

WORDS OF GRACE
FOR
The Household of Faith.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	I
NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION—	
3, 29, 57, 85, 113, 141, 169, 197	
CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE—	
WOMAN'S SERVICE	9
CHRISTIAN DEPORTMENT	44
NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS	77
FORGIVENESS OF SINS	208
DELIVERANCE	298
LETTERS TO A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN	13, 49, 109
THE RENT VEIL	14
PERFECTION AND PROGRESS	24
FRAGMENTS OF RECENT LETTERS—	
27, 28, 84, 112, 167, 168, 252, 308, 331, 332	
REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN	51
RESURRECTION	80, 215, 278
SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH—	
103, 133, 182, 233, 253, 281, 309	
"IN THE MIDST"	107
THOUGHTS ON THE WAYS OF GOD	111
GRACE IN THE PSALMS	163, 273
"ALL IS CHRIST"	168
RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT—	
HEAVENLY PLACES AND CONFLICT THERE	188
FEATURES OF FAITH	220
GRACE AND GOVERNMENT	265
RESURRECTION OF LIFE AND OF JUDGMENT	303
PEACE AND JOY	327

	PAGE
TRIALS BY THE WAY	194
DEVOTEDNESS	195
PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED	225
LETTERS TO AN ANGLICAN	242, 260, 293, 323
RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY—	
THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF OUR LORD	249
CHRIST IN HUMILIATION AND GLORY	306
THOUGHTS IN DEPARTING TO BE WITH CHRIST	276
COMING EVENTS	288
EGYPT	314
"PUT TO DEATH YOUR MEMBERS"	320

WORDS OF GRACE

FOR

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

PREFACE.

SOME explanation is, perhaps, needed in adding to the many religious publications which already exist. The strife of tongues, indeed, increases: "cries," warlike as well as peaceful; "voices," faithful and dubious, are heard on all sides. Highly vaunted spiritual specifics and patent "foods" for the soul are eagerly swallowed, only to induce deeper depression or undue exhilaration. New things spring up which obscure, and even deny, well known and tried truths, while old errors are refurbished and vamped up to look like new truth. In such a state of things the one object of this paper will be to minister the word of God's grace, which, received in the obedience of faith, is the exclusive source of all true spiritual blessing, as He may please to give it in His Spirit's power.

Recovery in the general state of the assembly, or a new characterizing condition in faithfulness, is not to be expected, seeing these are the last days. The point of faith to-day, where the truth is known, and in the measure that it is known, is to hold fast what we have.

Still, the progress of souls in conformity to Christ and knowledge of His love, and thus the sanctification of the assembly which is His body and bride, is earnestly to be desired; and it is hoped that under God these pages may prove a means to this end. Subject to the will of the Lord, the paper will appear periodically, and articles to help souls and edify the saints will be freely and thankfully inserted as opportunity may arise. Communications respecting God's work in the earth, or extracts and notes on Scripture, would also find a place, as well as soul-enquiries to be answered as the Lord may give wisdom, providing in all cases that such communications are not for reproduction elsewhere. Papers presenting the gospel of the glory of Christ and the grace of God would be also greatly valued.

The title of the magazine—*Words of Grace*—indicates that it will be occupied with positive truth, not assuming superiority in any way to one's brethren, but coveting the position of service to their needs, and, above all, of Christ's glory.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

INTRODUCTORY.

No part of the inspired Word appeals more strongly to the heart and conscience of the believer than the writings of the Apostle John, but the contrast between them is most marked. The gospel presents to us the Person of Christ, the divine Word incarnate, Son of God and Son of man. In the epistles, on the contrary, we see the family of God partakers of eternal life—a life which in Christ personally was with the Father, and was manifested in the world. But the ministry of John was to abide in this scene and furnish instruction *to the saints of God, whether now or in the approaching crisis of the dispensation*; and in the inspired volume this link is supplied by the Revelation. It is to this that the words of the Lord Jesus refer in John xxi. 22, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Paul reveals to us the counsels of God and the dispensations in which those counsels find their display and accomplishment. Peter was specially the minister to the circumcision, and was a man who was to pass off the scene, together with the special sphere of service to which he was called, viz., among those of the circumcision who were brought into the assembly. Paul speaks of the counsels of glory, of which man will be the centre in Christ. John presents the Man in the reality of His being and nature who is to occupy

4 NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

that scene, and also records in the Revelation the exercise of that power in which He will possess all things when He comes again.

In chapter i. John saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the exercise of His governing power, whether in regard to the earth and its kings (*v.* 5), or in the assembly as the responsible Light-bearer for God in the world. This latter subject is fully unfolded in detail in chapters ii., iii., and, as we observe, commences with a fallen Church and ends with a discarded one.

Chapter iv. thereupon transfers the seer to heaven, and shows the throne of God's government established there, with its twenty-four assessors and its accompanying powers and characterizing attributes. We see the heavenly court of justice.

Chapter v. then at once raises the supreme and all-important question, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?" That is to say, "Who has right to the inheritance, and is able to prove his title according to the conditions laid down in the book?" It is the rejected Sufferer who makes good His claim, and takes the book of the title-deeds out of the hand of the Supreme seated on the throne.

Chapter vi. reveals the divine attributes responding immediately and with power, and the agents of God's providence are sent forth in obedience to the Man to whom everything belongs. He is the only One that can break the seals and wield the power necessary to take the inheritance out of the hand of the usurper. Later on (chapter x.) we have His rights publicly asserted in connection with the little open book, and made good on earth; but here the book is sealed, and the breaking of the seals is connected with the heavenly

NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION. 5

courts. All here is mysterious for the earth, but the providence of God is set in motion to bring the inheritance under the power of the Heir.

Chapter vii. discloses the whole saved company of both Israel and the Gentiles who are to pass into millennial blessing through the tribulation. The purpose of God for blessing, whatever the trial in reaching it, is thus established at the outset; and with this the seven trumpets are connected.

Chapters viii.-xi. give the plagues of the seven trumpets, which are seven public denunciations on God's part of the Roman and Jewish apostasies in a way that man cannot but recognize, and are a declaration of the right of this blessed Man to possess all things, and of His determination to make good His rights in this world.

Chapter xi. closes the book as regards the general course of the history.

Chapter xii. goes back to take up the history, not so much of the Man, who is the Heir, as of the woman seen in Israel, by whom He was to be brought in. It is the woman as the glory of the Man and associated with Him. Here, of course, it is Israel as the vessel of God's counsel for earthly glory.

Chapter xiii. Having thus made known His purposes, the Spirit of God now shows that all the wicked plans of the adversary are known to Him beforehand—plans by which the foe would seek to frustrate His designs of blessing and glory.

Chapter xiv. But before recording the final dealings of God with these instruments of wickedness, the special company from among the Jews, the saved Judaic remnant, are seen established in blessing on

6. NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

Mount Zion. In a crucial way they have been exposed to the malice of Satan, as Christ had been, and in a special way are they associated with Him in blessing on earth. In connection with them are seven testimonies, which in that day will go forth to men, and these Jews, the brethren of the Lord, will be those who have carried it. They are the great missionaries to the world.

Chapter xv. then displays in an anticipative way, as previously, the certain accomplishment of God's purposes of blessing; but it appears to me in a slaughtered company here. They are seen standing on a glass sea mingled with fire, and have been persecuted to death during the last half week.

Chapter xvi. connects with them the seven bowls full of the fury of God. Man, as the instrument of satanic malice in opposing Christ, has gone to the extremity of wickedness, and God now deals in the severest and sternest possible way to bring them, if it were possible, to repentance. Thus the seven bowls are plagues upon the men who have spilt the life-blood of the saints. The Lord credits to Jerusalem all the blood shed from Abel to Zechariah, and Jerusalem's account is credited to Babylon.

Chapters xvii.-xviii. give the history and description of Babylon accordingly.

Chapters xix.-xx. introduce the whole heavenly company of saints prefatory to the history of judgment, from the appearing of Christ to the eternal state, as in chapter xxi. 1-8. There are three kinds of judgment:—

1. Warrior judgment.—Christ comes on a white horse and the enemies are taken red-handed.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION. .7

2. Sessional judgment.—He sits on His throne a thousand years.

3. Eternal judgment.—That of the great white throne.

There are no assessors when it is a question of the white horse or of the great white throne. We ride with Him in the warrior judgment, and sit with Him in His governmental throne.

Chapters xxi. 9-27, xxii., describe the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem—the bride of the Lamb, the heavenly glory and complement of the rejected Man who is the rightful Heir, whom God has finally installed in His rights and possession upon the destruction of the power of evil.

To return and take up a few details of the various chapters.

Chapter i. shows the purport of the book in three characters:—

1. It is the testimony of Jesus Christ which He gave from heaven.

2. It is a vision—what the prophet saw.

3. It is a prophecy.

“I am Alpha and Omega, &c. . . . which is, which was,” &c. It is Jehovah who is presented to us here. We do not find the Father in this book. Again, we have not the Holy Spirit as dwelling in the Church, but as the Seven Spirits, that is, in His governing capacity for the earth. God looks, so to say, with seven eyes throughout the whole earth. He is not occupied with one special object there as now, but surveys the whole field of man’s responsibility from every point of view. Then Christ is not seen as Head of His body the

8 NOTES OF ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

Church, or as the Saviour and Mediator, or High Priest, but as (1) the faithful witness—this is what He was in a fallen world; (2) as the first begotten of the dead. Here He is in connection specially with the risen scene and the eternal world. It is His place of dignity or rank for eternity, and is not a question of time; (3) He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. As such He is in relation with the millennial world. Thus we have here the Divine Persons known properly in the Church as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but who are revealed in this book according to universal relationship and the responsibility of man.

TALKS AT THE TEA-TABLE.

No. 1.

WOMAN'S SERVICE.

Is not such a class of subjects beneath the notice of your magazine?

The home and family life are not beneath the notice of Scripture. The words "at home" occur, as you know, in 1 Cor. xiv. 35, and are there used in contrast with being "in assembly" or in "church," as we commonly speak. Remark, too, that though divine principles are unchangeable, the conduct of the children of God varies in conformity with the place in which they are found. If a woman wishes to learn anything she may ask her husband at home, but it would be a shame for her to speak in assembly. The Christian's conduct, though founded on principle, is regulated by obedience to the Word.

Then you would infer that a woman may not preach? but how seriously that would affect her service for Christ.

God is all-wise, and we are not. He alone knows what is for the glory of Christ, and a preaching woman would be a blot upon it.

But they now preach to thousands, and the woman is becoming an immense and increasing factor in the religious world.

In its apostasy, true! But the apostle says, "Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection." (1 Tim. ii. 11.) As regards man, she is to be in quietness, and

not to teach nor exercise authority, and this is not only based upon the fact of the fall, but also is a necessary result of divine order in creation. She was made a helpmeet for the man—a companion of his joys and now, alas! of his sorrows, which she rightly shares, for she was the unwitting, if guilty, instrument of their introduction. He, more guilty perhaps because not deceived, was ensnared, to the ruin of them both, by a false consequence of the very principle of their union. God had said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh"; and when sin came in the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." Thus he uses God's ordinance in creation to dishonour the Creator. Principles are no guide for conduct, except as in obedience to God. That women, and Christian women, have prophesied is true; that they may receive spiritual gifts, as they do receive natural capacities, is equally true; that, of old, women have communicated God's mind and wrought deliverances, the Scriptures declare; but though acting in His sovereignty, which is superior to nature, God has at the same time distinctly evidenced His mind. Deborah conveyed Jehovah's commands to Barak; Jael slew Sisera in her husband's tent; Miriam sang amid the maidens of Israel, and so Jephthah's daughter bewailed her lot. Philip's daughters who prophesied were doubtless unknown as such outside of their father's house; nor did Priscilla unfold to Apollos the way of God more exactly, except in conjunction with her husband, who takes precedence, and in the privacy of the home. (Acts xviii. 26.) When the

question in hand is that of laying down their lives, "staking their own neck" (Rom. xvi. 4), for the sake of the apostle, the woman, indeed, comes first; and here we see a service—the greatest that can be rendered—one that is perhaps not so coveted or so easy to render, but in which the women can excel—it is the highest and fullest expression of love in man. It was in ministry of this kind, no doubt peculiarly noble in its character, that Phœbe excelled, exercised in that honourable devotedness that thinks in the bowels of Christ solely of the needs of others and seeks to help. (Rom. xvi. 1.) In the same category, too, we find Mary (v. 6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 11), Persis and the mother of Rufus, Julia and the sister of Nereus. Their labours in the Lord distinguished them, even as Phœbe, who had been a helper of many, including the apostles.

Well, I plainly see that there is something far more beautiful, if more lowly, in such a path than in seeking to obtrude oneself upon the public gaze.

Yes, and we must be thankful for the enforced feebleness of femininity, for it is as such that honour is given to the wife, and we are fellow-heirs of the grace of life.

Is the woman, then, to have no place or power and authority?

Her place of rule is undoubtedly the house (1 Tim. v. 14); but, after all, power and authority in themselves are no blessing except, it may be, to those over whom they are exercised. They are privileges and possessions, but not even the greatest of these, for it is in time only they are enjoyed by man, and will be surrendered even by Christ Himself when time is no

more. But women's service, as exhibited in Phœbe, in Mary of Bethany, and in Mary of Magdala, and the other women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him, is the ministry of love which never ceases, though its character changes according to the circumstances—whereas the preaching of the gospel was by necessity, even for an apostle, and an administration in which he was responsible under pain of woe. Love, indeed, could make the glad tidings costless to others, and this was his reward. (1 Cor. ix. 18.) Let others, especially the women, beware of assuming in self-will that responsibility which was a so exceedingly solemn one for an apostle.

That is quite a new light to view the preaching of the gospel in; yet one would fain think that a woman's lips are not to be always closed against words more important than all else that can be spoken.

Surely she can carry a message, as did Mary of Magdala, when the disciples had all gone to their own home and she still lingered disconsolate at the sepulchre. That was a message, than whose import no higher could there be, but it was neither teaching nor preaching. Yet a woman has her sphere of teaching, though a special and private one. The elder woman is to be a teacher of what is right, and to admonish the young women in regard to the relationships of nature and the affections and duties that pertain to them. This healthful service has been, alas! neglected in order to trespass upon forbidden ground.

LETTERS TO A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN.

No. 1.

ONE may be a true saint and an active and earnest servant, and yet, for all that, a double-minded man, in spite of much knowledge of truth and intelligence. This is not a question of the common crowd that thoughtlessly throng the churches and chapels of our land, content alike with Evangelical or Anglican, Unitarian or Catholic, but of one who knows the truth, and whose conscience intelligently judges of the truth. Unfaithful to his convictions, he becomes a grieving thorn in the side of his associates, and, goaded by his conscience, is an unceasing source of worry and disturbance to his friends. A champion of orthodoxy, a defender of the faith, he is at last reduced to a mere quibbler, a vain and ineffectual stickler at detail, dragged the while at the chariot wheels of the very doctrines and practices he rejects. Always objecting, he displays the humiliating spectacle of a man who, for the sake of party, is ever eating his objections, recanting his principles, and who ends with *searing his conscience*.

