state; the sixth and seventh are all that are required there. But the eighth day appears further on in the Scriptures, and we will examine each place and see to what they point.

Abraham circumcised Isaac on the eighth day, hence the eighth day became the day of *circumcision* (Genesis xxi. 4).

Here the lesson is *moral* rather than *dispensational*. Circumcision kept in view the work of the Cross (Col. ii. 11); and at the Cross of Christ circumcision has its fulfilment. But *seven whole days* passed over the history of every male child before *circumcision*, and we believe that *seven days* fairly set forth the whole period of man's history from the time sin entered *by Adam* until Christ came and was “*cut off* out of the land of the living”—circumcised.

The trial of man for 4,000 years is proof of his *depravity* and *corruption*; and so in the Cross of Christ the first man passes under the judgment of God and set aside; and for the real children of God Col. ii. 11 has its force,—“the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” Here we learn the lesson of the *seven days*. But that cross which was the end of the judgment of sinful man and his corrupt flesh, yet it lays the basis for a new creation, a new race, a new family; and Christ rises the *eighth day* the Head of the new creation, the beginning,

the firstborn from the dead. Here we get the lessons of Gen. xvii. and xxi.—the lessons of circumcision, the eighth day, and the seven days previous.

We will now pass on to Lev. viii. and ix. and we read of another “eighth day”; but the lessons are far different to Gen. xxi: a proof that the Scriptures are not a cold iron cast that will not move or bear a charge. Nay, Scripture is perfect, and is in the Master-hand to serve His perfect will at every step: yet never a clash, never a flaw.

Aaron and his sons were consecrated for the *priest's office*—a type of Christ and His church. Their consecration lasted *seven* whole days, and during this time they were shut inside the sacred *enclosure*—the fine *twined linen court*, and feasted all this period upon “the things wherewith the atonement was made” (see also Exodus xxix.). What a lovely sight as we view them in that sacred enclosure, and what a beautiful picture spread before us on the canvas for seven whole days! What a contrast to the previous seven days before circumcision! The lesson there was man's trial and what it brings out; here, in Aaron and his sons, we believe the seven whole days are this whole period while he is on the inside—“hidden.” And we belong to the same *sphere*—are shut in with Him, and our food, meat and drink, are the things wherewith the atonement was made. But this period ended, as our present period shall also. Aaron and Moses *reappeared* that eighth day, and “the glory of the Lord appeared also” (Lev. ix. 1, 22, 23). This *eighth* day points to the time when our Lord shall return as the *King-priest* with uplifted hands to bless. It will be the beginning of “the day of the Lord”—the Millennial glory. Here we are on dispensational lines; the seven days before answer more to our dispensation—the whole period and our happy occupation.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

ON THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST.

DEAR ———,

The questions you put make me feel deeply all that there is sorrowful in the walk of one whom, nevertheless, I love very sincerely, our friend M. G. To enter upon subtle questions as to the person of Jesus tends to wither and trouble the soul, to destroy the spirit of worship and affection, and to substitute thorny enquiries, as if the spirit of man could solve the manner in which the humanity and the divinity of Jesus were united to each other. In this sense it is said, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). It is needless to say that I have no such pretension. The humanity of Jesus cannot be compared. It was true and real humanity, body, soul, flesh, and blood, such as mine, as far as human nature is concerned. But Jesus appeared in circumstances quite different from those in which Adam was found. He came expressly to bear our griefs and infirmities. Adam had none of them to bear; not that his nature was incapable of them in itself, but he was not in the circumstances which brought them in. God had set him in a position inaccessible to physical evil, until he fell under moral evil.

On the other hand, God was not in Adam. God was in Christ in the midst of all sorts of miseries and afflictions, fatigues and sufferings, across which Christ passed according to the power of God, and with thoughts of which the Spirit of God was always the source, though they were really human in their sympathies. Adam before his fall had no

sorrows God was not in him, neither was the Holy Ghost the source of his thoughts; after his fall, sin was the source of his thoughts. It was never so in Jesus.

On the other side, Jesus is the Son of Man, Adam was not. But, at the same time, Jesus was born by divine power, so that that holy thing which was born of Mary was called the Son of God; which is not true of any other. He is Christ born of man, but as man even born of God; so that the state of humanity in Him is neither what Adam was before his fall, nor what he became after his fall.

But what was changed in Adam by the fall was not humanity, but the state of humanity. Adam was as much a man before as after, and after as before. Sin entered humanity, which became estranged from God; it is without God in the world. Now Christ is not that. He was always perfectly with God, save that He suffered on the cross the forsaking of God in His soul. Also the Word was made flesh. God was manifest in flesh. Thus acting in this true humanity, His presence was incompatible with sin in the unity of the same person.

It is a mistake to suppose that Adam had immortality in himself. No creature possesses it. They are all sustained of God, who "alone has immortality" essentially. When God was no longer pleased to sustain in this world, man becomes mortal and his strength is exhausted: in fact, according to the ways and will of God, he attains to the age of near one thousand years when God so wills, seventy when He finds it good. Only God would have this terminate, that one should die sooner or later when sin enters, save changing those who survive to the coming of Jesus, because He has overcome death.

Now, God was in Christ, which changed all in this respect (not as to the reality of His humanity, with all its affections,

its feelings, its natural wants of soul and body; all which were in Jesus, and were consequently affected by all that surrounded Him, only according to the Spirit and without sin). No one takes His life from Him; He gives it up, but at the moment willed of God. He is abandoned in fact to the effect of man's iniquity, because He came to accomplish the will of God; He suffers Himself to be crucified and slain. Only the moment in which He yields up, His spirit is in His hands. He works no miracle to hinder the effect of the cruel means of death which man employed, in order to guard His humanity from their effect; He leaves it to their effect. His divinity is not employed to secure Himself from it, to secure Himself from death; but it is employed to add to it all His moral value, all His perfection to His obedience. He works no miracle not to die, but He works a miracle in dying. He acts according to His divine rights in dying, but not in guarding Himself from death; for He surrenders His soul to His Father as soon as all is finished.

The difference then of His humanity is not in that it was not really and fully that of Mary, but in that it was so by an act of divine power, so as to be such without sin; and, moreover, that in place of being separated from God in His soul, like every sinful man, God was in Him who was of God. He could say, "I thirst," "My soul is troubled," "it is melted like wax in the midst of My bowels"; but He could also say, "the Son of Man who is in heaven," and "before Abraham was, I am." The innocence of Adam was not God manifest in flesh; it was not man subjected, as to the circumstances in which His humanity was found, to all the consequences of sin.

On the other hand, the humanity of man fallen was under the power of sin, of a will opposed to God, of lusts which

are at enmity with Him. Christ came to do God's will : in Him was no sin. It was humanity in Christ where God was, and not humanity separate from God in itself. It was not humanity in the *circumstances* where God had set man when he was created, but in the circumstances where sin had set him, and in these circumstances without sin ; not such as sin rendered man in their midst, but such as the divine power rendered Him in all His ways in the midst of those circumstances, such as the Holy Ghost translated Himself in humanity. It was not man where no evil was, like Adam, innocent, but man in the midst of evil ; it was not man bad in the midst of evil like Adam fallen, but man perfect, perfect according to God, in the midst of evil, God manifest in the flesh ; real, proper humanity, but His soul always having the thoughts that God produces in man, and in absolute communion with God, save when he suffered on the cross, where He must, as to the suffering of His soul, be forsaken of God ; more perfect then, as to the extent of the perfection and the degree of obedience, than anywhere else, because He accomplished the will of God in the face of His wrath, instead of doing it in the joy of His communion ; and therefore He asked that this cup should pass, which He never did elsewhere. He could not find His meat in the wrath of God.

Our precious Saviour was quite as really man as I, as regards the simple and abstract idea of humanity, but without sin, born miraculously by divine power ; and, moreover, He was God manifest in flesh.

Now, dear —, having said thus much, I recommend you with all my heart to avoid discussing and defining the person of our blessed Saviour. You will lose the savour of Christ in your thoughts, and you will only find in their room the barrenness of man's spirit in the things of God and in

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the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man, because he labours there at his own charge. It is as if one dissected the body of his friend, instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character. It is one of the worst signs of all those I have met with for the Church (as they call it) to which M. G. belongs, that he has entered thus, and that it presents itself after such a sort before the Church of God and before the world. I may add, that I am so profoundly convinced of man's incapacity in this respect, that it is outside the teaching of the Spirit to wish to define how the divinity and the humanity are united in Jesus, that I am quite ready to suppose that, with every desire to avoid, I may have fallen into it, and in falling into it, said something false in what I have written to you. That He is really man, Son of Man, dependent on God as such, and without sin in this state of dependence, really God, in His unspeakable perfection—to this I hold, I hope, more than to my life. To define is what I do not pretend. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." If I find something which enfeebles one or other of these truths, or which dishonours what they have for object, I should oppose it, God calling me to it, with all my might.

May God give you to believe all that the Word teaches with regard to Jesus! It is our peace and our nourishment to understand all that the Spirit gives us to understand, and not to seek to define what God does not call us to define; but to worship on the one hand, to feed on the other, and to live in every way, according to the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Yours affectionately,

J. N. D.

CHRIST AND THE CROSS.