But why remain in that of which the conscience disapproves? Vain is the excuse, to keep the evil out; it is already there or could not be objected to. God's way is on a different principle altogether: "Come out of her, My people," "Come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord." God is indeed merciful to His saints, whatever their folly and failure. Many a time does He deliver, but "he, that being

often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Like Samson, the city gates may sometimes be carried to the top of a hill, but to dally with the Philistines is to be finally destroyed in their doom.

The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, and objections, though increasing in seriousness and volume, result only in the castigation of the objector. One who acts the part of decoy to the saints of God will not escape the judgment of their enemies.

In conclusion, be warned; remember the apostle's injunction, "Be vigilant, stand fast in the faith; quit yourselves like men, be strong." However difficult the times, the foundation of God stands, the seal for all who name the name of the Lord being to withdraw from iniquity; and only as purified from vessels to dishonour can a man be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work.

THE RENT VEIL.

THE three synoptic gospels have recorded the rending of the veil of the Temple as a fact of remarkable significance that accompanied the death of Christ, and have at the same time given us no hint whatever, except in a mysterious and inferential way, of its precise meaning. This need not surprise us, for our God has been pleased oftentimes to reveal His thoughts in this way, arousing and fixing our minds by some striking and even enigmatical utterance, and leaving us under His Spirit's guidance to search out and understand the truth. John, who does not speak of the

rending of the veil, tells us of a fact of similar import, namely, of the piercing of the side of Christ, and that forthwith came thereout blood and water. Both evidently refer to the great, divine, absolute results of the death of Christ according to that particular view of it which each evangelist was inspired to take.

Matthew and Mark agree very closely in their report of the rending of the veil, Matthew specially giving it in connection with the testimony on earth and in the grave of the value of Christ's death. Here, evidently, we have the three great spheres in which God's will has been exercised in regard to men, namely, heaven, earth, and hades, identified as the last is with judgment, except for redeeming grace. In this instance, therefore, we have no difficulty in discerning what is the force of the rending of the veil. It is the witness of heaven to the value of Christ's death in regard to the admission of man there—his access to God in His dwelling-place—the barrier was removed. Agreeably therewith earth not alone quaked, but by that very means the sepulchres were opened; earth could no longer hinder the arising of the saints who were in the tomb. Finally hades itself, the unseen world, owned the mighty power of that work, and gave forth the saintly dead on that resurrection morn.

Together with this remark, as the negative side of the work of the cross, that the rending of the veil not only showed the work of reconciliation done, but evidenced the entire setting aside and annulling, as before God, of all the legal position in which the natural man was in responsibility. To be under law now is not to be under probation, but under the curse; and the glory of the law is annulled by the glory that

excelleth. Conformably, too, not only were the graves opened, but the earth quaked—figure of the entire disruption of the ordered natural estate. And fitly was Jerusalem the scene of this shaking of the earth, since it was the earthly centre from whence God's law went forth under the old covenant—a covenant now to be superseded by the new. So with the grave, there was plain evidence of a risen state of man on earth after His resurrection; but also there was a new condition, consequent upon His death, in hades itself. Never before could it have been said, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." For the saints the old condition of those fallen asleep was passed; they were with Christ. Nay, more, in a universal way it is true, "for to this end Christ has died and lived again, that He might rule over both dead and living." Power and place in heaven, earth, and hades now belong to the Christ, the risen Man.

This is the clear teaching of the rending of the veil of the Temple; not, as some have said, that God might come forth. It was rent for man to go in—not the old man but the new, and that in the Spirit, not in the flesh. This is conclusively proved by the fact of Christ's death; for though He, because of what He was, could have gone in without death, yet He must then have been eternally alone there in Manhood—God's glory unrevealed and His purposes for ever unaccomplished. Christ personally could have gone in in Manhood as He could come out in Godhead, and needed no rent veil for the one or for the other; and this exposes the serious error of supposing that the veil must be rent for God to come forth. God came forth to commune with Adam, but the veil was not

THE RENT VEIL.

17

rent, nor had man gone in. Similarly God was in Christ, the Son in Manhood come forth from the Father, but *the veil was not rent, nor had man gone back to the Father, even in His Person, before the cross.*

This fundamental mistake (for it forms part of a whole system of modern error) is also connected with another, that teaches that the rent veil as such allows of man drawing near in the flesh. But we have seen that, while indeed it gives access to God, the rending of the veil shows the annulling, except for judgment, of the legal place of man in the flesh. There is certainly no way made for man to draw near to God in the flesh. It is not probation, but the curse—not law and life in keeping it, but death and condemnation ministered. There is no veil now of any sort over the glory, but there is the veil on the heart, where there is no faith and Moses is read. It is of the highest moment to hold that there is no veil at all over the glory in heaven to-day. The man in probation under law is ended; the glory of law connected with him is annulled by the exceeding glory; the veil is done away in Christ. Where there is no faith the veil is upon the heart and nowhere else; but the universal privilege of Christians is to behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, from whence righteousness and the Spirit are ministered.

When Christ reigns in His millennial glory, and the Temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem, doubtless the veil will be again hung up; but not to set the first man up in responsibility under law once more, nor to put flesh under probation. The law will be written in the heart. Grace will remember no more their sins. The new nature and forgiveness will bring them near to Jehovah

the Most High to worship at His footstool. But Christ is known as Jehovah, the King of Israel, and their soul-relations are governed by this revelation of God in Him. It is not, as with us, the revelation of the Father in the Son, and Man glorified at God's right hand. That the blessing of forgiveness and the new nature is ours is true, but to limit the blessing of the simplest believer now to this, or to assert in any way that the veil is not rent, would be premonitory of apostasy.

Though the expression "rent veil" is not employed in Hebrews, yet the teaching fully sets forth the power and place in heaven of Christ the risen Man, and this through His death. This will be equally true in the millennial reign, but there will be no access then to the earthly holy places as there is to-day into the heavenly one. We have boldness by the blood for entering into the holiest, and it is by a new and living Way, for He is risen, and faith believes it; but this Way has been consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. It is by His death we have entrance, and it was the value of His death for this that the rending of the veil presented. Thus the historic figure and the fact as declared in Hebrews here correspond, the only difference being that the rending of the veil was the absolute sovereign act of God in righteousness and glory; whereas in Hebrews it is exhortation to draw near to God in the communion of our souls, according to the reality and power of Christ's work as thus owned of God. The first part of that epistle to chapter viii. especially reveals Christ as the Apostle and High Priest, who, being God come forth into this world, has spoken to us, as Himself a Divine Person, and that

THE RENT VEIL.

19

Person the Son. This was before the veil was rent. Now, having made by Himself the purification of sins, and set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, the veil is indeed rent, and we have the profit of the work; but the point is that He has done it for Himself, having come out for the purpose, namely, to glorify Himself in regard to the whole question of sin. And having thus glorified Himself, He takes the highest heavenly place in an absolutely divine title. Thus we see that the veil was not rent for God to come forth and speak to us, nor was His title to sit down on high founded on the blood or by the rending of the veil. Truly the blood was shed to make purification, and the veil was rent, but the title in which He takes the place is here absolutely divine and according to the excellency of the name He inherits. (Hebrews i. 1-4.)

Now it was salvation of which the Lord spoke to us, and in this, of course, man, believers, are immediately concerned. Jesus is therefore seen as Son of man, the leader of their salvation; but for this He must be made perfect through sufferings. The suffering of death, for the bringing in of the many sons to glory, to which the rending of the veil certainly refers, is therefore immediately introduced.

The sons are not brought to glory yet, but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and identifying Himself as all of one with His brethren, and praising in the midst of the assembly as a delivered company.

He is also a faithful and merciful High Priest for those who are tempted, and One able to sympathise with our infirmities. So far the exercise of His priesthood relates to our infirmities; but the fact that Jesus has passed through the heavens, not only Son of man,

but Son of God, a great High Priest for us, marks the place that belongs to us already in the presence of God. This is the hope set before us, entering into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered as Forerunner for us. The hope is that of being actually there where He is; but already the link of our relations and access to God is according to the glory of the Person and the place where He is. For such a High Priest *became us*, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens. Moreover, He is a Son perfected for ever, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens. (Heb. vi.-viii.) Thus as High Priest, and fixing our place of approach to God, He is in the same place and position in which He set Himself down, as God, after making purification for sins. But as the author of eternal salvation to us His sufferings and death are fully declared. (Heb. v. 7-9.) Nevertheless, the high and glorious position into which He has entered is applied, as far as chap. viii., in only two special ways, namely, to our infirmities as approaching to the throne of grace (ii. 18, iv. 16), and as the author of eternal salvation to those who have fled for refuge and who approach by Him to God. (v. 9, vi. 18, vii. 25.)

As yet the full teaching of the veil had not been considered by the apostle; this he now does in connection with the value of the sacrifice, in the second part of the epistle (chaps. ix., x.), where in type the veil is seen separating the first tabernacle from a tabernacle which is called holy of holies. Into the second the high priest only entered once a year, not without blood, to show that the way of the holy of holies had not yet been made manifest. There Christ has now

THE RENT VEIL.

21

entered once for all, having obtained eternal redemption, not in the earthly tabernacle, but as High Priest, come by the better, more perfect and heavenly tabernacle, and by His own blood. This is the character of His coming as High Priest, and of the place in which His functions are administered, and of His entrance therein. And here, we observe, His ministry is not said to be for wilderness infirmities, but in connection with a state of positive blessing—truly the coming good things of the millennial day, but, for us, the blessing of worshipping the living God with a conscience for ever purified from the vain effort to approach Him in a fleshly way. This precious privilege is ours by the blood of the Christ. But the holy of holies into which Christ has entered, now to appear before the face of God for us, is heaven itself. The value of His sacrifice for the putting away of sin is thus declared, and from thence will He appear to those that look for Him the second time without sin for salvation.

Meanwhile the value of this sacrifice for us is that we have been sanctified, and not only so, but perfected in perpetuity, even as He has not only entered heaven, but sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God. Thus this position of divine and glorious exaltation, possible alone to One who is the eternal God, is alike the declaration of the value and perfection of His work as it is taken in virtue of the absolutely divine title of His more excellent name, as well as on account of being our High Priest perfected through sufferings.

That the rending of the veil set forth the perfection for God's glory of the offering of Christ, and that the

way was now open for the priestly family to draw near, is certain, as already noticed. It is also clearly involved in the teaching of this epistle; for if the Way was not manifest so long as the first tabernacle had its standing, it is evident, Christ having entered into heaven itself, that now the Way is open.

We can now see (x. 19-22) wherein the precise difference lies between the point of view taken by the epistle and the force of the rending of the veil. The latter is indeed distinctly implied in the teaching of the epistle; on the one hand, by the way of the Holiest being now manifested, and on the other by the setting aside of the first tabernacle and of the old covenant; it forms the basis of the exhortations of the epistle. But this being already settled by the blood, and the new and living Way consecrated for us through the veil that is His flesh, we are not thereby absolved from the necessity of drawing near in the true present exercise of our souls, nor, of course, are we viewed as already entered in. The priestly title and state by the water and the blood being ours, we have to approach with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Thus these verses (x. 19-22) involve the truth expressed both by the rending of the veil and by the piercing of the side of Jesus. We have boldness for entering by the blood, and the way is dedicated for us through His flesh as rent in death. But the point pressed is that we should therefore approach, having a great Priest there. Death or acceptance, as with Aaron of old, is no longer a question with us. Jesus has died, is risen, and has entered in; it is therefore a new and living Way for us, with boldness for entering into the holy of holies itself.

In conclusion, remark that without Jesus there we should have no power to enjoy this infinitely precious privilege or its blessedness. It is He who has gone up step by step to the right hand of God, the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, in order to associate us with Himself in all the worth of His sacrifice and the acceptability of His Person. Notice the steps: as the sacrifice, He offers Himself spotless to God (ix. 15), and having done so enters into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us, not, in this passage as our Priest or Forerunner, but as our Representative who had suffered for our sins. (v. 24.) Finally, as having offered one sacrifice for sins, He sits down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, witness that He has sanctified and perfected us in perpetuity by that one offering. Likewise, as regards the high priest, He becomes man, suffers, and dies in order to be a merciful and faithful High Priest (ii. 16-18), and then rises from the dead and passes through the heavens (iv. 14), a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, entering moreover within the veil as Forerunner for us. (vi. 19, 20.) But not only so, He has become higher than the heavens (vii. 26, 27), for such a High Priest alone became us, who, through sovereign grace, belong to the heavens. Nay, more, He has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Greatness in the heavens (viii. 1), forming the link of our relationship and place of approach to God in the absolutely divine and supreme position where He personally is, and which pertains to Him because He is God the Son, though He is there in Manhood. Because He is God He *set Himself down* on the right hand of the Greatness on high. (i. 3.) As our High Priest He *set Himself*

down on the right hand of the throne of the Greatness in the heavens (viii. 1), and as having offered the one effectual sacrifice for sins, He *set Himself down* in perpetuity at the right hand of God. (ix. 12.) The glory of the eternal throne is the display of the grace and value of the death of Christ. To quote the words of another on this passage (Heb. x. 19-22), "For us the veil is rent, and that which rent the veil in order to admit us has likewise put away the sin which shut us out." (*Syn.*, vol. v. p. 314.)

PERFECTION AND PROGRESS.

PERFECTION in the sense of being like Christ and with Him in glory is viewed in Scripture as an object of attainment, and the Christian runs diligently on to lay hold of it. But before he can begin to run he must, in a true and scriptural sense, be already perfect; and this is no matter of attainment at all, but of our reception by faith of the revelation in the Word of what Christ is and that we are in Him. This is of pure grace, and is not merely knowledge of the thing revealed, but is the love of God thus revealed.

The difference in believers, as to being perfect, consists not in what is fundamental, but in the often slow and defective way in which for many reasons the soul receives the truth of Christ. Moreover, it is not a question of experience, for, like Paul, the Person of Christ may so thoroughly command the soul from the first that faith may receive at once the total setting aside of self, and that Christ is all for us with and before God. To receive this is to be a perfect Christian

(Phil. iii. 18), and not till then can he pursue to get possession of the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. Not, indeed, that any believer could come short of the prize; but the question is, How many are pursuing after it?

Christ instead of self is the great scope of the Christian revelation, which, once perceived by faith, the soul loves and pursues in order to possess, every fresh perception of His love and excellency and perfections bringing the soul spiritually nearer in increasing likeness to Him. Only those who are perfect can thus pursue, having the glorified Man in view, to whom we shall be conformed when perfected in His likeness. Meanwhile, forgetting the things behind, we are to stretch out to the things before.

As many as be perfect are to be thus minded; but, like the Hebrew saints, how many come short of this indispensable starting-point! They had fallen back into an infantile condition, and the apostle warns them that a heavenly Christ was the alone assurance of salvation. The condition of a babe was a reproach to a Christian, whose proper state was that of full growth. Among the perfect, or those of full age, the apostle spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery; but to the Corinthians only as unto babes, because of their fleshly state. And how many are in this state now! Do we not see in the rationalism of to-day that mind of the flesh which substitutes its own vain thoughts for a heavenly Christ? On the other hand, bondage to legal principles is rife in ritualism. Both must be avoided if we would be perfect, for both obstruct the view of a heavenly Christ.