WE are simply baffled by the inscrutability of that which the Lord assures us *is* inscrutable, the mystery of His divine-human Person, which for those who have not been content to accept the necessary limitations of creature-understanding, darkened now by sin, have constantly ended in the acceptance of some impairment either of humanity, or divinity in Him. But neither in this way have they escaped from perplexity, nor, had they done so could they have found the inscrutable Christ of Scripture. We can but accept Scripture, in its declarations and its silences; and in doing so, we shall find a Christ never impaired in His humanity by His divinity, capable as man of being understood by men, One capable of all that is proper to man; capable of *faith*, nay, the supreme example of it; capable of a *will* which, though holy, He gave up to the Father; capable of being "tempted in all things like as we are, sin apart" (Heb. iv. 15). Can we reconcile it all with that higher glory of deity in Him, which gives new glory to His humanity itself? We should gain nothing by the attempt, but lose wholly. We need a Christ whom we can know, and yet not wholly know; with whom there are inner recesses of light which no man may explore; and that is what we find in Him.

How the various classes of men are made to bear witness against themselves through all this scene: most freely acting out the very depths of their hearts, while overruled by the divine purpose to show out the glory of the Man so seemingly helpless in their hands. These are the men of blood and iron, the men with whom might is right—the men who delight to pull down others from their excellency; men with

no wrongs even imagined to repay, but simply at their business, which they enter into with the zest of the amphitheatre, the cruel Roman frenzy, which possessed all sections of the people. Now they have a king in their hands—a King!—and with an inscrutable dignity about Him which nothing that man has done can touch. Now it is their turn: what can they do that has not yet been done, and which shall accomplish what all else has failed in?

Herod had mocked Him with a royal robe; it should be theirs to *crown* Him; but with what? With bay, laurel, myrtle? He takes satire easily, as it were, unconsciously: can they not make Him feel it, this impenetrable Man? You see the brutal jest of the soldier: crown Him? yes, crown Him! make the satire pungent: crown Him with THORNS.

So they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet cloak, and having plaited a crown of thorns, put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they mocked Him, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!”

But they could not know how, ever after, we should be gazing with eager adoration at this wondrous Figure just as with cruel hands they had arrayed it; and how the centuries should see in all they had done, no more their malignant mockery, but indeed the divinely significant emblems of God's glorious King.

How plain that every detail here is under the government of divine wisdom, and proclaiming, in fact, His glory. They have failed, and cast aside their mockery, to turn it into mere brutality as useless. They have failed; every foe *must* fail. The King goes on to His throne.

—From *Numerical Bible*.

JOHN XIII. TO XVII.*(Continued from page 111.)***CHAP. XVII.**

NEW wonders meet the anointed eye as it passes along these pages. Chapter xvi. closed, as we observed, the teaching the Master began to give to His own in chap. xiii. He was then about to leave them and return to Him who sent Him (verse 5).

Now He lifts His eyes to heaven and addresses His Father. First it is with reference to Himself and the moment which had arrived in His course here below. "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (ver. 2). If the Father is to glorify the Son, it is in order that the Son may glorify the Father. He owns receiving from the Father power over all flesh, but it is that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him.

Here life, "eternal life," He gives in order that those to whom He gave it might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent (ver. 3). Eternal life in us is our capacity for knowing God and Christ, and living to God. No one could "know God," live to God, or "walk with God," without possessing that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested in this world (1 John i. 1, 2).

Saints of God long before the Son came into the world "walked" with God, and of one, Abraham (Isaiah xli. 8), God has said "My friend." We are correct, are we not, in saying that in and of the Adam life no one could walk with God, or be the friend of God. Man in all ages after the fall

lived in alienation from God. God could receive nothing from his hand (Gen. iv. 5).

In saying that saints before the death of Christ had life, we do not mean that they *knew* what they had. When the Holy Ghost would come the Lord told His disciples they would *know*—see chap. xiv. 20. “At that day ye shall *know* that I am in *My Father*, and ye in *Me*, and I in you.” Here He speaks of Himself as *the Son*, in whom was Life (John v. 26). It is not as the Christ, the anointed Man—though as the Firstborn, He was the Son and also the Christ (Heb i. 5; Matt. xvi. 16).

The first man (Adam) soon closed his condition of innocence. One solitary test discovers that the creature, man, cannot stand for a moment independent of God. Instead of keeping fast by what God had said to him he listened to the serpent, and sin came in, and death by sin. But (verse 4) now we listen, and wondrous words fall on our ears from the lips of the Second Man—“I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (vers. 4, 5).

How divinely perfect the sojourn of the Son here below! His *life work*, the work the Father had given Him to do, was finished, and He asks that He may re-enter the glory which He was in before the world was. The only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father (chap. i. 18) all the time of His journey here in the likeness of sinful flesh, and Who, though on earth, yet was ever the Son of Man in heaven (chap. iii. 13), is now about to return to where He came from, and to return as Man also. His entrance into that glory to which He was no stranger was that He might glorify the Father. This was always the prominent and

ever present object to the mind of the Son, and never did He deviate from it.

“Father, glorify Thy name” (xii. 28) was His utterance when “the hour” was closing in upon Him, when He knew He would be abandoned by God, His God, on account of sin (xii. 27, 28). In His perfection He says: “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.” Notice here that when he speaks to the Father about *Himself*, He says “Father”: when it is about His *people*, He says “Holy Father” (11); when it is regarding the *world*, it is “Righteous Father” (25). Perfect in His words and in His works we ever behold Him!

We do well to notice how the word “*give*” pervades this chapter, and, indeed, the Gospel. “Living water,” “living bread,” and “the Comforter,” are spoken of as gifts from Himself. See as to “give” in the chapter we are considering (vv. 2, 8, 14, 22), and the Father “gives” to Him (4, 6, 7). How blessed to walk on such a track!

As we have noticed, He is about to leave the world, but the darkness of the cross was yet to envelope Him. The Holy One is seen there bound on the altar (the cross) by the cords of Divine love, and dealt with by God as the sin-bearer. But the life-work was finished (4). No blemish—all went up as the perfect meat offering—the fine flour—no imperfection—nothing out of place in relation of one part to the other. In every one of Adam’s race imperfections abound—sins of thought—actions so unworthy. But He went straight on—never failed on any ground—never sought His own will. No one can think what it was to the Holy Son of God for sins to be laid upon Him, and to be made sin, and then, as the consequence of bowing Himself to such a burden, to be forsaken of God, His God.

Wonderful thing to have our eyes opened on Him in

prayer. In the synoptic Gospels the Lord is often to be seen praying, and at times He is before us in that act as our Example. But again He is seen praying when He is about to enter on that in which he could not be followed by anyone. Instances of prayer where He is our Example are not recorded in this Gospel.

The privilege afforded us in having a Divine record of His utterances to the Father about "His own" is great. He prays for those whom He had called to be with Him as He passed along unknown to anyone but those to whom it was given. Little understood by them, but loved by them all—save one. The shadow of Judas, "who betrayed Him," passes across His vision for a moment (12), to be noticed again in this Gospel, once more only, where it is recorded that he came to effect the awful deed he had agreed with the chief priests and Pharisees to accomplish (xviii. 3).

D. S.

MATTHEW IV. 1-11.

AND here now is His own Beloved, and there is no remnant of a hedge about the Person of the Christ of God; nor will He use the power that is in His hand against the adversary. In conflict between good and evil, power cannot decide; the goodness must manifest itself as that, and stand by its own virtue against all odds. The glorious Wrestler is stripped, therefore, for the wrestling. Son of God though He be, He comes into the poverty of the creature, the conditions of humanity, and these in their utmost straitness. Man in Adam in his original perfection had been tempted in a garden specially prepared and furnished for him. But

one thing was denied him, and in the denial was contained a blessing, among the chief of all the blessings there. Real want there was none, and need was in such sort ministered to as to be itself, in every way, the occasion of new delight. The weakness of the creature was owned, but tenderly provided for, so as to witness to the tender arms of love that were about him: he had but to shrink into them to be in perfect safety, beyond all possible reach of harm.

But not so sheltered, not so provided for, is the new Adam, the Son of man. The garden is gone; in its stead is the wilderness; nor is there nurture for Him now from Nature's barren breast. For forty days He fasts, and then, with the hunger of that forty days upon Him, the tempter comes. It marks the contrast between Him and other men that, whereas a Moses or Elias fasted to meet God, *He* fasts to meet the devil.

There are three forms of temptation; though, with the first broken, we see that victory is gained over them all. Yet for our instruction it is that we are permitted to have all before us, that we may realise the points in which the subtly perfected by ages of experience finds man to be above all accessible, and learn how Satan is to be resisted still. We shall do well to consider them closely, therefore, and with the closest application to ourselves. The battlefield here may seem to be a narrow one; the points of attack few; the weapons employed against the enemy a scanty armoury: but here lies one of the excellencies of Scripture, that its principles, while simple, have in them all the depths of divine wisdom and far-reaching application to the most diverse needs.

Notice, then, that it is as *man* He speaks: it is of man these things are written. Son of God He was—adoringly we own it; it is this that makes the path we are thinking of

so wonderful an one ; but it is not in the open glory of the Godhead that He is come to walk upon earth, but to learn obedience in humiliation—nay, by the things that He *suffers*. He is come as man to work out redemption for men ; and for this to learn all that is proper to man, apart from sin. Thus He cannot put forth divine power to save Himself out of this condition. What He can use freely for others, for Himself He cannot use. It is He of whom it is written in the volume of the book, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God I delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart.” Thus He is here simply subject, and subject in satisfaction and delight, to the will of Another. He has, for His whole course on earth, no other motive. Need may press, appetite may crave : He feels this as other men ; did He not feel it, the glory of His humiliation would be dimmed. But while he feels it, it is no *motive* to Him ; there is but one motive—the will of God. To make Himself a motive would destroy that perfection ; come to do that will and nothing else.

In the third temptation Satan shifts his ground completely. He is seeking the same thing of course ; and shows himself more completely than he has done before ; but he could not say, “If Thou be the Son of God, fall down and worship me !” He suddenly seems to realise so the truth of his humanity, that he will adventure fully upon it. If this be indeed One who is Son of man, shut off as it were from the claims and conditions of Deity ;—if He has come in, in the very weakness of manhood itself to work the work committed to Him, then he will boldly test Him as mere man. All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—can they have no attraction for this poor Nazarene ? It is a desperate game indeed, and to us cannot but seem like the mere

raving of insanity to propose to Christ to do homage to *him* for their possession! But, however, it may seem to be no longer temptation, but a mere awful insult to the divine glory veiled in humanity before him, it does not seem to be given us as this. . . . Satan has disclosed himself, and can be called by his name, and bidden to be off.

F. W. G.

THE SABBATH REST.

(Continued from page 180.)

THE eighth is the Millennium. Here the eighth does not apply to the eternal state, but rather the 1,000 years, if we allow it, as all Scripture, to fill its proper place. In Gen. xxi. the eighth day answered well in type to the beginning of the *new creation*; here, in Lev. ix. to the beginning of a new day for Israel and the earth—the “regeneration” of Matt. xix. 28. And another application of the *eighth* day is quite parallel in Mark ix. and Luke ix. 28—the transfiguration—“about an eight days,” and none can doubt this to be the Millennial picture—the transfiguration.

Seven days preceded this also, as in Gen. xxi. and Lev. ix. The Lord had announced to them His *sufferings*—the Cross; then seven days run their course, quietly passed over, and we see His Millennial glory upon an *eighth*. The seven days, this whole period of His rejection while He is on high, and the eighth, as Lev. ix., His return and Millennial glory.

In those last two cases the eighth is uniform, and fit well with the *subject*. Next, we will see another *eighth day*, and this appears in Lev. xxiii. 33-43, where we get the Jewish calendar for the whole year describing their set seasons for appointed feasts.

The *seventh* and last of all, in the Autumn, was the feast of *Tabernacles* : here they were to build booths (tents), and rejoice seven days before the Lord ; the season ends, and the harvest was past ; and they rejoice in God's goodness seven whole days. We believe this points to the *whole* period of the *Millennial joy*, the last of all the *dispensations* which will eclipse all the previous ones, and the *seven* days represent the whole period.

The *first seven* in Gen. before circumcision, represents the trial of man—the whole trial (past). The *next seven* in Lev. ix and Luke ix., foreshadow the *present* period of Christ on high, and our association with Him, etc. But in Lev. xxiii it is a future period that is before us,—a Millennial picture, and one for Israel full of joy. Here, they might think all was complete, but Jehovah adds another day to the list and says there was to be an *eighth*—a day after the *seven* ; and this eight was also to be a *Sabbath* (vv. 36, 39).

Now the question fairly rises :—to what can the *eighth* day here refer ? None could say that it was the same as Lev. ix. nor Luke ix. ; in those places it suited well the Millennium as a type. But here, in Lev. xxiii. the seven days is the beautiful clear Millennial type ; and the eighth is a day which points out for us the *new age* “The age of the ages,”—*eternity*. Here it suits *eternity well*, as a new scene—new heavens and a new earth. But it is a *Sabbath* also, and *foreshadows* the same period as the Sabbath itself in Gen. ii. Thus *instead of a clash*, it gives added *lustre* to the truth that it is meant to teach and illustrate. And by it we see the largeness and freeness of the ways of God in using days and types to serve His pleasure and purpose. And what a mine of wealth here lies open before us, and each added thought only *enhances* the *beauty* and *perfection* of the Word of our God from beginning to end !

Oh ! that critics would only open their eyes to see these perfections and beauties ! And also that Christians who believe it all would be free from that narrow prejudice that hinders the soul enjoying the whole scope of *Divine Truth* !

In Gen. i. and ii. we see that the sixth day is a grand Millennial picture. The Sabbath almost a perfect type of eternity. In Lev. ix. and Luke ix. the eighth is a passing picture of the Millennium. In Lev. xxiii. an *eighth day* also is a picture of *Eternity*, as well as the Seventh in Gen. ii. and the two are in Lev. joined together by the eighth itself being there a *special Sabbath*.

These beautiful lessons concerning the days of Scripture just touch a subject helpful and precious to every lover of the Word of truth : may each reader follow on further in this mine of wealth !

Lev. xxiii. begins with the *seventh day* as a theme, verse 3—the Sabbath ; and closes after the Feast of Tabernacles of seven days with an *eighth day*, and it *also a Sabbath*, verse 39. Hence the theme that employs the mind at the *beginning* of the year, and the *beginning* of their *set seasons* is the Sabbath. And the theme kept before them at *close* of the year—the close of the *last feast* or set season, the feast of Tabernacles—is the same—a Sabbath. *Rest—rest—rest*, is God's thought. The Israelite saw a little of those typical lessons ; perhaps scarce a ray of light beyond the yearly feasts. But for us the Spirit has added further light and truth, enabling us to see in those Scriptures, shadows of *good things to come*. Hence, Lev. xxiii. opening up with *rest* and *closing* with the same gives us the thought—this is God's thought—from *eternity* to *eternity*.

We append a few lines from two servants of Christ—one

of whom is "present with the Lord"—as a further testimony on these lines of study:—

"It is also clear that the teaching looks forward through the whole vista of time, even to the eternal future of bright glory, the never ending Sabbath of the blessed God."

"That glorious time is briefly spoken of in Rev. xxi. 1—8, where it is written, God will make all things new, and the tabernacle of God shall dwell with men ; death, pain, and sorrow shall be no more, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears. Then will He rest in His love, and His people share the rest of God through an unclouded eternity. Bright indeed the present prospect to energise the Christian's daily labour, and to calm amid the conflict, as the Holy Ghost leads into the realities of the rest secured by Jesus for the people of God."

(W.K., *Bible Treasury, New Series*, Vol. 5, No. 1.,
Notes on Sabbath, Lev. xxiii.)

(1). "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." (Heb. iv. 9).

"We are entering into rest, we who have believed; but we have not entered. From the nature of it, as described presently, no one could enter into it in this life. We are going on to it, and God has been always speaking of it, as in the Sabbath type keeping it before men from the beginning. God rested on the seventh day from all His works. That was at the beginning; but man violated that rest, and it remains for us only a shadow of what is yet to come. The Apostle quotes, also, David's words, long after Joshua's day, as showing that Israel's coming into the land was still not rest. After they had come in, it was still said: "To-day, if ye will hear His voice." The rest remains, then, a true "keeping the Sabbath" for the people of God—a rest which

will be God's rest also, or what good could be in it? A rest, too, in which he who rests ceases from all the labour which sin has imposed. Such a rest has not come for us. This carries us, in fact, on to eternity, the eternal rest, of which we have seen long since that the Sabbath is the type, and not of any Millennial anticipation of it. The thousand years are a time in which the earth has indeed come to its regeneration. Sin does not *reign* any more. Righteousness reigns, but still sin exists; and it is after the thousand years that death, "the last enemy," is put under Christ's feet, and the judgment of the dead comes with that. As a consequence, what we speak of sometimes as Millennial rest, is not strictly correct. God cannot rest except with the perfect accomplishment of perfect blessing. He cannot rest while there are enemies yet to be put under the feet—before sin and death are cast alike into the lake of fire."

(F.W.G., *Numerical Bible*. Notes on Heb. iv. 9).

EXTRACTS.

"Why art thou disquieted in me" (Ps. xlii. 5).

"DISQUIETED," a word used elsewhere of the raging and roaring of the sea (as xlii.): His soul is tossed and agitated like an angry sea.—"Hope thou in God" (Ps. xlii). "When we gaze on God, then first the chance of consolation comes. He is not affected by our mutability; our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless He remains serene and calm; when we are low He is still the unalterable *I am*—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—in Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What God is in

Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope. 'My soul hope thou in God.'"—*Dr. Perowne.*

"No mind can fully grasp Christ's glory; His beauty, His work, His importance no tongue can fully declare. He is the source of all good, the fountain of every excellency, the mirror of perfection, the light of heaven, the wonder of earth, time's masterpiece, and eternity's glory; the sun of bliss, the way of life, and life's fair way. He is altogether lovely, says the saint; a morning without clouds, a day without night, a rose without a thorn; His lips drop like the honeycomb, His eyes beam tenderness, His heart gushes love. The Christian is fed by His hands, carried in His heart, supported by His arm, nursed in His bosom, guided by His eye, instructed by His lips, warmed by His love."

"While there are some things in the life of our Saviour full of grandeur and importance, there are others which, though at first sight they may not so deeply impress the mind, are no less essential to the perfection of His character and work. They form, indeed, the unobtrusive *grace-notes* of His career, audible alone to the spiritually-educated ear which, in proportion as they are detected, impart an additional richness and charm to the sweet music of His life. Unlike the biographies of many of this world's great men, which, if too minute in detail, would rather lower than exalt them in the estimation of their admirers, the more closely the life of Christ is studied with *all* the circumstances of His public and private history, the higher He will rise in the estimation of His disciples, the more decided will be their testimony that He is 'the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.'"

“GOD MY EXCEEDING JOY.”

WHAT is it, child? What shall I do for thee?
 What is it draws thee to My presence now?
 Is there aught grieves thee? What hast thou to say?
 Thou knowest how I love to hear thy voice.
 Naught that can grieve My child is small to Me.
 Nothing that thou canst ask too hard for Him
 Who rules the universe, Who counts the stars,
 Who holds the waters in His hand, and yet
 Who knows if but one little sparrow falls!
 Then tell Me, child, what is thy heart's request?