In order that all saints may arrive at the measure of

the stature of the fulness of Christ He has given the gifts of His love to the assembly, so that it is not to be reached by attainment, but by the ministry of grace in the Word. (Ephes. iv. 10-13.) By holding the truth in love, not coming short of it, we are able to grow up to Him in all things who is the Head. The apostle toiled to present every man perfect in Christ, and Christian perfection, viewed as a present thing, is when faith receives, in the love of it, the revelation of Christ and of the new place in Him—the new man introduced upon the setting aside of the old man in the cross. Observe, it is received by faith; and faith not only knows, but loves what it knows. Objective knowledge, real and important as it is, of itself puffs up. On the other hand, to think I have the inward conscious knowledge of anything is to deceive myself, for it would be but the memory of an experience, and therefore no true knowledge at all. No personal experience can be the basis or rule of teaching, or of testimony and faith. The Scriptures alone are this, and when applied by the Spirit to heart and conscience not only give knowledge objectively, but also the love of the truth.

In conclusion, it may be said that there are two ways in which we cannot and shall not be perfect, and two ways in which we must and shall be. We cannot be perfect in the flesh or without sin, as Christ was, on earth, and though indeed we ought to be as perfect in all our walk we shall never be as He was, for we have sinned, and in many things we all offend. On the other hand, we must be perfect in Christ now, through the ministry of Christ in the Word, if we are to walk as He walked; and we shall be perfected like Him when He comes again and we see Him as He is.

FRAGMENTS OF RECENT LETTERS.

27

Perfection here is no object of pursuit on the Christian's part: he must be perfect in Christ to begin the course, and is perfected with Christ in heavenly glory at the close of it. In a word, progress is not the path to perfection here, but to be perfect is the necessary preliminary to progress toward a Christ in glory and being perfected there.

FRAGMENTS OF RECENT LETTERS.

I.

"Paul, after much active service for the Lord, is put in prison; but mark well, all ye that understand, 'the prisoner of the Lord.' There he takes the same interest in the Lord's work as before, though carried on by others, and he understands his imprisonment to be 'rather to the furtherance of the gospel.' Some preach 'out of love,' some 'out of contention.' The manner of doing it, and by whom done, he, as a true servant zealous for the Master's interests, passes over. This is not the point. With him the point is, Christ is announced. He unselfishly rejoices in the thing done being in the Master's interests, rather than in who did it. The Philippian saints really lost nothing in having to work out their own salvation without Paul leading them on, for the effect on them of Paul being in prison was to put them more immediately into contact with God, who worked in them to will and to do. Beautiful superiority over circumstances is thus seen in both Paul and the Philippians.

"Another thing to notice is, that Paul did more real

and lasting work *in prison*, though less ostentatious, than when he fought with beasts at Ephesus.

“‘Amen, amen, my soul replies;
Blest Hand that curbs, controls, denies.’

“Yours, A FELLOW-PRISONER.”

II.

“WHAT a mercy it is that we are formed by what is objective (*i.e.*, outside ourselves), and the blessedness of it is that if progress is made we know nothing of the progress (Moses wist not that his face shone) because of the immensity of that which attracts us. It is in beholding we are changed. It is not by climbing the ladder of self-complacency that growth is made, but by seeing Him where He is, and meditating on His perfections as seen here, those glories which attach to His Person, that we grow up to Him. Progress in divine things does not occupy us when led and taught by the Spirit, but Christ. When He is everything we feel the lowest room is our true place. ‘He rejecteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly.’

“What a present place of favour we have, I mean all God’s beloved children. What a Father, what love, unceasing care, the Comforter with us and in us, the revelation of His will in His Word, the opened heaven and the seated One there, the hope before us, and the finished work behind us. Well may we rejoice, as Paul exhorts the saints to do, ‘Rejoice *in the Lord alway*: and again I say, Rejoice.’ We can always rejoice in Him, but our state and circumstances are another thing. We are, however, privileged to be without care, to have the peace of God guarding our *hearts* and *thoughts*. No room left for anxiety and care.”

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

DELIVERED BY THE EDITOR AT ACTON IN 1897.

(*From Shorthand Report.*)

CHAPTER I.

I do not intend to go over the ground that we touched upon last time, beloved friends, but we will commence this evening with verse 7, because, if you remember, we spoke about the introduction of the book last time, and the way in which the Lord presents Himself to us here; that is to say, not, as we as Christians generally regard Him, as Father—"Grace and peace from God our Father," as the Epistles often say, as you know. That is the constant salutation which we have from the blessed Lord and from Him whom we know as our Father. But here it is all changed; it is no longer Father in any way in this book, but it is from the One who revealed Himself in days past to His people as Jehovah, who entered into relations with men on earth, keeping them in order; and if people are to be kept in order, who is to do it? There must be a source, the highest possible source, of authority, otherwise you cannot set one man to keep another in order. Well, it is in that character that God revealed Himself in connection with His people—Jehovah, the One who is, who was, and ever will be the same.

"*The seven spirits that are before His throne.*" There is not such an idea as this all through the New Testament till you get it here. In the Epistles you have the Holy Ghost, the power of the communication and of

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the reception of everything that God says. But here the Holy Ghost is presented as the "seven spirits of God." The Spirit of God, in taking up His relations with the world in governing men, takes the character of being the seven spirits. It is as though a man who is to look every way at once must have seven eyes. He is speaking in human language. God is not putting the world straight to-day, but He does expect order and a proper character of things in the Church. He does expect to see love reigning there, and righteousness there, and He does delight to see everything that answers to His name and to His nature there; but that is a different thing from looking every way, and taking everything into account. So you observe the position which this book takes is that of surveying the earth and all found there for the purpose of bringing it into subjection to Himself.

In verses 7 and 8 we have really what is the communication of the book. God does not apply Himself to instruct the intelligence merely. Of course, there are depths which the highest intelligence cannot fathom, but God does delight to make Himself understood by those whom He brings into relationship with Himself; so that He puts the whole subject of the book here into a nutshell: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." That is the Lord Jesus Christ that is coming. But you say, What a solemn way it is in which He is presented, "He cometh with clouds." It is no longer as once when He came as a little babe into this world, and all the angelic hosts

came to see for the first time the face of God in the little babe that lay there. That is not the way in the coming day. When He comes He puts His rights into effectuation and brings everything into subjection, for He is man as well as God. Then it is, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." It is striking how the Spirit of God insists on the fact that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with the clouds, as the blessed Saviour Himself warned the high priest. When He stood before that earthly tribunal He said, "Henceforth shall ye see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven, and accompanied with the angels of His power." It is a thought that is constantly presented in the Old Testament. In Daniel vii., where it speaks of the Son of Man, though He is not named here in this passage, it says, "I saw in the night visions, and lo! One like the Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven." A Son of Man coming from heaven is an extraordinary thought. What this book is occupied with—the way the world will have to do with Him in the coming day—is, "He cometh with clouds." Here is a Man coming from heaven surrounded with the clouds of glory. Are you prepared to see Him in that way? Well, the whole Scripture is full of it. He is man, that is true enough; but He is God, and therefore He is surrounded with the clouds.

Suppose I were to speak of Psalm xcvi. That scripture says, "Jehovah reigneth; let the earth be glad." The return of this blessed One is the only thing that will be able to make the earth a glad scene, because He will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and you cannot have iniquity and gladness

go hand in hand. You may have iniquity and excitement go hand in hand, but not iniquity and gladness. The inaugurating act of that coming is judgment; and so it says, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." It is not a mercy-seat. Faith knows that Christ is seated in the heavens now, and that is why any poor wretched soul, however guilty, ruined, and trodden down under the power of Satan, may draw near. That blessed Man who is coming to crush the serpent's head is seated on the throne of God; and it is nothing more, or rather nothing less, than a mercy-seat to-day.

"*Fire goeth before Him.*" What for? To devour His adversaries round about. No mercy then, no salvation for the ungodly then; but a *fire goeth before Him*.

"The heavens declare His righteousness" (not His mercy), "and all the people see His glory." It is this thought—the very millennium—we have here. The people are seeing His glory, and are terribly afraid of Him. You may see His glory to-day without fear, because you see it through the rent veil. The very highest act of human animosity is that which brought forth that precious blood which vindicates God in justifying the ungodly. But we need to know that this book is occupied with, not the mercy-seat, but the throne of judgment.

Then this Jehovah who reigns is no other than the Man Christ Jesus, and if He comes to effectuate God's rights in this world, He has to do with people who have rejected Him.

There are two controversies God has with men in

this world—one is the rejection of His Christ, and the other is idolatry. The Epistle of John, who is the apostle of love, and tells Christians what they are and have, and of course what they ought to be, says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." People may have idols in their chambers, although they may not set them up. Psalm xcvi. ends with, "Worship Him." You know this is quoted in the first chapter of Hebrews as testimony to the deity of Christ, "Worship Him, all ye gods." He is no angel; He is man and God, and every authority will have to worship Him. So you see this subject, put in a small compass here, is of the highest importance.

"And they also which pierced Him." You know what that refers to. It is quoted from Zechariah, and John is one who takes this subject up. John testifies to the cross in two ways: (1) Not a bone of Him shall be broken; and (2) it was John who gave the testimony that the spear that pierced the side of the blessed Saviour on the tree brought forth blood and water—the blood which expiates our sins, and the water that cleanses our souls in a moral way. The apostle John tells us that that was in fulfilment of a scripture which says, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced." Zechariah puts it somewhat differently from John. They are both inspired, but when Zechariah speaks of it he says, "In that day I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of grace and supplication: and they shall look on *Me* whom they pierced."

It is Jehovah Himself—true, the blessed Man, but that Man is Jehovah; and Jehovah Himself, in giving the testimony, says, "They shall look" (not "on Him" as

John puts it, but) “on Me whom they pierced.” They pierced Him; they disesteemed and dishonoured their Jehovah in the piercing of that blessed Man on the tree. It was no other than Jehovah Himself. But it is true He is Messiah, and so it says, “There shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, and they shall mourn for Him”—not Me. How wonderful is Scripture, and how perfect in every word it uses! They pierced Jehovah; they shall mourn for Him, that is, the Messiah, the Man they rejected. God will have repentance, and He will not have a soul in heaven without repentance; faith, of course—the two go together. The mourning is an individual thing, for everyone is to be by himself with God about it; it is a thorough thing, and so every family is apart, and the wives apart. Then there is the other thing, for God has these controversies with men—the rejection of His Christ and the worship of idols; and so Zechariah says, “I will open to the house of David”—because, you see, God is dealing with men on earth; we are not in heaven in this scripture—“I will open to the house of David a fountain for sin and uncleanness. And in that day I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall never be remembered again.” God has settled those two controversies to His own satisfaction, and then He will have a glad earth.

“*I am Alpha and Omega.*” The Lord signs His name, so to speak, at the end. He does not say anything about His being the Father or the Most High. The Father is the one the Christian knows, and the Most High is the one the millennial saint knows. You get everything here but those two names. You have the

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

35

Lord, God, Jehovah, and the Almighty. It is important to see that the Lord presents Himself here in contrast with all the idols that men set up. To-day you have idolatry in a very refined form. One person makes an idol of a wife or hundreds of things of the kind; they put something foremost, and God is shut out. The moment you bring anything between the soul and God it is an idol, so the Lord presents Himself as that which excludes everything else. He says, "I am Alpha and Omega." All revelation has its source and object in Him. He knows everything that is coming, and has declared it, and has ordered everything that is coming. He is the Lord who delivers; He is the God who created; He is Jehovah who is in relationship with His people, and governs the earth. Abraham after his call never had an idol. They began to get them very soon; and we are very apt to drop back to what we came out of. Abraham came out of idolatry, and, as far as Scripture records, he kept clear of it; but it soon came in again. Rachel brought teraphim, or very small idols, from her father's house, and they caused a very great deal of trouble. God is exclusive, and you and I have to see to it that He has His exclusive place; and when God has His exclusive place, then everything else takes its own proper place. John also signs this blessed communication, for it is well to know where we get these things from.

"The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." It is an extraordinary state of things that there should be the kingdom of God set up and tribulation connected with it. If you take your place with God you will find tribulation is connected with it, and you must be prepared for it. It is not what you find in Daniel vii.,

when the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven. "He comes to the Ancient of days, and is brought near to Him. And there is given to Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom that which shall not pass away." That is different from this. Here you have tribulation and kingdom and patience. You have not got dominion and glory and a kingdom here, but that you have to wait for. But the place John had, and we have, is tribulation and a kingdom of patience. A person might be able to map out a most perfect definition of all that is told out here, but if he did not get John's position he would not understand a fraction of it. He must be in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Tribulation is connected with the kingdom here. There are tribulations which are connected with the Christian position, as Paul speaks, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake"; but here you have tribulation and the kingdom. It is very similar to what the Saviour said to the disciples in the sermon on the mount, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Lord counts it a very great blessing. It does not make you unhappy, but makes you feel very happy indeed. Then He says, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil things against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

This is the kingdom and the tribulation and the

patience of Jesus Christ. But still, I should like to point out that there are tribulations connected with the body of Christ that a man who knows what the tribulation of the kingdom is might not know.

There are many people who do not know that God has a special place in connection with the heavenly Christ, and who do not care to suffer any tribulation on account of the fact that they are attached to the heavenly Man and attached to one another by that one Spirit; and they wander all over the world, and they do not suffer any tribulation at all on account of being attached to Him who is in heaven, and to those who belong to Him. The apostle Paul suffered distinctly on account of Christ's body, and because he could not be attached to anything else. We should not have any other association than that which unites us to the heavenly Man and unites us to one another.

"The patience of Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus Christ is waiting, and we must wait with Him. If we own Him, we do not want to own anyone else. We do not want to own the devil, who is the only other person in the world who claims authority as being the source of it. The devil is coming in power presently to put his claims into effect; but the Lord Jesus Christ is the One we own, and He is waiting in patience, and He is not coming until He is told to come. With Him it is not difficult at all to effectuate His claims; as soon as He gets the word the thing is done. Those are the principles of the position which a man must be in in order to understand the Book of the Revelation. He might have all the charts in the world, but if he did not get to the right point of view he would have no right understanding of the book at all.

There are two practical effects of these principles ; that is to say, the moment you put principle into practice you find yourself in a position. Now the position at which the apostle arrived by putting these principles into practice was a very peculiar one. He was in the Isle of Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. Here are the two antipodes of Christian position. You could not have two more opposites than the Isle of Patmos as the place of persecution, where he was treated with the greatest possible neglect and enmity, and, on the other hand, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. However opposite these things are, there is a most intimate connection between them. For instance, that passage in Hebrews, "We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle"—nobody who serves the tabernacle, that is to say, who accepts earthly principles as the link of his relationship with God. For the Christian despises such a thing utterly ; he stands on his dignity with such people, and says, "They have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp." There was the blood inside and the body outside to be burned. "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate"—that is, took the place of reproach. John was in Patmos, and the Lord Jesus Christ suffered without the gate, in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. "Let us therefore go unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." There is the position distinctly.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

39

You have to be under the reproach of this world just as Christ was, and you have the inner place just where the blood was taken in by the priest, that is, the very holiest itself. On one hand you have John in Patmos, the place of reproach, and, on the other, in the Spirit on the Lord's-day—there is no reproach there. The Spirit is alone that which is the power of our relations with God and the character of our link with Him, and it is only as in the Spirit that there is any worship worth anything at all. There is the place inside the veil, and there is the place outside the camp.