Oh Father! I have no request to make
 Just now: I only want to be with Thee,
 To be alone with Thee, to come close to
 Thy side; I do not need to hear Thee speak,
 It is enough to know Thee near, 'tis joy
 Unspeakable, to rest me in Thy love.
 That wondrous love, that full provision made
 For my soul's deepest need, that brought me to
 Thyself, to find my joy in Thee! in God!
 “God my exceeding joy!” Then let me stay
 In silence before Thee, till Thou dost please
 To send me forth with messages for Thee
 To weary souls who know not yet Thy love.

S. B.

REVELATION II. AND III.

IN Rev. i. John saw in vision One like unto the Son of Man, arrayed in judicial attire and displaying those characteristics belonging to judicial glory. He saw, too, seven golden lamps, in the midst of which this glorious One was walking.

Chapters ii. and iii. give us the result of His examination of what He found in each lamp or assembly. "The seven lamps are the seven assemblies." The condition of things in each assembly is clearly stated, and no two are the same. Suited warnings and encouragements are addressed to each, and these also widely differ. Overcomers are called for in each one, thus showing that the corporate condition was unsatisfactory; even Philadelphia is no exception, although nothing is directly blamed.

"A little strength"—what does that indicate? Robust health? Not at all. It speaks of feebleness. The only power for producing health and vigour within, or for testimony without, is that of God the Holy Ghost, and no limit can be put to that. If there be then a feeble condition it results from something that ought not to have been. A child may inherit a feeble constitution, for which it cannot be held responsible, or a man may bring about a feeble condition by sinful indulgence, or by neglect of the laws of health; but whatever may have been the producing cause it indicates wrong somewhere. Now, taking the view, as we do, that these seven assemblies were intended to present a prophetic picture of the Church or Assembly of God in its

responsible character as a light bearer in the world, we can easily perceive that the loss of first love at Ephesus, if not regained by repentance and doing the first works, would entail results right down through the Church's history. That repentance was not forthcoming, and the first love was not regained.

In Smyrna we find a time of fearful persecution. Satan was active and God allowed it to force His saints into closer contact with Him. The fervent outgoing of heart to Christ seen at the first in Ephesus, the fire of love burning within having died down, the fire of persecution from without is designed to re-arouse and call back. But the next Assembly, Pergamos, shows a still further decline. The doctrine of Balaam was there, and that of the Nicolaitanes too. Then follows Thyatira, which is worse still. Now, for the first time, we read of the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and for the first time, too, we read of the Lord's Coming. From this we conclude that this Assembly reaches on to the end, and is, we believe, Romanism. But long before the end comes we have another state of things presented to us in Sardis, which also goes on to the end. This, we take it, finds its answer in Protestantism. It is of sufficient importance to be regarded as a Church condition, and evidently embraces at the start, and for some considerable time, not any single Protestant company, but the aggregate of those who are found in protest against the glaring evils of Romanism. Othodox in doctrine, a name to live, but in reality dead, it was more the world than the true Assembly of God. There were a few in this who were morally apart, who had not personally defiled their garments. Next follows Philadelphia, reaching also to the end, and lastly Laodicea to be spued out of Christ's mouth as nauseous to Him. There are then, towards the close, four distinct

Assembly conditions in existence, no one of which embraces all true believers. Even Thyatira had some and also Sardis, and we may likewise gather from the address to the overcome in Laodicea that some may be even in her.

Can we then regard all true Christians as Philadelphians? No doubt all such in some measure keep Christ's Word and do not deny His name, but we are not viewing believing ones in their individual character, but that of a Church condition. Philadelphia, as a whole, is addressed and commended as "keeping My Word, and not denying My name." "The Holy" and "the True" is how He is here spoken of, and shows a corresponding care for holiness and truth by this Assembly. Spite of little strength, faithfulness in general was found and much that the Lord could commend. The idea that Philadelphia embraces all true Christians can hardly be entertained we think; for a believer could not be a Thyatirian, a Sardisian, and a Philadelphian at the same time. All true believers are in some sense overcomers, no doubt, but the Lord does not regard them in these addresses. His object is to arouse, to stimulate, to produce soul exercise to lead to repentance; but the fact of speaking of overcomers shows plain enough that the corporate thing was wrong, and intimates pretty plainly it was not expected to improve. Intense individualism is looked for. Are we answering to His call is the question for each saint? Are we individually just where we find ourselves, bent, by the grace of God, upon overcoming? Depend upon it, if we do not overcome we shall be overcome. To tell us that we are all overcomers is to administer a soothing draught and help to put to sleep. The Lord in mercy help us to awake and fill us with energy and with true purpose of heart to answer to His mind.

Was it not wonderful grace on the Lord's part to tell His

disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me." Overcomers in this sense they were, but what did Peter, James, and John do when asked to "watch with Me" but go to sleep? In this they were not overcomers, but overcome. Again, "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Was that overcoming or being overcome? Peter, too, denied the Lord with oaths and curses. What was that but being overcome? And why was all this recorded? That we might surely admire the grace of the Lord Jesus to them; and not that only, but that we may avoid repeating such failures ourselves. The disciples had a precious opportunity, but failed, sadly failed to rise to the occasion. We each one have our opportunity. Shall we fail? Shall we take it easy? Shall we talk about difficulties and excuse our love of ease instead of seeking, as the beloved Apostle Paul did, "To know the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death"?

Where are we? and what marks do we bear? Is the stamp of Philadelphia upon us? We need not make boastful claims. It is unwise and unbecoming to do so, but seeing in Philadelphia a condition that comes nearer to the mind of the Lord than is found in any other Assembly, we may well covet that such shall be ours.

Sardis, we believe, embraces the various reformed Assemblies. *Protest against evil* gave rise to their existence, and that satisfied them. No doubt certain truths were recovered, and for this we can thank God, but the position taken was that of protest against evil in what claimed to be the Assembly of God on earth. It was, therefore, far more negative than positive. The truth, as revealed in the New Testament, as to the Assembly of God was not perceived.

With much zeal against evil there was but a name to live. The solemn verdict is, "and art dead."

Philadelphia, on the contrary, comes upon the scene, not to reform and purify the public professing body, or bodies, but by getting hold of positive truth, the prayerful study of the Word, the learning what it teaches, disowning what is not sanctioned by the Word, and the going in for what is found there. It was life and not death, although marked by feebleness. Christ presents Himself to her as The Holy and The True. It is not so much what He had, but what was personal; and as such He could and did approve, finding nothing, although The Holy and The True, to call for direct censure. Holiness and truth, we take it, marked Philadelphia; not the mere protest against evil, but positive proof of life, although but little strength.

We know of no movement subsequent to Protestantism that can in any way be regarded as Philadelphian in character, save what commenced some seventy years since. It was indeed a wonderful work of God's Spirit, and great was the light granted and rich the blessing enjoyed, individual and corporate. Never was the Gospel so clearly seen, and never was Church truth so fully unfolded since the days of the Apostles. The Lord's Coming, the distinctive hope of the Christian, was a striking part of the recovered truth, and is, we believe, embodied in the commendatory remark, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience I also will keep thee," etc.

Here, too, we first get "*Behold I come quickly.*" Never do we find this before in these addresses. To Sardis He would come as a thief, if they did not watch, that is, being like the world, *dead*, they would be treated as the world, but in Philadelphia, how different! What was imperative was to hold fast what they had. There would, then, be a

temptation to let go. It was not so much to gain more, but to hold fast what they already had, that no one take their crown.

We regard it as incontestable that Philadelphia goes on to the end, but what is not so sure is, Will those once marked by it continue in the grace of it? "That no one take thy crown" is a warning of danger. It is not the one who gets the truth that will obtain the crown, but it is the one who, having got it, keeps fast hold of it, when the tendency is to let it go. No true believer in Christ will be left behind at His Coming for His saints to pass through the great trial which shall come upon all the world to try them which dwell on the earth, but this of itself does not make every saint a Philadelphian. For the rest in Thyatira, and the few in Sardis, will undoubtedly be removed with all true saints who are alive and remain until Jesus comes.

What is it, then, to be an overcomer in Philadelphia but to hold fast what is known and possessed? and this of itself shows that the tendency is to let go. He who stands for truth here and refuses to give it up shall be a pillar in the temple of Christ's God. "My God," He says. Having been firm here, what an honour to be a pillar there! And there "he shall go no more out." What does this say to us? Going out from this and that, refusing to be associated with evil here, then and there he shall go out no more. What joy to have done with separation because surrounded with perfection.

There is exceeding preciousness in what follows: "And I will write upon him the name of *My God*, and the name of the city of My God, which cometh down out of heaven from *My God*, and I will write upon him *My new Name*." Christ will Himself write on the overcomer the Name of His God. Now, an inscription upon a pillar or upon a person is to be

read by onlookers, and these shall behold, not only by what they read, but by the fact that Christ Himself inscribed it, what He thinks of what they did here on the earth. They were for God here, and shall bear His Name there. They were true to the teaching of the Word about the church, and held it fast, and shall bear, then, and for ever, the name of the City of *My God*, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *My God* (what a display!) And I will write upon Him *My new Name*.

A name should indicate and express what is true of the person, and this must be so of Christ. His new Name will tell of what He will be in relation to the whole scope of blessing and glory in which the heavenly saints shall find their portion in association with Him. Never shall we forget what He has been in relation to sin and its judgment, to the earth and its sorrows; but it is requisite that He should be known by a name that expresses what He will be in relation to the future of perfection, when all evil shall be done away.

It may be well to add a few remarks presenting, perhaps, a somewhat different view, but further consideration seems to lead to it. Sardis embraces the various ecclesiastical bodies or Assemblies found in protest against Romanism, therefore it cannot be regarded as an Assembly from a mere ecclesiastical standpoint. Thyatira and Sardis exist, side by side, and present to us two totally different Assembly conditions, in both of which some true saints are found; and this will be so, without doubt, at the end.