When he was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day he was all alone, because the meeting, I suppose, was not there, for he was a poor, isolated man. The Spirit of God never leads a man to isolate himself from the children of God except there be special reasons. He must separate from evil if he is to be a vessel meet for the Master's use. It is like putting a service of plate on the table, and you do not have the pots and pans on the table. It was not a question of worship here; he was in the Spirit for it, but it was not a question of worship: so there is a loud voice like a trumpet. Sometimes we need this loud voice. We are sometimes not sufficiently occupied with what the Lord has to say to us, and we may be inclined to be very happy when the Lord has called us to consider our ways. And the Christian cannot separate himself from other Christians. You cannot say, I do not go here and there, and it does not matter to me what other people do. We are all identified and bound up in one company, in one responsibility, for we all own the same Lord. That was the thing the apostle had to be re-

called to, and we have often to be recalled to it. He needed a very loud voice, and the voice said, "What thou seest write in a book, and send it to the seven churches." The Lord was taking account of what was going on in the assemblies. It is a practical thing. I might look at this or that place; He takes account, and, as we shall see, in a very solemn way, of *everything* that goes on under His name. In one sense it does not matter a single bit what the Sultan of Turkey does (of course, God undertakes in all these things; there will be a day when He will take into account all that); but now He is taking in hand what goes on under the name of Christ, and God picks out seven distinct churches, and took special account of what was going on in those meetings. John turned to see the voice that spake to him, and he saw seven golden candlesticks. It might be a very poor little company of persons. The question is, What does the Lord think of that company that is gathered here under His name, and confessing it?

He regards it as a golden candlestick in its nature. They may be poor and illiterate, but if they are gathered confessing His name, the Lord says, "That is the only golden candlestick which I have got! I do not look among the Jews for it." So he says he saw "seven golden candlesticks," and "One like unto the Son of Man, clothed in a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Girt—not round the loins for service. We do not sometimes think of the Lord Jesus Christ looking like this. How do you think He looks? I know very well what is good for our hearts, and know how we have formed acquaintance with Him in grace; but when He re-

marks that which is responsible to Him and to maintain His character in the world and to stand in service amidst the world that is fallen under the dominion of Satan, don't you think He is particular as to what goes on? And the character He takes when He judges of the way that things go on under His name is this. It is very important, because you do find He is presented here as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of Man; and He is far above angels, principalities, and powers, and everything is subject to the ordering of this blessed Man. When He orders His angels and the men here for Him, don't you think He is a master, and exercises His authority in a way worthy of Himself? He says, "There are golden candlesticks which I have placed there, and they are responsible to maintain the light and truth as regards Myself. Are they doing it?"

Do you observe, He is the Son of Man first? I have quoted the passage from Daniel vii., where the Son of Man is particularly presented, and He came in the clouds of heaven. He is not in the clouds of heaven here; He is on earth. It is the same Person with the same power, but it is being exercised in a smaller sphere. The power and authority which will be exercised universally by-and-by is now being put into effect here wherever His name is known.

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot, girt about the paps with a golden girdle." It is the character of the Son of David. In Isaiah xi. He is presented as a root out of the stem of Jesse, and the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him of wisdom and understanding. He is quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, and He is looking out for it. And what is His character

as Son of David? Righteousness is the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. He does not judge according to the sight of His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness does He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

If you look at Psalm ci. you will find the character of this man. "He that practiseth deceit shall not dwell within My house: he that speaketh lies shall not tarry in My sight. Early will I destroy all the wicked of the land." He did it once in the Church. When Ananias and Sapphira came in Christ struck the man dead, and the woman who came in afterwards and agreed to the same lie.

The Person we have to do with is the same Person, and He is acting to-day in the Church. He will by-and-by put His power into wider exercise, but we have the Person now.

"His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire." This is the Son of God character. In Daniel vii., where he speaks of the Ancient of days, what sort of Person is He? In verse 9 he "beheld till the thrones were set." Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ in the day of His rejection—everyone who is associated with Him and joined as members of His body—will be filling those thrones; but Daniel did not see anyone on them: "The Ancient of days did sit, and His raiment was white as snow," as you get here, unsullied—that which cannot be polluted.

"And the hairs of His head like pure wool, and His

throne as a flame of fire." That is the sort of thing we have to do with here. His throne was as a flame of fire. That is a day when judgment will be put into immediate exercise, and in connection with God and His character universally. Here you have the same God and the same character of Person in the Lord Jesus Christ as will one day be on the throne of flames of fire, and its wheels burn as fire; and a stream of fire goeth before Him.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire, His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of many waters." In Daniel, where Daniel is mourning about God's people, he says they are in a very bad case indeed, and in chapter x. he fasts for twenty-one days, and at last gets the vision of a man like this, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body was also like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (I do not say it was the Lord Jesus Christ). So an angel comes to him with characteristics that show that God does not put up with evil in His people. God chastises His people, and allows evil for the purpose of chastising them, particularly the Jews. He allows evil to have all its way in order to discipline His people: that is chapter ix.; and the prophet gets the declaration that God's way would have its effect.

Chapter x. is the devil at work, and he uses these instruments of evil to destroy the remnant; but God will not have it, and He destroys all the instruments

of evil that were ever aroused in this world. It is in that character that the blessed Son here appears as one who suffers evil to come in to chastise His people, but knows how to terminate it that blessing may come.

In verse 19 the Lord tells John to "write the things that thou hast seen." What had he seen? Seven golden candlesticks and the Son of Man standing in the midst of them. We ought to know our relations with Christ in connection with our responsibility in the Church. The husband is jealous of the affections of the wife, and must have them all.

Moreover, the Lord gives the explanation of two things which otherwise could not have been known.

The mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and He holds them all in His right hand.

And the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches.

So the Lord has a special regard for us, and intends these revelations for our instruction and our learning, to search our consciences and hearts. May He accomplish His own blessed will in us, and that which is well pleasing before Him through Jesus Christ.

CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE.

No. 2.*

CHRISTIAN DEPARTMENT.

FROM what has been already said the woman's path of service seems much clearer; but what is more difficult, if less important, is her position in relation to the man.

* The first of this series appeared under the title of "Talks at the Tea-table."

† It is not less important, for both position and path of service are governed by the same deep, divine principles.

Well, it is more difficult to see.

† Not so; both are alike easy to a single eye.

But, for instance, it is not always easy to determine whether a woman's head should be covered or not.

† Then the single eye is so far lacking.

Of course one has no difficulty in regard to the assembly and religious meetings in public, but the question so much debated, and so variously decided, is whether she should be covered in the family and in private meetings.

† The answer is simple. No one is at a loss to say when a man ought to have his head covered, and when it would be a thing indifferent. Why, then, should the woman's be a doubtful case? For example, though certainly eccentric, no one could object on principle, if when taking food, or in ordinary household matters, or even when with his friends a man chose to cover his head; but to give thanks or engage thus in any religious exercise, whether in approaching God or addressing man, would do violence to the fundamental principles of Christianity, and shock every right mind.

Yes that indeed settles the matter practically; but what precisely are the principles referred to?

† In Christianity the respective positions of the man and the woman rest upon the grand basis of the purpose of God and the position of Christ. God is unseen in His essential Being, but, according to His eternal purpose, prefigured in nature and the first creation, man is His image, and this Christ is. Wherefore in any act which directly recognises the unseen

God in an orderly way, this purpose of His must be put in evidence by the man's head being uncovered. Every man praying, that is, addressing God as on man's part, or prophesying, that is, addressing man on God's part, having anything on his head, puts his Head, that is Christ, to shame. (1 Cor. xi. 3-7.) For Christ is the head of every man in the divine order of delegated authority, revealed in Christianity, and determined in the eternal purpose of God. In the same order woman's head is the man; and every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered puts her own head to shame, for she assumes the place of man, as though he were not present. This is determined by the place of Christ. He is absent; therefore the man is uncovered as representing his absent Head—the head under God of all authority. On the other hand, the woman ought to have authority on her head, as under it, because of the angels, signified by her being covered, inasmuch as the man is not absent, but present, and is her head, the representative of Christ and the image of God.

What vast and weighty principles are at stake in these apparently simple matters.

† Yes, it is no longer an earthly, holy place, an unrevealed Christ and angels as mediators in the place of authority. Then the shoe was removed, and the head-covering retained, as even among rejecters of Christ, Jews, and Mahometans to-day.

But there is one question more—When does the woman pray and prophesy? Is it audibly?

† I believe never audibly when the man is present; but that she is regarded as taking part in the act when gathered in fellowship with it, whether for praying or

prophesying. Surely she has fellowship with the prayers, and therefore prays, though not audibly; and similarly she has fellowship with the preaching, though she does not preach herself. Praying and prophesying are taken as the two great public exercises of the soul in divine things.

One word as to women being silent in the assemblies.

† They are not permitted to teach the man, and if they would learn from him they can ask their own husbands at home. Assembly rules such as this are not binding in the intimacy of natural and family relations, or in meetings which are not for addressing God or teaching man (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35), though, of course, Scripture may be referred to and much may be learned on such occasions of the things of God. But the basis laid of these great divine principles, the effect of them is felt in all the activities of life; and the Christian woman, and especially the man, should instinctively perceive how to do all things comelily and in order. For this, however, an obedient spirit alone avails, though principles are useful to guide. To the husband subjection is always due as to the Lord, for the man is the head of the wife, even as the woman is the glory of man.

How beautiful these natural relationships appear in the light of God's eternal purposes!

† Wondrously so! And how our thoughts, so ready to grovel and worse, when governed by nature, are lifted above self and purified by the holy radiance of His thoughts, which by His Spirit become a power in us superior to nature.

Yet in these natural relationships we may live according to this power.

† Undoubtedly, and only rightly so. For instance, it was not the thought of God that man should derive from the woman, but the woman from the man. Therefore Adam was formed first, and Eve from a rib taken from his side. And the Church, the body and the bride of Christ, derives from Him. He is the source of her life and character, and of her spiritual and moral nature. However glorious and divine therefore her beauty may be, so that Christ is admired in the saints, it can never be a cause of boast or of any thought of self-appreciation, for all is absolutely derived, and is for the sole glory of Him who is the source of it. "Woman is man's glory. For man is not of woman, but woman of man." And this divine thought is to regulate her conduct to-day.

That seems a little to put the woman into the shade.

† Not at all! really the reverse, for if she is the man's glory, it is in her this glory is manifested. Have you never noticed that it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, in whom is concentrated all the varied display of the divine glory in the millennial day? It is just the same to-day, only the jewels now are, of course, the very precious stones of spiritual graces.

Not the less beautiful and attractive on that account.

† No, indeed, they are the only true adornment. But so far from the place of the woman being secondary, or non-essential in the mind of God, without her the man of His purposes could not have been. If she derives from him he comes by her. They are in mutual and inseparable relations, and positively necessary and indispensable morally one to another, so as to complete the mind of God as to this even in nature.

LETTERS TO A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN.

49

How much more true and important is this in regard to Christ and the Church, according to the eternal purpose!

It is most striking, and one cannot fail to see that the God who created is the God who redeemed; and also that He has counselled from eternity, never losing sight, even in a temporary world and the first man, of His eternal thoughts and purposes, in the last Adam, the second man and a new Creation.

LETTERS TO A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN.

No. 2.

To protest, moved by conscience, but at the same time to submit by reason of other influences, produces necessarily a crooked path. This, however, is not the worst effect of double-mindedness. Against those who not only protest, but, obedient to the Word, reject and separate from that of which the conscience does not approve, a deep animosity springs up. Sad as this is, worse often follows; for that which godly exercise of conscience failed to produce, namely, a path of practical separation from evil, is sometimes undertaken in self-will and a spirit of opposition. Such a person is liable to sink back into a worse condition than before; conscience is not set at rest, the way of truth is still despised, divine power and the anointed eye are lacking, and the man becomes an easy prey to the enemy. He does not really separate from evil in self-judgment, but in self-will; and, like the house swept and garnished, his last state becomes worse than the first. He is not only unstable, but is an unscrupulous man, if not also a violent one.

How refreshing to turn from such a picture to the

holy and wholesome Word of God. If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, and are not left to our own self-will or an effete judgment of others, but by His intercession are brought to judge ourselves, and are restored to holy, gracious communion in the Light. But we do not find ourselves alone there, for the Light is the place of fellowship one with another. Restoration is indeed individual and alone with God, as all true conscience work must be; but communion belongs to the whole family of God; and at the table the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?—one bread, one body, for we all partake of that one bread. A man should therefore judge himself, and so let him eat. Moreover, except there be this self-judgment, service could only be self-will or worse. Peter is an example of a devoted, loving servant caught in the toils of a foe mightier than he. His heart is broken at the remembrance of his fall—his service suspended. Ignorant of the depths of grace in the heart of Christ, and thinking of temporal needs, he would go back, and lead others also, to his old occupation; but the Lord, skilful in His love, lays bare the secret source of failure, brings him to judge himself, and restores his apostleship in a higher and fuller way than ever. He had already said to him, “When thou art converted, or restored, confirm thy brethren”; but after his fall He commits to his care the sheep and lambs so dear to the heart of Christ. And Christ’s sheep and lambs are found in His flock, *not in a fold*.

It is a terrible thing to play fast and loose with conscience, for it issues in judicial blinding to every divine principle—evil is called good, and good evil;

REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN. 51

darkness put for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Conscience disallowed ends in avowed antagonism. But, instead of this, let us remember that however thorough the failure may be, or deep the fall, there are depths of love in the heart of Christ beyond it all—depths unfathomable of a love that passes knowledge. His is a grace that anticipates the fall even if He permits it, and advocates beforehand, in order that all that is essential may be preserved intact. Sustained by divine ministry the faith fails not, in spite, yea, in the midst of that course, headlong and shocking as it is. All that is of God remains, and the rest—horrid history of sins—is turned to invaluable account as a lesson learned of the love of God, and no confidence in the flesh.

REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN.

1 PETER i. 18; ii. 3.

“It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.”

HEB. xiii. 9.

WE are constantly in danger of turning from grace in some shape or other, and need, therefore, to be reminded of the simple way in which God has acted in grace toward us in spite of what we are or had done. Further, that as to our blessings through and in Christ, He has not left, nor could He leave, anything for us to do, that they might be secured to us or be ours. The work of His own beloved Son is the sole ground upon which blessing for us can rest, and is also that whereby God's glory has been secured.

Let us see then what is stated in the above scripture to be true of believers, not theirs by attainment, but by

52 REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN.

simple faith in the Lord Jesus, who had been set before them in the gospel.