Philadelphia, too, gives not any single ecclesiastical position, though, without doubt, there is but one that can be really right. Here we find a condition marked by little power, yet keeping Christ's Word and not denying His Name. Yet there is need of overcoming, and those who do

will obtain special rewards. All here in Philadelphia are assured of being kept from the hour of trial that shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. This will be true of all saints alive when Christ comes for His people, and, therefore, we conclude that at the close, in the mind of the Lord, every true believer will be regarded as a Philadelphian, or as having that character, whilst all beside will, to His mind, be included in Laodicea, and will be spued out of His mouth. Rejected, left behind when He comes for His own, and later on dealt with in judgment as Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, in Rev. xvii.

Thyatira and Sardis exist to the end, Philadelphia gives the true and Laodicea the false. In one sense the four are distinct, reaching to the end; in another the last two embrace the whole. The rest in Thyatira, and the few in Sardis, are not outwardly connected with what is characteristically Philadelphian; but we doubt not that at the close there will be a mighty action of the Holy Spirit, producing in each believer true bridal affection for Christ, and an earnest longing for His Coming, making good that precious word, "The Spirit and the Bride say come." And in this all partake of the Philadelphian character. Are we overcomers? is the question for us each one; not, Are we saved? not, Shall we be caught up when Christ comes? All having faith in Christ are saved and will be caught up. This is pure grace to us, and due to Christ's precious sacrifice—to His precious blood. The Lord, in mercy, grant us the energy to overcome; to hold fast what we have that no one take our crown.

Some have found a difficulty in accepting the plain Scriptural principle that association with evil defiles, on the ground that there were a few in Sardis who had not defiled *their garments*, and so these seem to think we may be in

fellowship with evil and be undefiled. This, we take it, is a grave mistake, for one Scripture will never contradict another. It is said that the whole Church of God is defiled. If that is so then each individually must share in it, but many, through grace, have, as far as their personal walk is concerned, not defiled themselves. It is no question how far the general condition affects each one, but the Lord's recognition of individual faithfulness and consistency of conduct. Another thing, no evil is stated to be in Sardis. It is death, not sin, that is in question. Separation is not commanded, neither is it in Thyatira, where the grossest evils abounded. The argument goes too far, and would make separation from evil a sin instead of obedience to a command of God. The truth is, instruction on such matters these addresses were not intended to teach; we have it elsewhere. Here it is the Lord's account of what He found in the various Assemblies addressed.

E. R. W.

HOLD FAST!

THERE is an inspiring tone as well as a warning note in the cry, *Hold Fast!* implying, as it does, that there is something possessed which is worth keeping. Two little words are these which by constant repetition wear their way to the heart. And we do well to mark, in these days when precious things are lightly renounced, what we are exhorted to hold fast.

For this purpose we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, that blessed ministry of Christ and His perfect work which introduces us to eternal instead of temporary blessing. *Needful it was in the Apostle's day to exhort the saints to*

hold, with a Spirit-given tenacity, the blessings conferred by Christianity. The exhortations have come down to us and with them the need which first gave occasion for them. We, too, can allow various things to come in and rob us of the present enjoyment of our privileges. Difficulties abound and we love ease—are inclined to try a by-path seemingly smoother, only to prove, however, that the blessings of truth are only enjoyed in the path of truth.

Turning to chap. iii. of our Epistle, we have the exhortation to consider “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus” (ver. 1), and a contrast is drawn between Him and Moses, the Apostle of the old dispensation, proving the superlative excellence of Christ, and hence necessarily, the greater blessing enjoyed by those ranging under Him. Moses was faithful in God’s house—the tabernacle in the wilderness—as a servant (verse 5). God dwelt, then, in the *midst* of His people. Of how much greater privilege does it speak that Christ, as Son, is now over God’s house, “whose house are we.” God now dwells *in* His redeemed ones, not simply *in* their midst.

“Whose house are we,” wrote the inspired penman, “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end” (verse 6). An immense privilege this, to form part of God’s house! But some might *profess* to belong to it who really did not. How shall that profession be tested? By holding fast firm unto the end what went with the *possession* of the blessing—the boldness and glorying of our hope. The renunciation of this would be the giving up of Christianity and the hope connected therewith, and then what would remain for them? Too confident about their privileges they could not be; and the confidence with which they started they were to retain, animated by faith and so increasing it as they journey on.

The "if" is not conditional save as it implies that profession has to be tested, and that the true enjoyment of privilege is linked with the fulfilment of responsibility. The former must not be divorced from the latter.

Then in verse 14 we further read, "for we are made partakers (or companions) with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." Another phase of blessing is in this presented, and far surpassing anything that Judaism had to bestow. The goal is only actually reached at the end, but faith grasps it long ere that. And to its eyes a vista of glory, wondrous and surprisingly grand is unrolled—"companions with Christ." Cast the plummet and strive to fathom the depths. Gaze up and try to measure its height. Impossible; to us it is unfathomable, immeasurable. What, by law, could never be obtained is by grace conferred.

Here, then, is a powerful incentive provided for us to continue, to hold fast. Of Christ it is written, "God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (chap. i. 9), and these, His fellows, are the partakers of verse 14. Association with Christ, glory with Christ—what will it be? No pen can adequately portray, nor can tongue fully describe, the immensity of blessing contained in such a portion. Were the greatest earthly monarch to take up the lowest and basest of his subjects and set them beside the heir to his throne, that would only in the faintest way illustrate the grace that is here set out. But such blessing must have its corresponding responsibility, and this without touching the question of the saints' security. So "the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end" has to be held. And what is this beginning of confidence? These Hebrew Christians had turned from type to antitype, from shadow to substance—the body which is of Christ, from law

to grace, from an earthly calling to a heavenly one, to Christ "the prize and mark of our calling on high," and would assuredly realize that blessing was secured for them by Him alone. Everything for them, thus centred round Christ, the once despised One. He was their all-in-all, and none could be found to compare with Him. How much depended upon their maintaining that right on to the close. The beginning of their confidence connected them with Christ and they were never to lose that. Their faith was to be fed by glorious anticipations of coming days—days in which they should share with Christ that inheritance to which they were heirs of God, but, as His fellows, His companions. To renounce Christ, in whom their confidence reposed, was to renounce everything; but to maintain the confidence they began with, would end in their proving the actuality of the privilege grasped and enjoyed by faith. They had a hope which pointed on, and in which they boasted. That they were to hold fast. They had expectations, and their confidence concerning these were wrapped up in a Person—the Apostle of their confession. That confidence they must not let slip.

And passing to chap. iv. we read once again of something that has to be held fast, namely, their confession—"Let us hold fast our confession" (ver. 14). The confession of the Israelite connected him with the land that lay on the other side of the wilderness, Canaan. The Christian's confession connects him with heaven and makes him a pilgrim here below. But it is the wilderness that makes manifest what we are, proving, indeed, the weakness that attaches to us; and this confession, in the maintaining it, would make a demand upon strength. Obstacles would have to be surmounted; difficulties overcome. But what can weakness do? Just owning itself to be what it is, it is our title to strength, and this is vouchsafed here.

So graciously along with the cry, "Hold fast," is the assurance given that there is One, our High Priest, truly called *great*, who has passed through the heavens up to the throne; yea, the fact that He is there, is the ground upon which the exhortation to hold fast is based. Are we weak? He knows what it is to be in the place of weakness; for truly His was a perfectly human heart, and entering into the circumstances of humanity, He was tempted in all points like as we, apart from sin. And now up there He lives to minister in the heavenly sanctuary for us, obtaining the grace and mercy by His intercession which we require to tread the wilderness way. Well, then, may we hold fast our confession and never let it go; but considering, as we onward march, "the High Priest of our confession—Jesus" (ch. iii. 1). The road He has trod before us, and so is acquainted with whatever characterises it. He passed through all in perfection, in communion with God; and now He brings all that perfectness to bear for us. He is faithful. May we *hold fast*.

Another point comes before us in ch. x. 23: "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering." A heavenly hope they had, and the confession of it told of their turning their backs on forms and ceremonies, and ordinances, and upon the world with its many alluring attractions. Sight gave way to faith with not less strong if less patent evidences. But as the fulfilment of the hope might seem delayed, there would be the danger of yielding to the natural inclination for things open and seen. But "without wavering" it must be held. And why? "For He is faithful that promised." Thus they are set upon what God is. Faithfulness has ever marked His dealings, and must do so; for He *is* faithful. His dealings with His people of old corroborate this truth,

and surely all our experiences but verify the blessed fact. He is faithful, so hold fast. On His word they had embraced this hope ; from that word He would not go. But they had need to remember, and so have we as the path seems very, very long, that there is "need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

In the spirit of this may we wend our way onwards. The "little while" spoken of shall soon have run its course : but, whether long or short, whatever of truth has been committed to us, let us hold fast. If we have infirmities, a heart full of sympathy beats on high, and God is faithful. Let us not be discouraged because men are faithless. That does not lessen the faithfulness of God. Do you distrust Him? Ah no! Then there can be no good, valid reason given for turning aside. Privilege is enjoyed by holding fast what faith embraces. So encompassed with infirmity, and pressed by various trials, let us hold fast that no one take our crown, assured, indeed, that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry," and encouraged by the knowledge that God has pleasure in the patient, waiting soul, living day by day on the principle of faith.

H. F.

MASTER AND SERVANT.

EACH believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a servant of Christ. It is the Master's prerogative to give to each one his work. It is the servant's duty to perform it. These are words that are easily written, but not so easily put into practice. Christ is our Master and He has rights which we cannot, dare not question. We are His. We owe everything to Him. But

for Him where should we be? He died to save us. Our true interest He has studied, and never for one moment ceases to keep it before Him. Our present and eternal welfare is perfectly safe in His keeping; and by and by the servant shall be with his Master, not in the yard or the kitchen, but in the drawing room as one of the family, as a valued friend, and an honoured guest, and this for ever. We are not allowed to choose either our work or our sphere of labour. These are matters for the Master to decide. The good servant awaits his Master's orders, and then works with heart and good will. A novice may sincerely desire to serve, but until he knows his trade he cannot be intrusted with particular work. Put a blacksmith into a watchmaker's shop, and little enough could he do but spoil other people's work. Let him keep to his hammer and anvil and then he may do what is good and useful.

The Master knows perfectly the capacity of each servant, and hence never calls upon any for work that he is not capable of doing, with this borne in mind, "without Me ye can do nothing." Some that are intended for high-class work have a long apprenticeship such as Moses had, who for forty years was separated from his people in a strange land; others are passed through seasons of deepest trial, as David was, when hunted by Saul; but each and all are distinctly cared for, and get the needed discipline, instruction, and comfort that will best conduce to fitness for the work which the Master wants His servant to do.

All are not called to preach or to teach. These are services which can only be performed by those specially endowed for it. It is most distressing to witness the attempts sometimes made by one or another, who evidently want to be somebodies of importance, to do

what they are not called to do, and leaving undone what they ought to do. Let us all learn that we are nothing and can well be done without; and if the Master is pleased to use us in any measure in His work it is great grace on His part to do it, and should humble us in the dust before Him.

We have said that all are not fitted for preaching and teaching, yet to each one it is given to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. A slave need not distress himself. In serving his earthly master faithfully he was also serving Christ. His master may be harsh, unjust, perhaps cruel, but it was the servant's business to look over the head of his tyrannical earthly master and to see behind him the face of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. "I'll do it for the Lord," he says; and the smile of approbation is his immediate reward. The Master has defined the relative duties of husband and wife, of father and children, of master and servant, and every right position in which men and women can be found.

Guidance as to what should be done, and how to do it, can be found in the Scriptures of truth. There are social and domestic duties; there are ecclesiastical and evangelic duties; and it is no business of ours to assign to one class great importance, and to another minor or small importance. Duty is duty. Jesus was one day asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Were all the others then small and unimportant? Let us hear the Master finish: "And the *second is like unto it*, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Whether the duty be to God or man, all is great and important. Each one has the personal duty of making

a complete surrender of himself or herself to God. Until this is done whatever else there may be in the way of service all will be more or less spoiled by some selfish aim or object, and this it is that lies at the root of so much of the failure all around us.

We read of the saints in Macedonia, "And this they did, not as we hoped, but *first gave their own selves to the Lord*, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Cor. viii. 5). All our faculties are the Lord's. Our bodies are to be presented a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable or intelligent service (Rom. xii. 1). The outward adornment of the person with the ever-changing fashions of this world must be eschewed; and instead thereof that which is moral and relates to the spirit, a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. Let us then face our personal duty, and earnestly seek the needed grace and help to meet it. How this will help in the discharge of the other duties that devolve upon us.

Depend upon it, unless God has His own proper place in our souls failure will mark us everywhere. Take a husband. What thoughtful love! What tender regard! What constant consideration! He is to love his wife even as himself, giving honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel. Christ's love to the Church is the model—*He gave Himself*. The wife is of course to obey and to reverence, and this is not so very difficult to any right-minded woman who meets with the treatment we have been describing. Then the children are to be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Can we count on God's converting grace if we shirk our plain and solemn duty? He has told us what to do, and we must do it.

We knew a very learned man, quiet and retiring, whose voice was never heard in our meetings, who had a family

of ten sons and daughters, quite grown up, all manifestly the Lord's, and walking well. What a testimony to piety at home! Yet another case. A working-man of feeble mind, with four sons growing up, leaving home for work at six o'clock in the morning. The father was up at five o'clock and would not let them leave until he had read and prayed with them, and all of them are, I believe, manifestly the Lord's.

Home is the first circle, and there we must begin. There must be piety at home. No one is fitted to take care of the saints of God who lacks what the Apostle lays down in his instructions to Titus and Timothy. Paul could appoint to office, but he dared not put in anyone who was minus the qualifications he had described. We cannot appoint to-day, but we can refuse to recognise anyone who claims to do the work of oversight if his home is quite contrary to the Word. Each believer is a member of the body of Christ, and consequently cannot rightly be a member of any other body. Ministry in the Church can only be to profit when emanating from the Spirit of God. Spiritual gifts are furnished by the Spirit, and all are subject to Christ, whose guidance must be sought.

We cannot recognise human systems, nor acquiesce in human ordination. Many earnest servants of Christ are there, doing much that is good and commendable, but in so far as they support what is contrary to the Word and a dishonour to the Holy Spirit, just so far are they serving not Christ but His enemy and ours. This a very solemn consideration. It is true that in modern times there is less of outward antagonism among the various denominations, ministers frequently exchanging pulpits, a sort of mutual recognition and toleration, and this looks well. But if all these systems are wrong no liberality of spirit can make

them right. What, then, is our plain duty? To hold by the Word. We cannot tolerate; we cannot recognise; we must be separate.

Are truths connected with the Church of comparatively small importance as placed side by side with the Gospel. We dare not think so. The Church is the Church of God; the Gospel is the Gospel of God. If we take for our stand the need of sinners, it is easy and natural to be carried away with the immense importance of missionary enterprise, preaching, etc., and ways and means will seem paltry to us as compared with the glorious object aimed at. Modern ways and means disgrace the Gospel. Any sort of thing can be tolerated to draw people together; even amusement or entertainment must not be ignored altogether. We must not be squeamish. But where is God in all this? Is it not best to have Him and His glory for our stand-point. God's Gospel contributes to His glory, and those who proclaim it must exhibit it. By the Gospel souls are saved and brought to God. Let us think of what this means, deeply blessed, but awfully solemn work too; and who is sufficient for these things? No one, but God by His Spirit can make a true evangelist, and the same must be said of a teacher or a pastor, and there is no antagonism in these things. The lines of service are distinct, but both are sometimes ably performed by the same person. Paul was a minister of the Gospel and of the Church.

Before a man preaches the Gospel he should have believed it and been saved by it. Wicked men have preached Christ out of envy and strife, and Paul rejoiced, not at their envy and strife, but that Christ was preached. That was great largeness of heart! Would Paul have any fellowship with them in their work or exhort any to help them? Certainly not. A true man, saved by the Gospel, is, ere he

preaches it, a member of the Church of God, of the body of Christ. He should know it and remember it, for it will help him much to do so. All the world is his parish and every creature his congregation, provided he is a called Gospel preacher or evangelist.

He is Christ's servant, and directly responsible to Him; but being a member of Christ's body he has privileges and duties connected therewith which must not be overlooked. If called into an outside path in loyalty to Christ on the lines of Church truth, Gospel work will not call upon him to go back again. We do not traverse one set of principles in order to maintain others, nor should we mar others' work by the way we do our own. Intensely individual in service, yet we have no private instructions; all are found in the Word, and all are open to each one to read. God-given opportunities for service it is well to embrace, only let us be sure that they are God-given. He will not call us into paths or places where we are weakening a part of His present testimony on the earth. We are beholding to no one, we are dependent on no one. Sinners abound and are to be met with everywhere. In the work of helping the saints we must be near the Lord ourselves: know what is right and keep to it. He who is uncertain will never lead to certainty. Patience is always needed, for this is an uphill work. Conflict there will be in which carnal weapons will not avail us. Nearness to Christ, knowing His mind, enjoying His love, souls will get help, one here and another there. Oh, what a Master have we all! Would that He had all true and faithful servants!

E. R. W.

JEHOVAH-NISSI.

(Ex. xvii. 8-16.)

THE people of Israel were journeying from Egypt to Canaan. Brought out of the "house of bondage" by the strong arm of the Lord, they soon had manifest evidences of His graciousness and kindness towards them. The barrenness of the wilderness through which they were passing they must necessarily prove; but prove to acquaint them with the truth that He who had preserved them in Egypt could provide for them where nature's resources failed. Marah's bitter waters He would sweeten—was He not "the Lord that healeth thee"? (ch. xv. 27)—and could bring them to His Elim where rest and refreshment could be enjoyed by the way. Were they hungry? Then "angel's food" He bestows to meet that need. Did they thirst? The flinty rock shall be made to yield "water that they may drink."

The Lord had brought them out unto Himself, and blessed it is to trace His superiority to the evil that was constantly showing itself in them. His provisions for them tell us this. They murmured and provoke Him, but show Himself He must; deny Himself He could not. How precious this faithfulness of their God shines out, brought into relief indeed by the distrust which could not rely upon the arm of the One who had saved them.

And strange was the question which had been asked. "Is the Lord among us or not?" was the query passed amongst themselves, and this because they had a need, and any apparent way of supplying it seemed lacking. Under such circumstances they murmured; with every need supplied

they forgot God, waxing fat and departing from Him. Alas! such is the way of all flesh; on the one hand grossest distrust, on the other an easy sliding into independency. How easy to see, then, the strong necessity that we should learn *all* that is implied in what our Lord taught His disciples to utter—"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. vi. 11), as containing the proper corrective for both evils. Did they but know it, their needs were their blessings, and so ours also; for, as it has been beautifully put, "there is no release from a dependence which makes us sensible only of the love which constantly ministers and keeps us near to the gracious hand of Omnipotence."