And first as to redemption. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were . . . redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." How simple and how definite! There is no room for uncertainty here. They were redeemed, and they knew it. And so necessary is this that it is the ground upon which the apostle rests his injunction as to their maintaining practical holiness. The ruined sinner, whose entire history has been continual rebellion against God, must have redemption first, and must also have the knowledge of it. But they knew also that it was not life-works that redeemed them; not even the obedience in life of the Lord Jesus, precious as that was to God. Apart from His atoning death for us, that could but have made our case more hopeless still, for it would have shown how inexcusable we were. But they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. This is of infinite value; and atonement having been wrought by His suffering and death, nothing can possibly alter its value. The redemption rests upon a sure basis, which cannot possibly undergo any change. Death and bloodshedding are wholly unalterable facts. But there are two things said of the Lamb by whose blood we have been redeemed, as there are two things brought before us as having been done by God, and two results for the believer. He was without blemish and without spot. This is no doubt an allusion to what was enjoined as to the victims of old. There must be no blemish and no spot. Lev. xxi. 17-24 may help us to understand the force of without blemish.

REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN. 53

We will take up first His suitability as the Holy One to bear our sins, which chap. ii. 24 states He has done: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." To this God has answered by raising Him from the dead. But why has God done this? That your faith might be—where? In yourself, or in attainment of yours? No, but in God. Not in something that is still to be done, nor in something that is being done by you, but in God *who has done* something. "He has raised Him who bore your sins from the dead." This is faith's resting-place, by this we know that the question of our sins is settled. But there is the other side. He was "without blemish." There was infinite excellence in that wondrous sacrifice. He *was* (not merely *is*) without blemish. And what is God's answer to this? He has given Him glory, and why so? "That your hope might be in God." That is, the work of Christ as the sinless One has met perfectly the whole question of our sins, and God has attested this by raising Him from the dead. But that work of His, as the One without blemish, the One of infinite excellence and perfection (and that here in incarnation), has settled the question of our title to glory, and God has attested this by giving Him glory already, so that we have an established fact as the sure ground of our hope.

Some will deny this, and maintain that to be sure of the present clearance from all our sins, and to be certain of glory with Christ, is presumption. But is it presumption to believe God? But some who will agree as to this are not ready to accept the next truth; "*Having* purified your souls in obeying the truth." Notice well the word "having." It was already done,

54 REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN.

and how? By long years of effort, &c.? No; but by obeying the truth. Now the obedience spoken of is the obedience of faith in the word of the gospel, the soul bowing in faith to Christ as Saviour. And notice it is not something done for them and outside them, but it is said, "*Ye have purified your souls.*"

God's word is not a dead letter, but "living and operative." Received by faith into the soul, it purifies. Whilst the blood is that by which we are redeemed, it is the truth, as the water, that purifies. The death of Christ, as that with which we are identified by faith, is the only means of this. As the apostle John in 1 John v. says, "This is He that *came* by water and blood." Cleansing and expiation are both by the death of Christ. "Such *were* some of you, but ye are *washed*" (1 Cor. vi. 11); "Having our bodies *washed* with pure water" (Heb. x. 22), show the same truth. But this is not mere negative cleansing, if I may so speak, it is positive in its result—"To unfeigned love of the brethren." It is not, however, as some teach, that we now have no sin in us; nor as others are now affirming (who once knew better), that the believer has not two natures, but that sin, though in the believer, has not dominion over him. Its power over him is broken by his identification with the death of Christ through faith. And now the apostle can call upon them to "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

The Word of God (1 John iv. 19) says: "We love Him, because He first loved us," and until God's love is known the product cannot be forthcoming either to God or to those begotten of Him. But are we sufficiently alive to what the Spirit here says: "See that ye love one another with a pure heart *fervently*"?

REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN. 55

Ah! we shall not think so when once we enter the home that the love came from.

But to pass on to our third truth: "*Being born again.*" This truth, like the two preceding, is stated definitely as an accomplished fact; and in the very nature of the case it cannot be outside me. We are "born again," but we must notice what it is that we are born of. Is it of the law, or law principle? Is it God's statement of something that *I ought to do or be*, which is in question in this passage? No, it is not. "Of incorruptible seed by the Word of God, which *liveth and abideth . . .* and this is the Word which by the *gospel* is preached unto you." Now the *being born again* is here distinctly stated to be by the gospel (not by the law), and connected with this are two simple principles. We will take first that which is necessary for our sustenance spiritually. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby to salvation, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The soul born again has tasted, and desires for food, that which has been tasted, and *grows* by it. That is, there is the distinct, undeniable communication of life from Christ by the gospel (for Christ, I need hardly say, is the subject of the gospel); and that life is such that it is indestructible, and, like the seed from which it is produced, is **LIVING** and abiding. My dear reader, if you are a believer in Christ you *have* this life, you have been born again, and your life cannot perish. So says the blessed Word of Him who cannot lie. But the other principle I would speak of is that which is spoken of immediately before the statement we are considering, "See that ye love another with a pure heart fervently,"

56 REDEEMED, PURIFIED, AND BORN AGAIN.

as the apostle John by the Spirit says, "Let *us* love one another, for love is of God." This enables us to see plainly the nature of the life that *has been given* to us by and in Him. There is no possible doubt of what its nature is. It is of God, and therefore it is added in 1 John iv., "And everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It is plain then that life is communicated—is imparted; that the life shows itself by desiring as food that which was used to produce it; it is proved in display by growth, and also by manifesting its innate principle—love.

Let us then hold fast to the principle of grace, and insist that the redemption, purification, and the being born again are accomplished facts,* and are already true of every believer, no matter how feeble his faith, or whether he has laid hold of the Lord Jesus by faith no longer than an hour ago. He is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ *from* his vain conversation (way of living), he has purified his soul *to* the unfeigned love of the brethren, and he has been born again by the gospel; wherein God has displayed Himself in the greatest love, in sovereign grace, and richest mercy.

And let us each go on with faith unshaken and hope undimmed, with Christ, in that glory which is rightly His, before our hearts. And, oh, the joy that there is in that hope! We may at any moment as called by Him enter upon that glory, when He will own us as His redeemed before His Father.

Let us walk then the brief time that we may be left here as those that have been redeemed by Him to be His own peculiar treasure. B. G. (Gateshead).

* There is also the present process of purification according to Christ glorified, for which each believer is personally responsible. (See 1 John iii. 3.)—ED.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(*From Shorthand Report.*)

LECTURE III. CHAPTER II.

WE see in this chapter that the Churches are in a very special way addressed, because of the repeated exhortations, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches." The Spirit is saying something particular to the Churches, to that which bears the name of Christ in this world, so that it has a precise application to ourselves. The Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself in a very remarkable character, not such as we are accustomed to. It is not simply as the Saviour that He presents Himself to us in this book; we have Him as the Son of man, and not only so, but as the Son of David, and also as the Son of God. These are the three characters which the Lord Jesus Christ sustains. He spoke of Himself as the Son of man, that name which He delighted to apply to Himself perhaps more often than any other. It was as Son of man He was to be lifted up; and He presents Himself as Son of man here, not in His saving, but in His judging character. We have Him as Son of God too, with all the characteristics and attributes of Deity. Also we were noticing last time that He is clothed with those attributes which signify His utter abhorrence of everything that is evil. He could not even save our souls at the expense of putting up with evil. He indeed, when standing before God with respect to our sins, confessed them as His own. He bore them in

His own body on the tree. He suffered not one single sin to pass until that sin had been atoned for, and the judgment expended on His own holy person and God glorified about it. And because the transaction was between two divine persons, the Father and the Son, it was not until every single sin that could be, or would be laid to the account of every believer, until that sin had been dealt with and judgment administered according to the full requirements, and God glorified about it, that the blessed Lord Jesus Christ gave up His spirit. Then He rises from the dead a victor over it in order to bring us into the same place as Himself. That is why no sin can be imputed to the believer, because it has been imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see then that personally He never puts up with anything that is evil of any sort or kind, and, having redeemed His own and having established His Church in this world on the ground of redemption, He does not put up with any evil thing in it at all. As a matter of fact we know that in the early days of the Church's history, when deception came in, and Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions and brought part of the price as though it had been all, they were excommunicated by death. This is but a specimen of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ regards an evil thing in that which represents Himself, and is responsible to maintain His character in this world.

People talk about needed truth ; this is a very needed truth. The needed truth for saints to know is that the Lord Jesus Christ in no wise puts up with evil. His character is presented to us here in that way—"a sharp, two-edged sword, and His countenance shining as the sun in its strength."

But there is another character presented to us, and that is when He has made use of evil; because He would not permit evil if He did not make a good use of it. The way in which He is bringing good out of evil in this day is by allowing the success of evil and Satan to bring trouble upon the Church. It brings people to their senses. This is a very good thing. The prodigal son began thus. He came to himself before there was any good there, and in that way the Lord Jesus Christ uses evil in this world. He makes use of Satan as a whip for the saints; He permits evil for His own good and wise purpose in the world, and when evil has accomplished that for which it was permitted the Lord Jesus Christ puts an end to it altogether.

But there are only two points to which the Lord draws particular attention when John, hearing the trumpet, looks back and sees this glorious person with the seven stars in His hand walking amid the seven golden candlesticks. The Lord, in speaking to John as he turns, gives special instruction with regard to—

“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest, and of the seven golden candlesticks.” These are the things about which we have to listen to the Lord’s instruction—that is to say, we have to understand our present relation with the Lord Jesus Christ in the world, and we have to understand it by faith in order that we may answer to our responsibilities, and be for Him while we are here. Why has God set aside His people Israel, and introduced Christianity into the world? The Church is introduced into this world to stand as witness for Christ against the power of evil. You get God’s testimony in the world to-day, and the devil doing in a

certain sense just what he likes—I mean the world is the devil's playground, the very world God created. If you want to see what is not like Christ, you will find it in the world. It has become the scene where Satan does as he pleases and governs morally, and is the god and prince of this world. He is the spring of the clock of this world, and sets it going every day. Everything morally evil in this world Satan is at the back of, and in that sense he does just what he likes. In the midst of a scene like this Christ has His testimony; not a testimony that is linked up with the world, for it is in distinct opposition to the devil's world—man's world, if you please, only the devil is master. And we have to understand that the Church is here as Christ's testimony and God's witness against everything else, morally speaking. So He tells John that the seven stars in His right hand are the angels of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches. You say, Why has He these stars in His right hand? That is the way He is working—a man works with his right hand. The way Christ is working and upholding His testimony in this world is by means of the stars. They are these seven angels. What are the angels? They are the mystical representatives of the Churches, because in the second chapter the Lord addresses Himself to the Church and the angel indifferently. That is to say, He speaks to the angel, and in so doing he is speaking to the Church. When you come to the application of it you see the Spirit speaking to the Churches. The two things are practically the same; only the angel is the representative of the Church. In what way? Have we a bishop, priest, or deacon? No, it is no mere official

representative, that is not the point at all; what represents the Church for Christ is the character of the thing. The Lord Jesus Christ is shedding heavenly light (because that is what stars are for) in this world, and is doing His work by means of these stars; and He is not doing any work in this world apart from His Church. He is not putting down evil apart from the men He takes up to carry on His testimony. The Lord Jesus Christ, though not limited to the responsibility of the saints here, is nevertheless doing nothing in this world apart from those that own His name. You will never find an atom of divine truth apart from those who own the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. Will you go to Mahomet for it, or to Confucius, or to the famed books of antiquity? You will find them revelations of demons. But the moment you come to the Word of God no one has that but the Church of God alone. And it is solely by those who own His name here in this world that Christ is doing His work; and when they prove themselves unfit for the service He will do it Himself without them.

At the close of the history of the Church in this world Christ puts the Church aside—spues it out of His mouth, and says, I will do the work Myself. And then the Church is no good any longer; but in the meanwhile it does Christ's work in this world as by means of the seven stars.

They are stars for Christ, and angels for the Churches. Each one of us in an assembly—and if you take the thing as a whole, every person that owns the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world—puts in a little bit of character in that which represents Christ here. Christ is represented in this world by each one of us,

according to the way in which we present Him ; so that the character of any individual assembly, such as we have addressed here, is represented by that of everybody in it.

Every one of us should recognise that if we are bearing the name of Christ in this world, Christ is represented by the character we present, and that the Church as a whole goes to make up the angel. And the Lord looks to see if that is the sort of thing which presents Him. He says, There are certain defects, and I point them out because they do not present me. And it is important we should have ears to hear. That was the main thing for which the Lord addressed the vision to John. He said, I will tell you "the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks ; the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."

They are always candlesticks for Christ, and must remain so till the end, until He gives it all up, until the Church is discarded and carried away to Babylon in a figure. Till then His right hand has it, and it is established in the world for Christ. The thing is a golden candlestick. As regards the actual fact, it is just so many companies of Christians that bear the name of Christ.

He addresses first the Church of Ephesus, and to give the history of the Churches as a whole you will find this about them, it ends in perfect failure ; the Church will not stay here for ever. People think the Church will convert the world. No, the world will convert the Church. So far from the Church turning the world to Christ, the world will turn the Church to

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

63

antichrist. Thanks be to God, all the true ones in it will be taken out of the earthly profession; but nevertheless it is a solemn thing that what the history here records is, not that the Church converts the world, but that the world converts the Church.

The devil—well, I was going to say, I trust it is not irreverent—is not original; that is, God has exposed his ways of working, and he always proceeds on certain lines and principles. God has exposed them so that a man that has an ear may avoid them. Take what happened at the first. The Lord signified the principle upon which the serpent, the instrument of mischief, had worked, by saying to Adam—not to the woman, because she was not the responsible party: “Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife.” He says not, Because thou hast hearkened to the serpent. No; the serpent keeps in the background as long as he can, and puts something else that will attract; and by means of this it is that God is excluded and the creature put before God. The Lord said: “Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake.” This is the way he began, and it is the principle of idolatry; putting the creature before the Creator. And this is the sort of thing we have to deal with to-day. Paul tells us, in the Epistle to Timothy, that “in the last days perilous times shall come.” Because there are three things that people will love and three things they will not love; and they will cover it all with a form of piety, but denying the power of it.

They are lovers of themselves, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasures: and the Spirit of God declares

this. These are three things that Satan puts before the souls of those who own the name of Jesus; for it says, "They are lovers of pleasures *more* than lovers of God." They have got the creature, or Satan has put the creature in place of the Creator, and attached the heart of the man who bears the name of Christ to a creature, and the Creator is put out of His place. What was it that the first history ended with? It began with the principle of idolatry and ended with something still worse, namely, that Cain killed the man God approved of. God approved of Abel, and because God approved of Abel Cain slew him. So you get these two things as a principle of Satan's work in this world: one is idolatry and the other the rejection of Christ. These two things are the principle upon which Satan is working to-day, and they run through God's history of the Church. It began in principle with idolatry and ends in doing without Christ. When Israel was gathered out from the nations and brought to God into the wilderness, what did they begin their wilderness journey with? Making a golden calf. "Make us gods that shall go before us, because as for this Moses, we do not know what has become of him." And Aaron made a god of gold, and they proclaimed a feast to Jehovah and said: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." But what did their wilderness journey terminate with? When they got to the borders of the land they said, "Would God we had died in Egypt"; and said, "Let us make a captain over us." They began their history as a people brought out of Egypt with idolatry, and ended their journey across the wilderness by rejecting God's leader. You see that the devil acts on the same

principle as to-day. We have the old enemy at work, and we have to be aware of his devices.