The people put the question; the Lord answered it; and Meribah and Massah from thenceforth became the abiding witnesses to His grace and faithfulness, and their unbelief and strivings. He was among them, and would now again, though in another way, manifest it, revealing that in conflict, as in all else, dependence upon Him would ensure victory and blessing.

For the giving of the manna and the out-flowing of the water—types of Christ and the Spirit—were succeeded by conflict. Unprovoked, Amalek comes forth aggressively against Israel, and compels them to fight. And "fearing not God" (Deut. xxv. 18) he increases his folly by basely attacking the feeble, the faint and the weary. But the God whom he feared not was looking on, and whilst His people must first learn how their conflicts are to be conducted and victory gained, yet presently His abhorrence of Amalek's act is stated, and the sentence comes from His presence—"I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

But Joshua is the chosen leader to go out on the morrow and fight, whilst Moses with the rod of God in his hand

would go up on the hill. And it seemed strange fighting, for victory alternately rested with Israel and Amalek. Not upon the skill or upon the courage of the combatants, then, did the issue rest, but upon the upheld hand of Moses. That let down and then the enemy prevailed. In that hand was the rod of God, symbol of His authority.

So it surely becomes easy for us to read the lesson embodied here. Success in spiritual conflict does depend upon the upholding of the authority of God in the soul. If that is not maintained, then the enemy finds us the weakest of opponents, and accessible at all points to his attacks; renounce the authority of God, and we are powerless before the activities of the flesh of which Amalek might well stand as a type—a picture indeed of the natural man ever insubject to God (1 Cor. ii. 14).

But the fight is fought and victory gained—Amalek and his people are discomfited “with the edge of the sword.” And here, again, the spiritual interpretation is plain. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” has to be wielded in subjection to God; or, as the Scriptures put it, the saint must be walking in the Spirit” (Gal. v. 16, 25). So the upheld hand and the use of the sword go together; for the Word received in the soul as God’s Word, and its voice listened to, it can then be successfully used in spiritual warfare, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Cor. x. 4). If we first give God His place, our preservation is secured, for He it is that works in us and through us.

But to return to our chapter. The Lord speaks to Moses telling him to write an account of the conflict in a book and to rehearse it in Joshua’s ears. The appointed leader must know the sentence pronounced by Jehovah, that under no pretext might he make terms with such an enemy. But not

only so, for what encouragement to remember the way the victory had been won.

And this Moses celebrates, as building an altar he called it Jehovah-nissi—the Lord our banner. Not to his efforts, nor to the help of Aaron and Hur, nor to the skilful conduct of the leader does he ascribe the victory. The name of his altar testifies his appreciation of the patent fact that the victory was the Lord's. And ever would be, too; for Jehovah made the warfare His—"the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

And so Moses saw, as it were, a banner floating triumphantly over His people inscribed with the precious name of Jehovah-nissi. He was truly their Protector, and that name was the blessed, abiding assurance of complete victory. If the warfare was to be continuous, yet that banner waving over the people of God would tell the glad story of continuous victory also.

"The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" was the judicial sentence pronounced. So we can understand the first king's responsibility to put it into execution. It is the Lord's test for Saul, and consequent on his failure to carry it out, he is rejected. The prophet, speaking for Jehovah, rehearses the dire doings of Amalek and then commands, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not" (1 Sam. xv. 2, 3). With the result we are all familiar. The *best* were spared on the pretext of offering in sacrifice to the One whose king he was. He should have known that a needless command was never given by Jehovah, and should surely have appreciated, as the one anointed to shepherd His people, the abhorrence of the aggressor's act. To rule in righteousness was his work. The bestowal of mercy rested with the Lord "whose mercy endureth for ever"—mercy

shown indeed in the slaying of great kings (Ps. cxxxvi. 17). Plainly Saul was unfit to be king over Jehovah's people, and certainly knew not the joy of erecting an altar and naming it Jehovah-nissi.

But let us turn this to account for ourselves. How often do we, spite of the fact that we know that God has expressed in the most emphatic way, His disapproval of the flesh and all its works, spare the best, the things that are exalted in men's eyes, as though they could be sanctified to His service. We mark our disapproval of the bad and grosser things, but quite forget that in many other ways can the flesh be pandered to. The active principle, sin within us, has been condemned, and therefore is to find no allowance in any way, or on any ground, from us. We are "not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh," and as there was no quarter for Amalek neither must there be any for the flesh. "Self is the principle, motive or end of every action done by a natural man," and consequently is not from God nor for God, and His sentence upon it must be continually before us. This is warfare from generation to generation, and walking in the Spirit the lusts of the flesh are not fulfilled by us.

For Jehovah-nissi tells that we go not to conflict at our own charges, but in dependence upon Him. Dependence leans and obeys; and what is independence but rank disobedience? In what we have been looking at both in the picture and what it illustrates, the warfare is the Lord's, and we are but those who are soldiers in the conflict. May we learn what is the true meaning of "to obey is better than sacrifice," and have given to us the blessed consolation contained in the name Jehovah-nissi—the Lord our banner.

H. F.

PSALM XVI.

THIS Psalm is essentially Christ taking the place of a man, and pointing out the path of life before Him through death, since He came for us, but trusting in Jehovah, into His presence, where is fulness of joy. We must not lose sight of the direct prophetic character; still this path is an example for us. The Good Shepherd has gone before the sheep. The great principle proposed in the psalm is trust in the Lord, even in death—the place of dependent obedience, and the Lord Himself being the whole portion of man excluded all inconsistent with this. We may add, having Him always in view. These are the great principles of divine life, and of divine life come into the scene of sin and death. No doubt we should speak of communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ in this path of life; but the great moral principles, the subjective state of soul, is brought out before us here, and that in Christ Himself. And note here, it is His perfection as man, and before God and towards God. It is not divine perfection—God manifested to man; but what He was as man dependent on God. We have not even His offering Himself, in which we have also to follow Him (1 John iii. 16), but His place as man in perfection. It is perfectness before God—the principle that governed Him. Hence, even the word, “My goodness extendeth not to thee,” has its application also to us. That our goodness does not actually reach God it might seem almost absurd to affirm; but when it is applied to Christ as man, who was absolutely perfect, it affords us an apprehension of the nature of this goodness, a principle which we can apply to ourselves, and which puts us in our place. It is man’s perfection towards God, the new path of which

Christ is the perfection and example in the earth. But this thought shows the unspeakably blessed place which we have as Christians, though in our own case in the midst not only of weakness, but of internal conflicts which were not in Christ, in whom was no sin. But Christ's place is the perfect expression of our place before God. This is fully unfolded at the close of the Gospel of John, and particularly in chap. xvii.

The Epistle of John, too, which first presents Christ as the manifestation on earth of that eternal life which was with the Father (its manifestation in a man whom their hands had touched), teaches that this was true in Christians as in Him (1 John ii. 8), and unfolds the character of this life in righteousness and in love, adding the presence of the Holy Ghost, through whom we can dwell in God and God in us. We have this eternal life, which is come down from heaven, but is only said to be in the Son; yet he who has the Son has it; indeed, this gives it all its value. No doubt the Epistle of John unfolds it in all its extent and value, as it cannot be unfolded in the psalms; still in this psalm we have Christ taking the place itself as amongst the excellent of the earth. I may remark here that the writings of John, though intimating at and just showing that we shall be with Christ above, do not pursue this life to its presentation in glory before God. This is Paul's office; indeed, he had only so seen Christ. John presents the life in itself and manifested on earth. This life is the light of men.

I have already made some allusion to a restriction which we must put, in speaking of this psalm, to the development of the life of Christ on earth. But this restriction only brings out more directly and blessedly in its place that part of Christ's life which is the subject of the psalm itself. Christ was the manifestation of God Himself (I speak of the

divine traits of His character, not of His divine nature and title) in His path in this world. Perfect love was seen there, perfect holiness and righteousness. He was the truth in the revelation of all that God is. And this is most blessed ; and in this we have to imitate Him (see Eph. iv. 32 ; v. 1, 2 ; Col. iii. 10). But this is not the aspect in which the psalm views Him. It depicts His place as the dependent devoted man. It depicts Him as taking His place among the remnant of Israel, in contrast with the idolatry of that people. But on that I do not dwell now. The character of the blessed Lord's life will alone occupy our thoughts. The expression, " My goodness extendeth not to thee," would not suit the divine manifestation of goodness on the earth. But, taking His place entirely as a man here, the Lord shows us the true place of man living to God, not in his innocence, not surely in sin, but the very opposite ; but perfect, in a world of sin, in righteousness and true holiness, having the knowledge of good and evil, tempted but separate from sin and sinners, not made higher than the heavens, but fit for it in the desires of His nature, and in the path towards it ; dependent, obedient, taking no place with God, but before Him as responsible as man upon earth, and looking towards the place of perfect blessedness as man with God by being in His presence, which would be fulness of joy for Him ; a place which, when having His nature, we can have with Christ. It is man trusting God, deriving His pleasure and joy from God, living by faith, and in that sense apart from Him—not God manifested in the flesh, which we know was also true of the blessed Lord. This, while it is our place on earth as sanctified through the truth, is above the place of the Jewish remnant. We have another in the consciousness of union with Christ through the Holy Ghost.

The Lord takes the place we are considering. When He

says to the young man, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is God." Thus far it went outwardly well with the young ruler; but there was more than this to characterise the life where divine life was, in a world of sin and sinners, in its path towards the place of the fulness of joy—what had been shown in Abraham, and in the saints of God, in the Davids and the prophets. "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance." Having the Lord Himself as that which governed and led the heart, "Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me." But the Lord was not, at any rate then, the portion of his inheritance; only one knows not what may have become afterwards his state through grace.