Look at the kingdom; what did this begin with? The very same thing—worshipping idols. Solomon set them up. Solomon began idolatry in the kingdom of Israel that God had set up as a testimony to the one God. God cured them of that in a certain way by carrying them away to Babylon. But what did the history of the kingdom end with? *Nailing Christ upon the cross.* And we shall see that the ruin of the Church arises from the same thing which caused the ruin of Israel and the ruin of man in the beginning.

I will just give you a slight sketch of these seven Churches.

They run in pairs. The first two Churches represent the period of decline. The next two present what is a worse state of things, that is, the introduction of poisonous doctrine. Pergamos and Thyatira bring distinctly before you the era in which poisonous doctrine began to be introduced and established as doctrine in the Church. The final phase is a phase of death. Sardis is dead. Laodicea is worse than dead. There are two kinds of deadness. You may be dead to a person, to the love and kindness he may show you, while in his presence; that is one kind. But when that person is outside and you are perfectly *indifferent to it, and glad to be quit of him and without that kind friend*, that is a worse sort of deadness. These are the two you find in the last phase of the Church. In *Sardis* Christ is there in His goodness; and in *Laodicea* Christ is outside the door, and the Church is content to have Him outside. You cannot go further in hardness, in coldness, in depravity

of heart than content to do without the only friend you have: "Rich and increased in goods, and need of nothing."

The Lord addresses His Word to the angel of the Church at Ephesus, and presents Himself in His full proper character, according to what He would be if the Church were always right—"He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." The Lord Jesus Christ never anticipates failure. He does not say, I know what you are; but when He finds the thing as it is He has to recognise it. You observe the way He treated Adam. He did not credit him with doing something wrong, but when the wrong was done, then He said, "Adam, where art thou?" and he had to tell the tale. He came down to commune with the man, have friendly intercourse; and that is a right expression, because God can be friendly. He came in order to have friendly intercourse with the man He created and set in that beautiful garden, but the man did not want it because he had disobeyed. Everything was broken. The link between that man's heart and his God was broken, but the Lord comes, as though nothing had happened, to find it out for Himself. We see the same in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. Was the Lord satisfied merely to hear the cry of it? No. He said, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it." He will not credit man with wickedness until it is proved beyond doubt. He comes to the Church in the earliest stage of its history, holding the seven stars in His right hand, no difference is made at all;

and He has to inspect the state of things. He says, "I know thy works," and the state is very good. Would you not say these people were in a remarkably good and flourishing condition? He says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." These are all positively good things. Plenty of preaching the gospel, prayer meetings, societies for good works; the Lord notices all these things — works, labour, patience. And as for what was not good, they could not bear the evil men. What a good character! And so earnest were they that they tried those who said they were apostles, and were not, and found them liars. More than that, He says, "Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted." That is to say, they were not only jealous of having evil inside, but were willing to bear evil from without. Active in good works, opposed to evil within and suffering evil from without. What more could they have done? Well, you see, there was something lacking, and the Lord Jesus notices it in a very definite way. He says, as it were, What spoils all that for Me is this: you have left your first love. To Me all your labours are not a bit satisfactory if they do not arise from love. As for patience, there is no hope in it; I have no pleasure in it. I must have a single eye for Myself, and if there *is not that I do not care for all the rest put together.* It is a great thing for us to know what He likes. It is the same as when He came into the garden of Eden: He found the link broken between that heart and Himself. And here the Lord Jesus Christ comes into the Church, and finds the link with that heart and Himself broken. "Thou hast left thy first love."

The Lord wants love and a single eye. He does not want anybody to share your affection with Him; and unless your spiritual affections and mind too are centred simply and wholly on Christ, the devil gets the rest, and gets all because Christ will not have a share in it. He says, "I have" (not "somewhat"), but "I have against thee."

Look when Israel had gone after idols, and the Lord sends Jeremiah to speak to them in a similar way, just as the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to us here. "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying I remember"—the Lord has a good memory for good things, and He will need to have a good memory for bad ones when the day of judgment comes—"I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness." Where did they go after the Lord? In the wilderness, when there was nothing to get there: but the Lord was there. It was a single eye, a simple heart, a devoted soul. That is just what the Lord values, and without that nothing has any value in His eyes at all. What was wrong with the wilderness? Nothing at all. It was "a land that was not sown"; there was no *seed* in the ground, but the Lord was there, and they went after Him and nothing else besides. There was no strange god there then, and He wanted Jeremiah to recall to the minds of the people of Israel that single eye and devout love. This is what He noticed was lacking when He came down to inspect the state of the Church at Ephesus. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent"—get back to the original state of things, which, by-the-by, they never did and the Church never will, for we have its history here—"or else I will come unto thee

quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place." This is what I believe has been done. I believe the candlestick of the Church has been removed out of its place, not taken away altogether; but the Church has not the same place to-day as it had at the beginning. Where are the mighty miracles that were wrought once? Where the opening of the prison doors when a man is put into prison for preaching the gospel as at first? Those were grand days, and the Church has not got that kind of day now. No, the candlestick is removed.

But I will give you an instance of the way in which the Lord deals. You remember, in regard to the kingdom, God set it up gloriously in Solomon, and all had to recognise and come from the ends of the earth to hearken to the wisdom of Solomon. But he loved many strange women besides the daughter of Pharaoh, and his heart clave to them in love, and his wives turned away his heart, so that when he became old his wives turned away his heart after strange gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God as David his father's heart was perfect, because he went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, and built a high place for Chemosh, and turned away after these false gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, and He said to him, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes which I commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." The Lord will not put up with sin; if there is evil in His people He marks His disapprobation of it. But He said, "I will not do it in thy days for thy father

David's sake, but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom, but will give one tribe to thy son, for the sake of David My servant." The Lord marks His disapprobation of the devil's success, and of the failures of the responsibility to maintain His testimony; but He maintains the lamp, nevertheless, and testimony to His truth in spite of everything. Therefore He says, "I will give him one tribe for the sake of David My servant, and Jerusalem, which I have chosen." And as a matter of fact there were three tribes. The Lord is always better than His word in a certain sense. He gave him the tribe of Judah, and he got Levi and Benjamin as well. But the Lord removed the kingdom from the state in which He established it, from that condition, and marked it with His sense of what the failure was.

He says, "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place except thou repent."

There is just this one thing more which He notices, "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes." What was this? You find it a little lower down,* it is similar to that which Balaam did. It was a very subtle thing: he connected by doctrine the Lord's people with the idolatrous principles of the nations around for the sake of money. In order to secure the reward he invented a system by which God's people were to be mingled with the idolatrous nations around. This seems to be like the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.

* Verse 15 reads, "*So thou also hast,*" not "*thou hast also,*" and "in like manner" instead of "which thing I hate." It is not quite certain, however, that the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was similar to that of Balaam; but, if not, we are without scriptural instruction respecting Nicolaitanism.

Here it is not quite so bad, it is the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes. Led away by their own thoughts and feelings of what was right and proper, they thought it a very nice thing to go on with Jewish ordinances and ceremonies, and to bring in the principles connected with the law. This is probably the sin of these Nicolaitanes, and is what you find the apostle Paul condemns distinctly in the Epistle to the Galatians. He says, "When ye knew not God ye were in bondage to those who by nature are not gods. But now, after that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" These weak and beggarly elements are, "You observe days and months, and times and years." To-day the Church is full of these observances. You have saints' days innumerable; you have certain feasts and fasts and festivals established in the Church wherever you go. And do not people think it is a very right and nice thing to have them? Because they say it recalls the memory to divine things. The apostle says it is nothing less than idolatry. It is not even going back to legal principles, but to heathenism. You see how important it is to get our instructions from Scripture, and not from what people say. It was not formed into a doctrine yet, but people did it. I do not want to go into Church history, but will mention that the apostle John was scarcely off the scene forty years before they established a fast of forty days at Lent. That shows how quickly the whole Church was impregnated with the deeds of the Nicolaitanes before it became doctrine. The devil is at work. He gets the thin edge of the wedge in, and he very soon knows how to strike it home; but the Spirit of God warns

us against the thin edge of the wedge. So the Lord says, "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

"*The tree of life.*" That is a good thing. When Adam took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he was shut out from the tree of life. The Lord set an angel and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life, lest he "eat and live for ever." So he lost the earthly paradise, and it can never be regained. We never had an earthly paradise promised to us at all, and however much failure comes in here in connection with our responsibility as the Church of God, it cannot shut the overcomer out of heaven; that is all secure. We have to own failure, and see the result of it on every hand; but the devil cannot deprive us of the tree of life. That is the only thing worth having.

Then the Lord addresses the Church of Smyrna, and in a very blessed way. He says, "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." Is that any comfort to you? "The first and the last." Does that comfort your heart? You say, I scarcely ever thought of it. It is important we should think of it. What does He mean by saying this? Well, you have to consider that the Church at Smyrna was suffering the consequences of what had gone on at Ephesus. The consequences were these—they were in a deal of trouble, and the devil was allowed to bring the hammer down upon them, and, humanly speaking, they were in a most wretched, miserable condition—

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

73

tribulation, poverty, reproach, and persecution. The world could point the finger of scorn at them—troubled, mocked, scoffed at, poor, and persecuted. It is a terrible thing, but the Lord says, "Thou art rich." You need not be afraid, when you get into trouble for Christ's sake, that the Lord disregards your condition. Rather He finds your poverty and place of reproach, and the tribulation you are in, and the persecution you may have to suffer, an occasion of His expressing His satisfaction with you. The strange part of it is this, that when people ought to mourn they are exalted, and when they ought to be happy they mourn. When things are going on prosperously they are happy, when they ought to mourn; but when things are weak, they mourn when they might be happy. When we are in trouble and persecuted and reproached (because we fail, surely that is so, but we own the place), we have the Lord's comfort there.

He presents Himself as the "first and last, who was dead and is alive." These are divine titles; you may find them in Isaiah. It is the way in which the Lord presents Himself to Israel in contrast with idols, because Jehovah institutes all the course and order of His dealings with men. God has ordered all the dispensations which have passed in this world in connection with man in it. He started them, and He started them with a certain purpose; and when that purpose is accomplished He will end them, and the eternal state will come in. He calls the generations from the beginning, and nobody else can. No one can tell you how the thing will end but God, and nobody has said how it began but God. Therefore He is the "first and the last" that "callest the generations from the

beginning" (Isaiah xli. 4), and that "declareth the end from the beginning." (Isaiah xlvi. 10.) Moreover, He is Himself one who has entered the dispensations in which man has been found in this world, and has passed out of them by death. We have a wonderful Comforter who has ordered it all and accomplished all, and more than that, He has been into it and has gone out of it by death, and has power over everything that is there. So He says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich)." He comforts them and gives them a blessed promise.

In conclusion I would draw your attention to this. It is when we are in trouble and difficulty through failure, and recognise the trouble and the failure, that we get the Lord's comfort. Look at the way in which He dealt with Israel. Israel had committed abominations, and the Lord had written "Not My people" upon them. He was so angry with them that He hedged up their way with thorns—a very difficult position to be in—and He made it a troublesome day for them. But what does He say? "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness." He brings the persons, His witnesses, those that are the vessels of His testimony, into trouble, into a place of a desert. But why? Do you say, to make her feel what it is to be without these good things, and starve her? No. "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness to speak comfortably unto her." He could not speak comfortably to her when she had everything her own way, as long as she was decking herself with her jewels and forgetting the Lord. No, you see the wisdom of His ways. He brings her into the wilderness. What did her lovers care for the wilderness? They kept away from

it. When she is alone He speaks comfort to her. That is the way He gets to the heart and gets to the Church. And here you find the poor Church in the wilderness, but not a word of anger. He says, "I will speak comfortably to her, and give her her vineyards from thence"; that is, she will not have vineyards given except she is in the wilderness.

And the valley of Achor, the place of Israel's shame, He makes a door of hope. What is more, He goes on to say, "She shall sing in the wilderness"; you get quite happy there! That is the way of the Lord, the way He works and arouses the conscience and makes you feel what sin is. And when you are in sorrow and tribulation, and persecution and reproach, you begin to feel happy; that is, if you recognise the Lord is doing it. "And she shall sing as in the days of her youth"; nobody ever sings so joyfully as in the days of their youth. What the Lord does is that He brings back the old affections, "*as in the day when she came up out of Egypt.*" The Lord knows how to deal with *our* hearts, though no doubt the address to Smyrna refers to a special stage of the Church's history, which you may read of in the various histories that are published as to the Church's sojourn in this world. She had to pass through the persecution of the wicked emperors of Rome; but, nevertheless, that is the very time when the Lord comforts, when the singing begins, and is a time that precedes deliverance. It is the condition of things that follows upon failure. The Church has failed quite enough, it does not want to fail any more. We have to recognise the failure, and when we find that in consequence of the failure we are brought into a position of difficulty, trouble, reproach, and perse-

cution, then it is we can sing. Do not get depressed then: be depressed when things are going on smoothly. But the moment you get into trouble, and the devil is allowed to bring his power down upon the Christian because of faithfulness, then is the time to rejoice and be glad, and the time the Lord comforts the heart. As He says, "They shall call me Ishi"; that is to say, "my husband": there is the renewed recognition of relationship—no longer "Baali," my lord; "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, so that they shall never more be remembered by them."

There is the self-judgment that rejoices in the heart being renewed in its young affections to the one who is loved.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The devil may deal very badly with us and bring us into much trouble; there may be persecution; we may have to suffer for the Lord at the expense of our lives. Never mind, we cannot be hurt of the second death; and we are to be faithful to Him through it all; and He will bring us through, because He is the "first and last." He has been into the world and died, and is risen again and has ascended up on high, and has the keys of hell and of death.

CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE.

No. 3.

NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS.

WHILE upon matters of importance in daily Christian walk, the enquiry arises whether Scripture affords help as regards the relationships of nature?—a subject by universal consent so difficult.

†The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, turns every way, not as a terror, but to protect and guide the Christian in his path. It furnishes instruction for every relationship in which he properly may be found.

Pardon me, the difficulty is this: That the relationships in question are natural and the Christian is spiritual, so that in the nature of things there is no correspondence between him and such a position.

†Reason needs a curb. The relationships, though not spiritual, are of God, and the Christian, though spiritual, is not unnatural. That which is of God, and one who is spiritual, are not ill-assorted if God so order. Moreover, it is well to remember that the body is the Lord's, whatever its condition. For the present it is of dust and corruptible, needing to be redeemed—an earthen vessel in no way corresponding to the heavenly treasure. Yet all Christian truth recognises it as such, and the Holy Spirit appropriates it in that state as His dwelling-place—divine pledge, of course, of resurrection.

Why, then, are we told that the body is dead?

†Because of sin. The body is not the living power of Christianity. The Spirit is this, and the body is but the servant, not a master, and must be kept ever in the place of subjection. For this the power of the Spirit is

needed, so that the body may in no case rule the man as life, which would be sin.

At least the affections are not sin.

† Affections, if they govern the man, are passions and lusts, and these they that are of the Christ have crucified. The fact is the body now is but a temporary tabernacle, not the building of God, but, nevertheless, is the link in divine wisdom of that which is eternal, heavenly, and divine with this time scene and a ruined world. Thus in taking the body prepared for Him the blessed Lord brought the compassions of Deity into the sorrows of humanity, though in Him sin apart and in sympathy of suffering, not as liable by nature to the ills to which humanity is heir.

Yet He was crucified through weakness.

† True He became man for this, which otherwise were impossible for God, and learned what obedience was by the things He suffered. And even we, having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, bring by His intercession the woes of a groaning creation to the ear and heart of a God of grace, as those who are yet in the body.

Then this body of humiliation has an important place in the economy of grace.

† And a real place. It is His, and He is glorified in it. Consequently, as His property, and servant, and temple, all that is connected with it by creation is cared for by Him—the affections and feelings, the relationships and needs, quiet and tranquillity in a scene of turmoil, sustenance and covering. He is the Preserver and Saviour of the body. To number all the hairs of our head is a greater display of what God is in Himself than to count the number of the stars. The one is the calculation of a love to which the least thing is precious—a painstaking care which overlooks nothing.

The other is a wisdom that takes account of all His works, and compassionates the woes of Israel. This is realized in a millennial earth, but that is satisfied with nothing short of resurrection and a new creation. Spiritually Christ displays His power more gloriously in carrying victoriously through this world an infirm and utterly helpless man than in trampling the power of evil beneath His feet. Crippled, a Jacob would cling in dependence where once he strove. With a thorn for the flesh, Paul learned to boast in his infirmities. Creature power gone, Christ's grace proves its sufficiency, and His strength its perfectness.

What value this gives to the body of dust and that which pertains to it!

† Yes, in an apostate scene the earthly tabernacle is a fit vessel of divine power. Moreover, for the believer, that which naturally ministers to its well-being, whether in its relationships or needs, is sanctified by God's Word and free intercourse with Him. Being received with thanksgiving, the creature is ours no longer by nature, but by the Word of God.

Ah! that fully answers my question, and it is plain that while in this world the creature and its natural relationships are for us on a new and Christian footing, not merely on sufferance.

† Quite so; even the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and *vice versa*. So also the children are holy; fathers are to bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, and children to obey their parents in the Lord. Marriage, too, must be in the Lord. In fact, all takes now a proper Christian character; and though these links are of nature merely, and to end with life here, yet the power to live in them soberly, justly, and piously is of the Spirit only.

RESURRECTION.

THE great central truth of Christianity is the fact of man risen from among the dead in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the final and glorious proof of the supremacy of God above and beyond all the failure of that which He has created, and is the display of His love and tender care and intervention on behalf of man.

How immensely important is this now that God is no longer known by the light of nature, clear and manifested though the reality of His existence be. Nor can He be found out by wisdom of man, and, therefore, vain is the effort of scientists and philosophers to do so. He is known by the word of revelation alone and faith in it. To this, therefore, we turn and find Him to be the God of resurrection. Our trust is no longer "in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." (2 Cor. i. 9.)

Nor is this a mere doctrine, however true; but it encourages us in all our tribulation. For by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead we know Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions and God of all encouragement.

It is true that He never left Himself without a witness of His gracious care in providence, even of reprobate creatures, doing good and giving from heaven rain and fruitful seasons, filling the hearts of men with food and gladness. But still death closed finally the scene where purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare were a possibility. It was the king of terrors; but more, the sting of death was sin. This added unbearable agony to the thought of man's passing and painful

life. But for transgression unforgiven he would oft-times in his sorrow choose strangling and death (Job xv. 7-21); but the question solemnly recurred, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (xiv. 14.) "There is hope for a tree: if it be cut down, it will sprout again" (vv. 7-9); but man, if he expireth, where is he? Is man of less account than a tree? Surely no! but the bitter and terrible truism ever and anon presented itself, "What is man that he should be pure?" (xv. 14) "How should man be just with God? Or how should he be clean that is born of a woman?" Had man been but as a tree he could have confided in a considerate God; but he was a sinner, and would have to meet a holy and righteous God. Death therefore had its terrors, which, pressed to the lips by human misery, brought anguish insupportable to the soul—a draught inevitable, yet too bitter for man to drink.

Dark and awful as were sin and death, and all beyond a mystery impenetrable, yet before life and incorruptibility were brought to light faith could look to God beyond the darkness and trust in Him to be remembered, though in Sheol (xiv. 13), and changed when the time came. Of that resurrection scene, with every question settled, Job could say, "Out of my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself." (xix. 25-27.)

Faith's record then was, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; now we know that our Redeemer has risen from among the dead, the first-fruits of those fallen asleep. (1 Cor. xv. 20.)

The importance of the resurrection of Christ, and, therefore, of the Christian's, is that it is "from among the dead"—proof of the especial favour of God and of His intervention on behalf of man, as one in whom He has found His delight. This character of resur-

rection had formed no part of Jewish doctrine, though the orthodox Pharisees confessed a general resurrection of the dead. Nor did the Old Testament teach that some would be raised while others were still left in the graves. The disciples therefore were in doubt, "questioning among themselves what rising *from among* the dead was." They were well acquainted with the current teaching of a general resurrection (Mark ix. 10) of the just and unjust (Acts xxiv. 15); but a first resurrection, in which all who have part are blessed and holy, and who "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, while the rest of the dead did not live till the thousand years had been completed" (Rev. xx. 4, 5), such a thought had never entered their minds. Indeed, many Christians to-day are quite as ignorant on this important subject as the disciples were.

This ignorance arises from not perceiving that Christ, and those who are His, rise from among the dead because of righteousness on God's part and the Father's glory. So that the blessed Lord in speaking of it could declare, "All that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life." They share with Christ in the value of His work and in life beyond the grave, while the rest who have done evil rise a thousand years afterwards for judgment and the second death. (John v. 29.)

Christ's resurrection is the proof that all the sins which He bore in His own body on the tree, and they were ours, are put away for ever. They were upon Him once, and He suffered for them there; they are no longer upon Him, and He is glorified without them. Remission of sins was therefore proclaimed in His name as soon as He arose from the dead. The question of judgment

RESURRECTION.

83

is passed for ever for those who believe, because as He is so are we in this world.

So absolutely is our resurrection linked with His, that if the dead are not raised, neither is He raised. He in resurrection is the first-fruits, like the wave-sheaf waved before the Lord after the passover. It is the pledge and proof of the harvest; there could be no first-fruits without the harvest. (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

The resurrection of the believer, like that of Christ, is beyond death and judgment, the curse of law and sin and the world. By virtue of Christ's death he rises incorruptible, immortal, bearing the image of the heavenly One, with a spiritual body, glorious and in power.

It is essential that the true character of Christ's resurrection should be apprehended, not merely as a fact, but for the proper understanding of Christian doctrine. We are buried with Him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should live in newness of life as those who have died unto sin, having no more to do with sin than He now has. We are dead to the law, having died to that in which we were held, redeemed from its curse. We have died with Christ from the elements of the world, and have been raised with Him to seek the things which are above. Feebly, if at all, it may be, do our souls take up this marvellous place in which the grace of God sets us in Christ; but the defect arises from the little appreciation in our souls of the power and value of His resurrection. It is the wholly new place formed for man which, with the heavenly glory into which Christ has already entered, is the accomplishment of the eternal thoughts and purposes of God for the man of His counsels, the man of His good pleasure.

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 3.

“THESE things after all are not misfortunes, but the means of teaching us deep and blessed lessons, the value of which we shall only know in eternity itself, even the absolute sufficiency of Christ for each and all. Doubtless this is what is more than ever valued by —, but necessarily only perfectly so when we are with Christ.

“It has seemed to me that part of the blessedness of being with Him before the rapture is that the knowledge of Him *there* is in the perfection of isolation, such as otherwise would be impossible either in this world or in the risen scene. It is not, of course, a perfect state, but it is to be with Him in an experience not otherwise possible.

“At least it was a desire of the apostle’s heart to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and this could not be for the thing itself, but for the results in the knowledge of Christ. To be beside oneself to God is not, I suppose, an eternal condition, but it is a desirable state in this present wilderness world, and death for the believer can only perfect this—‘to depart and to be with Christ is far better.’ The absence of those used by Him to guide and care for the saints produces in measure in the Church this experience of the sufficiency of Christ by the very sense of our need, and of the way He meets it.

“May this ever be the result in our souls of the sorrows of the scene.”

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(From Shorthand Report.)

LECTURE 4, CHAPTER II., VERSE 12.

WE were considering the first stage of the Church's history on the last occasion, and were noticing that the position described presents a period when the Church loses its first estate. The moment failure came in, and the Church lost its first love, there was not the same love to Christ, and there was no longer the same place in the world, no longer the same evidence of spiritual power there, as there had been. Because, when all was simplicity and devotedness to the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was no other object before the souls of the saints but Christ, we know how God intervened in a most remarkable way, shaking the prison foundations and delivering His servants, sending an angel to Peter when he was chained between two soldiers, and causing his manacles to drop off, instructing him to clothe himself with his mantle and put on his sandals, and the great gate at the entrance to the city opening of its own accord. All these things show how clearly divine power was with the Church. Beloved friends, if you have to get into prison for the sake of the Lord Jesus, you will not have an angel sent to take you out. We have the same Saviour who is able to deliver His servants, no matter what the danger; but the reason is simply this, that the first love has failed,

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and the Church has no longer the place in the world that it once had. So we see that decline has come in, and not only so, but that the tendency of things is to drift into the world. That is always the danger—the danger for each one of us personally. The world is a system of things around us, and there is ever the danger of drifting into it, and all that is in the world is not of the Father. As to its motives, principles, and objects, the saint has nothing to do with any one thing that is to be found in the whole world. He has his duties to do and his responsibilities to take up, and the varied relationships of life in which God has placed him to faithfully fulfil; but as regards that which moves and governs the world, morally, the saint has nothing whatsoever to do with it. Well, then, what the danger is for us individually was the danger for the Church collectively at the first. Therefore we find that the next Church presented to us is where God makes felt the character of the world in its opposition to Christ, and in its opposition to those who are Christ's down here. What God allowed to come out in the most remarkable way in the early ages of the Church is the very same thing that would come out to-day if God permitted it. The god of this world would have every one of us hung up to the nearest lamp-post if he could. I know we have to-day churches at nearly every corner of the street, and the whole scene calls itself Christian, but that does not alter the heart of it. The external thing is but the shell; and no matter how beautiful the shell, the important thing is not what is outside, but what is inside. Satan is as much the god of this world to-day as ever he was, and, if God permitted, what

occurred at the first would take place again to-day. When the Church had failed in its first love He brought it into persecutions and trial, and that from the very world it was going on with. Where did we get our idols from? From the world. God caused the Church to find out in a providential way what sort of world it was and what sort of idols they were; and He made the Church to experience that the thing it was going on with as idols was, when Satan had the power, nothing more nor less than persecution. This world would not leave a sound bone in our bodies if it could have its own way. We may make idols of it, but behind the idols is the power of Satan, who would make us feel it if he could. But faith recognizes that the Church has failed, and is no longer in the place it once was, and Satan being the god of this world, faith therefore keeps very clear of it.

Now we will look at the third Church, the letter to which I have read to you this evening. We find a very extraordinary state of things when we read the message to Pergamos. In spite of all the solemn discipline into which God brought the saints at the hands of the world, and of him who was the god of it, the Church has drifted into the fullest fellowship, one may say, with the very thing that had persecuted her beforehand. The Lord Jesus presents Himself to Pergamos in a very solemn way: "These things saith He that hath the sharp sword with two edges." It is a sword that cuts both ways, and there is no getting out of its power. And we were remembering that the sharp sword pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with His governing character. He will wield it when He takes up again the government of this

world. At the present moment the Lord Jesus Christ is hidden within the heavens, which must receive Him till the day of the restitution of all things. When that day comes the Lord Jesus will resume directly the reins of government in this world, and the first instrument that He uses in order to carry out His government is this sharp sword with two edges. He smites the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He slays the wicked. He will not have any upstart usurper in this world, but *He* takes possession of it. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only Saviour, but He is Son over God's house, and therefore has His sphere of government in the Church of God to-day; He will take up His sphere of government in the world to-morrow. In the meantime it is the same Person; and when He takes up government He proceeds in the same way.

He says, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." They have got under the very wing of Satan himself. We do not see these things as He sees them, but we have the Word of God in order that we may do so.

When the Lord Jesus Christ considers the providential history of this Church, He says, "The place where thou dwellest is the place where Satan has his throne." It did not look like it, but that is what it was. This teaches us a very important principle, and it is this—that the moment of deliverance is the moment of danger. When we get relieved from pressure, then is the moment when we may expect Satan to set a trap for our feet. It is not when things are very trying, and when a terrible amount of trouble and persecution sweeps the scene, that Satan has his special

success. Not at all. The Lord Jesus Christ has nothing but commendation for that poor Church which was about to be tried ten days; that is, to have ten successive eras of persecution one after the other, like the strokes of the hammer upon the anvil. He says, "I know you are poor, but you are rich." That was the moment of pressure, and not the moment of danger. When Satan roars, the saint stands as fast as a rock; but when relief comes, then the danger comes. Our God does not delight in afflicting the children of men, He delights in blessing; and therefore, when there is the least chance of recovery and re-establishment, and when He considers that the discipline suffices, then He removes the pressure and gives relief, and Satan steps in. That is the thing we have to be careful about, because we know very well that we have passed through times of trouble, and it is possible that there may be a little relief from pressure. If so, be very careful, because it is the moment when Satan steps in.

I will remind you of an incident in the history of David, who was a remarkable man of God, and one for whom God intervened on certainly four most remarkable occasions. You remember at the hill of Hachilah, while Saul is sleeping in the midst of his soldiers, David spares his life, and cries to him from the top of the hill. Saul recognizes his voice, and says, "I have sinned." His conscience gets reached; the persecutor is after all only a man, though Satan uses him. Satan has no conscience of mercy, but God is above Satan, and God made the man, and Satan did not. The result is, in God's providential way, He makes the man ashamed of persecuting his brother.

Here was the promise no more to persecute, and

blessing instead of the sword. But what is the next thing we hear of? David says in his heart, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." The very moment when deliverance came in was the moment that Satan used to destroy confidence in God in the heart of God's servant, and to take him off the ground of testimony altogether. There was nothing better, he said, than to escape into the land of the Philistines. He left the land of Judah, where God had put him for a testimony; he flees to Achish, the enemy of Israel and of God, and shelters himself under the protection of Achish. If he had had only a little patience, and kept in the path of testimony for a few months longer, God's time would have come to remove, in His wrath, the king He gave in His anger, and to substitute the man after His own heart.