The state described in this psalm is that of man considered apart from God (I do not mean, of course, morally separated, nor touch upon the union of the divine and human natures in Christ); but it is man partaker of the divine nature, for so only it could be, but having God for his object, his confidence, as alone having authority over him, entirely dependent on God, and perfect in faith in Him. This could only be in one personally partaker of the divine nature, God Himself in man, as Christ was, or derivatively as in one born of God; but as we have seen Christ is not here viewed in this aspect nor the believer as united to Him. The divine presence in Him is viewed, not in the manifestation of God in Him, but in its effect in His absolute perfection as man. He is walking as man morally in view of God. Christ here depends on Jehovah for His resurrection. He says, "*Thou wilt not leave,*" though He could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Yet He could say, as perfect man, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." As Peter among the Jews could say, "He hath made Him, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ;" while

Thomas could say, "My Lord and my God." Indeed Peter never leaves this ground—the rejected man, the Messiah exalted by God, nor preaches the Son of God (as Paul did at once in the synagogues), though the first, by divine revelation, to confess Him such.

J. N. D.

(To be continued D.V.)

A WORD FOR TO-DAY.

Luke iv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 16, and ii. 15.

IN the first passage mentioned above we have the testimony of God, by His servant Moses, quoted and acted upon by the Son of God, then a man upon this earth. Satan assails that blessed One, whose meat, we find Him saying, was to do the will of Him that sent Him (Jno. iv. 34), and is met by the sword of the Spirit, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God."

No attempt to foil the adversary by showing His greatness or power is made. No. He was a man, and as man He takes His stand upon the only stable ground, the ever-abiding Word of God.

What an example for us. How often have we suffered defeat through ignorance of the Word, consequently unprepared for an attack on either, or all sides. Ah, we want to be better acquainted with our Bibles, in these days of assault and difficulty. What proves the Word to be of God? Its power over my heart and ways, through acquaintance with it; not the discoveries of modern explorers, helpful as these may prove to be. "God is His own interpreter," and we have not to go outside the Book. But we come now to the

next Scripture. There we find the inspired apostle telling, primarily "his son Timothy," but us also, that "all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable." To what end? "That the man of God may be perfect" (or complete). "All Scripture;" not the parts we think we understand and enjoy merely; not the glories to which the Church is called, simply; not merely the blessed truth of the Lord's return for His blood-bought ones. No. "*All Scripture.*"

"That the *man of God* may be perfect."

Not the smatterer in divine things, but he who, like the One before mentioned, makes it his meat to do the will of his Heavenly Father. And how is that will to be known? Only as revealed in the Word.

It will not do to read the written ministry of the different "gifts" merely. All very good in its place, but it is second-hand, so to speak, unless we make it personally our own by getting the substance of the ministry from the fountain-head.

How is it we hear on all sides the remark "There is not the power there used to be; not the freshness, not the enthusiasm, not the blessed results?" We have entered into other men's labours, have we not? without the strength acquired from the exercise they had to undergo before the fruit was theirs. But that is, perhaps, not the worst feature. We hear such remarks as these, "Oh, I do like to hear so-and-so, he puts us in such close relation to Christ." While another of the "gifts" is spoken of as putting truth before us, as not just exactly bearing upon us. "More for the Jews, you know," they will say, as if there could be any superfluity with God. And is it Scripture? Yes. All inspired? Yes. Then we are told, "*All Scripture is profitable.*"

But does not the opening clause of the 17th verse define for whom it bears that aspect? "The man of God." And

now what does our last passage say? "Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the Word of Truth." (New Trans.)

Here is the man of God, shall we say, acting as under His eye, seeking His approval. That does not mean that his brethren will always approve him, although we ought to show great deference to the counsel of spiritually-minded men (Heb. xiii. 7); but the point here is, everything for the eye of God. "Approved to God." Then how about His Word? "Cutting in a straight line," or "rightly dividing," as the usual version has it. Not selecting portions here and there and specialising them. Not reading to the end of Eph. iii. and stopping there. No. The last three chapters are just as important, although they may sound a little more common-place. You see the "straight line" goes right on, the "therefore" of chap. iv. 1, proving this. Let us arouse ourselves then, we who have named the name of the Lord, and see to it that we *live* by the Word of God, and that it is *every* word; and that we do not chop out pieces to suit our own tastes and favourite views. Thus, and thus alone can we be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

H. C.

Light and peace come to us not by thinking, but by faith.

"When I pondered it, that I might know this, it was a trouble in mine eyes" (Ps. lxxiii. 16). "Thought could not solve the problem. The brain grew wearier, and the heart heavier. Light and peace come to us, not by thinking but by faith. In Thy light we shall see light—God Himself was the Teacher."—*Dr. Perowne.*

THE INDISPENSABLE ONE.

LORD, come !

To Thee our hearts in sorrow turning,
For Thee to come have long been yearning.
When will that morning break so long expected?
Brightness and joy be in Thy face reflected?
We'll read Thy love in all its fulness then,
And worship Thee.

But Thou

Dost cheer Thy people in their sadness,
And fill the waiting soul with gladness.
E'en now we taste in desert life the meetness
Of dainty morsels such love gives, and sweetness
From Thine own hand, and constant succour too.
But then, O Lord

We'll be

Not weak, nor grieve Thee by declining
To trust Thee, on Thy breast reclining ;
But like Thee, Lord, no sin or sorrow being
In Thy dear presence, all Thy beauty seeing,
Thy praise our hearts shall sweetly sing, Thy joy
Our deepest then.

How long

O Lord ? Oh keep us busy doing,
While waiting still, Thy will and wooing
Poor hearts, that need Thy grace, that pardon getting
Their blessing to Thy heart may be refreshing ;
For Thou dost still delight to save. May we
Lord work for Thee.

E. R. W.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

WE might break our hearts over the state of the Church generally, did we not know that it is all foreseen, and provision made for it by Him who cares far more than we could do.

We need to pass on to one another Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians—"Therefore watch and remember" that we are warned (Acts xx. 31). Amongst the seven Churches of Rev. ii. and iii. there are always overcomers. May God grant that as our eyes have been opened in some measure to what is suitable to Him—that we may follow Him. It is comforting to remember that in the last stage, Laodicea; the remedy for all is within reach of all; it needs no intellect nor wisdom, it wants only the heart for Christ. It is to hear His voice and open the door, the rest He will confer. Is it not the same truth presented in John xiv. 23? "If a man love Me he *will keep My words*, and My Father will love him and we will make Our abode with him."

The Japanese sailors who faced death to destroy the "Petropavlosk" said afterwards they were ready to die for their Emperor, but were thankful to live to receive their country's acclamations. It was an honour to have been through it and lived till that hour. Shall it not be the same with us? We wish the Lord would come often to remove us from the trial; but shall we not be thankful for the opportunities of the trial in eternity if we go through it?

"Shall we of the way be weary

When we see our Master's face?"

Joshua iii. 4, has been of comfort to me of late: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." It is a revelation of the lovingkindness of God. It was nothing new to Him, but it was a new way to His people, and He makes provision

for them—that “Ye may know the way by which ye must go.” We go on untried paths, we have not passed this way heretofore, but with the Ark of the Covenant before, we, too, shall raise a memorial for ever of our weakness, but of the provision of God. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and *He shall sustain thee*”—not the burden, as I had often thought, but He shall sustain thee without it.

EXTRACT.

I WAS interested yesterday in preaching on Luke xv. and Isaiah liii. 6. In Luke xv. the Lord addresses Jews and describes God seeking and God receiving. The Lord seeking, the Father receiving. The publicans and sinners, all of them Jews, are depicted as lost sheep, and as the prodigal. But whilst God's heart comes out in Luke xv., we have no record of the reason why God could act in grace. Now turning to Isaiah liii. 6, where the remnant of the future is prophetically described, we see them endorsing as true of themselves, the description of sinners given in Luke xv. “All we like sheep,” i.e. *lost sheep*; we have turned every one to his own way, i.e., *the prodigal*. What their fathers of old would not accept, they all own as just the description of every one of them, and they give a reason for the grace, the Lord having been their substitute, and that will perfectly satisfy them. A full confession they make, but are perfectly free in their conscience, for He has borne their iniquities. How simple is their faith, how full their confession! In Luke we have parables. In Isaiah liii. we have living men and women in the future endorsing the parabolic description as correct.

C. E. S.

FAITH AND THE PRESENT.

MARTHA could believe the distant miracle, that all the thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of the earth should rise, but she could not contentedly rest upon the present promise, and believe that the brother whom she loved should be called back again out of his sepulchre at Bethany.

How easy it is, comparatively, for our faith to give full credence to those high promises of God which refer to the future; and how difficult to receive unhesitatingly, and to rest upon implicitly, the promise of to-day.

Yet this, which seems the simplest, is in truth the highest achievement of faith; to live contentedly amidst our daily wants and daily trials and daily temptations, upon the present enjoyment of God's promises, in the full assurance, as each season of difficulty comes, that there will accompany it, grace, and love, and patience, equal to our need and God's requirements.

Remember, that neither the depth, nor the length of an affliction, is any evidence that the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, or that you are not the objects of His love. Were it so, then never would the tears of sorrow have flowed so freely in the house of Martha. Remember also, that a prayer unanswered, by no means signifies a prayer unheard; if so, then Jesus never saw the messenger from Bethany, or cared for the woeful tidings which he brought. No, in all cases the Lord's time, not mine; the Lord's way, not mine; the Lord's will, not mine; must be the language of the believer's heart. Enough, if it be but "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby" (Jno. xi. 4).