Satan sheltered David under the protection of the world. Here you find the same thing. The Church was relieved from persecution which came on it in the early ages, and the next thing is it is dwelling where Satan's throne is, sheltered under the wing of the world. Where is the Church to-day? You say, What church do you mean? Any church you please. If you like to take the Church of England, not that I would make invidious comparisons, because it is as good as any church so-called, but is it simply relying on a heavenly Christ? I have no wish to say a word against anything that bears the name of Christ; but what the Lord says of the Church here is as true to-day as when He said it—that it is sheltered under the protection of the governing powers of the world. Of course, these are owned and established of God, no matter into whose hands they come. And the Church

does not unchristianize itself because it is there. The Lord Jesus Christ delights to recognize every good thing He can, no matter the place into which the Church has got, and He says, "You are holding fast My name, and have not denied My faith, even in those days in which My martyr Antipas was slain among you." We know that this historically refers to the establishment of Christianity in the Roman Empire under Constantine; but that state of things continues till the present moment, and the world that was Christianized under Constantine remains Christian to-day. It is none the less where the persecutions took place.

The Lord does not find fault merely with the state of things. *Our* eye rests upon the state first; but the Lord goes down to the source of it. When we get the hidden source of the evil discovered and exposed, we know how to get right again; but if we merely have our bad state presented to us, it does not help us to get out of it. The Lord does not merely find fault with the Church for sheltering itself under the wing of Satan. Fear prompted it, because it looked back at those ten days of persecution, and it said, How comfortable it is now—we have such repose. But how are you to continue this always? By trusting God always? or by some expedient of your own? Are you going to maintain a state of peace and security by using human expedients? That is the point. Suppose we come out of a time of trial and feel things more comfortable than they were, are we going to secure this by adopting expedients? Are we going to have recourse to things which partake of a worldly character? The Lord will then have something to say about us as He did about His Church

here. The Lord does not say anything disparagingly to Pergamos about being in the place where Satan's throne is, but He searches out the mischief to the root of it. It is the same thing as He did when evil came in at the first. There were Adam and Eve hidden among the trees of the garden; and they made aprons of fig leaves, and were afraid of God's voice in the garden. The Lord had to call Adam; and you know Adam's answer. He said, "I heard Thy voice, and was afraid, because I was naked." The Lord did not say, You were very wrong to hide yourself and make aprons. He went to the root of the matter, and said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?" And the Lord, having traced the mischief to the root of it, coming down to the serpent, He judges it in the serpent, and deals with the responsible man and also with the woman—the agent of the mischief.

The man is responsible.

The woman is the agent.

The serpent is the source.

It is the same here. He said, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast those that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . and those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes in like manner." These two things work together; they are the two hands by which Satan seeks to drag the Church down into a position of entire ruin.

The history God gives us in these churches is the history of the way in which Satan first introduced idolatry into the thing which God established pure in this world; and having begun thus by setting the

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

93

creature before the Creator, he ends by procuring the rejection of the Man by whom God is going to establish all His blessing. Solemn as it is to say it, the Church down here, in this place of responsibility, is a ruined thing. Satan is successful in carrying out his designs.

The doctrine of Balaam was this—a system of doctrine formed which would enable the saints to mix up with the world without troubling their conscience. That is what you see among Christians every day of your life. It is the religion of Christendom to-day. Mind, there is truth there; but, nevertheless, a system of things is invented for the purpose of enabling the Christian to mix up with the world and not feel he is doing wrong. You remember when it was that Balaam put forth his doctrine; it was when he failed to curse Israel, seeing them from the top of the rocks where God sees His people. God turned his curse into a blessing; and then it was he did a most wicked thing. He says, as it were, The only thing to do—and you will succeed if you do it—is to bring these people into association with those that know not God. Satan and Balaam knew what God was like, knew the principles on which He acted, and that if they could only get God's people mixed up with those who were about to be judged, then the whole thing would be judged. And God sees the inexcusable wickedness of such a doctrine. The thing came to pass historically in this way—by changing the festivals of the heathen demons and false gods to saints' days and feasts in connection with Christianity, so that the heathen could go on under the mantle of Christianity and remain heathen in heart all the same. It was a system

invented of Satan for the purpose of Christianizing the heathen, and enabling Christians to mix up with the world. Take Christmas-day. Everybody knows that it was not the day when Christ was born, but it was fixed when the Romans had their Saturnalia, in order that the heathen might be Christians and have their Saturnalia too, so also the annunciation of the blessed Virgin was settled when the Lupercalia was held. Whence come all the saints' days? The saints' days are the demons' days with their names altered. This was the system invented—a doctrine of which Balaam was the great originator. It was not a new thing, Balaam originated it, and it has gone on ever since—eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication, that is to say, idolatry and worldliness.

You know why Balaam invented his doctrine—it was to secure the reward. He did not get the reward, because he could not curse the people, so he invented this doctrine in order that he might get the reward and bring the people under the curse in spite of God. As a matter of fact, God is not mocked; this man had to find out after all that the Spirit of the Lord could reach him no matter where he was. Do you see how solemn it is to have to do with doctrines which do not belong to Christianity?

There is the other side of the matter, which has been already referred to in the previous lecture. These Nicolaitanes are a similar sort of thing,* but the other side of it. It is not Christianizing the world so that they can mix up in it with an easy conscience, but it is a system pious people take up to bring in Jewish principles. They were introducing it among the

* But see note at foot of page 70

Galatians, as the apostle says, "Ye observe days and months, and times and years" He says, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" They were only observing days, setting special days apart for religious observances, under the idea that it would enable them to be more religious, but in point of fact it was introducing the legal system, and engrafting it upon Christianity

What belongs to Judaism was engrafted on Christianity The Sabbath day and certain fasts and festivals belong to Judaism God had certain days in the course of the year which were to be observed religiously, and proper it was when God established it, because it was a religion of the earth Now it is a religion for heaven, and if people have to do with days and feasts, and introduce earthly principles into heavenly things, it is to ruin the heavenly things

Another thing I observe here is that when false doctrines are introduced the Lord insists that *the assembly* allows them—not merely that people hold them The assembly is the responsible thing, and if these doctrines are brought there the whole assembly is bound to repent of them So the Lord says to the whole assembly, "Repent"

He uses the sword of His mouth, that is His testimony, with the power to put into effect the judgment that it denounces Nobody but Christ had the sword in his mouth, so that if He says a thing it is as good as done

Now comes the reward, that which is given us here to sustain the saint in walking in a godly path in the midst of such difficulties as these "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna"

This is in contrast to going on with a Christianized world, which is a thing at *home* here, not in the wilderness. You do not get manna except in the wilderness; and if you belong to the world, and your home is there, it is for you no wilderness at all. So that a saint who stands clear of this satanically-contrived doctrine of which Balaam was the originator stands clear of a world with which a Christian can mix without getting his conscience particularly troubled with it. The Christian thus separated knows what the place of rejection is which Christ had when He was here—a lonely path, a path of reproach, and of testimony against the whole scene in which He was. You see this is a blessed thing, because the hidden manna was not naturally there, but *came down* and fell on the sand of the desert, and it was a manna that was taken up and hidden in the ark. And if we are walking in the same path as a rejected Christ walked, we learn to know Him and become acquainted with Him in a way we should not otherwise. By being in the path in which He walked Himself we learn the thoughts of His heart and the way in which He looks at things; we become acquainted with Him in a near and intimate way that would not otherwise be possible, and what we learn in this way we shall not forget when we are in heaven. We shall enjoy Him thus; there will be more, I doubt not, but we shall have this element of our joy throughout eternity, that we shall enjoy Him there as we have known Him here. Therefore it is that the consciousness of the whole Church is a perfect knowledge of Christ, and we all have our part in it. The man who is linked with Christ in that way has

his own special knowledge of Christ for eternity, and this is a thing worth having.

There is something more: "I will give him a white stone, and in that stone a new name written," &c. Do you not see, beloved friends, this is the reward for a person who stands clear from those people who *will* have Judaism? This is the special grace to those who get simplicity enough to be satisfied with Christ without the days and the months. This is the reward offered a man that stands apart from the earthly religion because he has a heavenly, and that when earthly religion submerges the whole scene of Christendom.

What is the white stone? It is an emblem of purity. And from whence? It is purity according to the purity of a heavenly Christ; and you cannot know anything about that by observing days and months and going on with earthly principles. To the saint that stands clear from all contact with earthly principles of religion at a time when everything has come in to pollute the scene which is proper to a heavenly religion, to him Christ gives the white stone—the emblem of purity after a heavenly character.

John's first epistle, chap. iii, says: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." The hope "in Him" is in the heavenly Christ and His return, and

of being like that heavenly Christ when He comes. How does he purify himself? According to what is proper for a good Jew? No. By the standard of any earthly religion whatsoever? No, he purifies himself even as *He*—that heavenly Man—“is pure,” that Man seated on the throne—of course, eternal God and Son of God, the true God and eternal life—but still in manhood, seated on the throne of God. The higher the standard we have, the more we detect our poverty, *but having the right standard, He says, That is the sort of thing I approve of, and He gives you the white stone.*

But there is a name in the stone. Christ recognizes a certain character in that man, as Adam recognized a certain character in the animals when they were brought to him. Here, of course, it is a new creation and family of God. He recognizes the character of that man who has a heavenly standard of purity before him, and according to that character He puts his name on the stone. If *we* know Christ throughout eternity according to the way in which we have acquired the knowledge of Him by being in His path here below, *He* knows us and describes us according as we have had *Himself* before us as the heavenly measure of our walk.

What an encouragement for a poor saint that is simply in this world with a world-church that is under the wing of Satan!

You see the progress Satan has made in introducing idolatry into the Church. He has got it here formulated into doctrine; and the danger of bad doctrine is this, that an honest soul gets a certain principle to work on, so that he does evil and thinks it a very good thing

that he is doing. This is the evil of idolatrous doctrine. If it is received it enables a most sincere and upright soul to go on with any amount of evil, and think it a perfectly right thing to do. That is what God sees so dreadfully bad in this doctrine.

Now we come to the next church—

THYATIRA.

Very much more threatening is the way in which He presents Himself to this church. In these two churches we get the era of poisonous doctrine. The next two churches—that is, Sardis and Laodicea—will bring in death, but here we have the progress of Satan's attack in introducing poisonous doctrine into the Church.

There are two things here—the thing done by Christ and the way of doing it. He is the Son of God; and as Son of God He is the One by whom all God's purposes of blessing are secured. He says, Let Satan succeed as he pleases; all God has ever designed for blessing shall be accomplished. I have My way of doing it; I will not spare evil; I will destroy every trace of evil; I will not submit to a single slur of the enemy in this world, but I will at the same time establish everything God has designed for blessing.

Look at that passage in John v.: "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." He will have His way in blessing. All that God has designed for blessing shall be done. The dead are not beyond the limits of His power. The "Son of God" is the special way in which the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself in Christianity, according to the testimony of the Apostle John: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we

may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

You cannot hinder that.

Again, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the security for the gospel. If He were any other person than the Son of God, how could you have it secure? It is secure in the Son of God, who will have His way because His way is for blessing. It is true His eyes are as a flame of fire to detect everything, and His feet as fine brass to stamp out evil, but He is the Son of God to fulfil everything God has designed to accomplish.

For we are not mere atoms drifted about here and there, the sport of a vast organism, the victims of blind chance. We are here in the position of responsibility towards God. Every soul born in this world is in a position of responsibility to God, and we have to answer to it. Israel was in the position of responsibility to God as a nation, as He describes in Isaiah v.: "Now will I sing a song to My wellbeloved. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Was it nothing to Israel that there should be more false gods in Israel than anywhere else? Now He says, "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard . . . I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up." He does not spare when it is a question

of man's responsibility. "I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. . . I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." What sort of vineyard is this? "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." He "looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." There never were such persecutors as were found in Israel.

There you see man's responsibility—not the Church, of course. What we are considering to-day is man's responsibility *in the Church*, and you see the end it comes to. Just turn to the next chapter of Isaiah. You find a different scene. It is the Son of God, as we see from John xii. 38. In the very year that King Uzziah died the prophet sees the Lord seated upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. The seraphims stood above. Each one had six wings. With twain he covered his face (because they cannot look at God—we can behold the glory if believers). With twain he covered his feet (they dare not have their ways inspected). With twain he did fly (they do His bidding). And they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of Him that cried. God will have His way. He is God, and He designs blessing and nothing but blessing in Christianity. He will bless, and He will make it fit and proper to bless, in spite of all the evil of Satan and failure of man. And so what does God say? The prophet had been talking of woes to other people—six of them—in the previous chapter. Now he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people

of unclean lips." The moment he says that, one of the seraphims flew with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and he laid it on the prophet's mouth, and said, "This hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." God knows how to carry out His will in a way worthy of Himself, and He does it by means of a sacrifice which is valid alike for the accomplishment of blessing and for the thorough, absolute judgment of evil.

But the prophet gets his commission, and he has to take a terrible message of judgment to Israel. It is to go to the very uttermost, until the cities are wasted. Suppose that were to happen in this London of ours to-day — judgment was to go on till the cities were wasted without inhabitant, and there was to be a great forsaking in the midst of the land! And God says, "But there shall be a tenth," on the ground of the sacrifice by which sin is purged and expiated; and the man who is honest enough to own he is a sinner gets cleansed. On that ground there was to be a tenth, and it shall return. Just as the *teil tree* and the oak when felled yet the trunk remains, so shall the remnant be the trunk or stock in Israel. God will have the remnant saved, and He will save all who are honest enough to confess their sins; and He will have them saved in a way of holiness, righteousness, and truth. Thus He will accomplish the blessing divinely and put away evil. Let us remember this, that we have to do with One who will perform everything God has designed for blessing.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON (1897).

No 1.

EPHESIANS i.

THE Church of God on the earth has its being and distinctive character from the presence of the Man of God's counsels, seated at God's right hand, and the consequent presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling on the earth. The Church is on earth because the Holy Ghost is here, but belongs to heaven because the Head is there. We have no unfoldings of the counsels of God before the Man of His counsels laid a righteous basis for their accomplishment on the cross, and is in consequence seated and crowned at God's right hand. And when these counsels of blessings are thence unfolded to us they begin with what is individual; and as they reach us they bear the stamp of the place from whence they flow—even from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. These counsels are not according to our need alone, but are to satisfy His own holy thoughts of love and wisdom for Himself and the glory of His beloved Son.

The Scriptures give the history of two men. The first is the responsible man, with his history of failure morally and judicially closed in the cross; there his enmity to God was fully manifested, and all remedial measure on God's part proved to be of no avail. There, too, we see the Second Man—the Man of God's counsels, who, in the fulness of time and in the body prepared for Him, came into this scene of the first man's ruin to do the will of God. He passes through

104 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

the scene in perfect obedience, dependence, and confidence (Ps. xvi.), His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. Identifying Himself with the repentant remnant in John's baptism, and praying, the heavens were opened to Him, the Spirit of God as a dove rested on Him, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and using in that same spirit of obedience and dependence the sword of the Spirit, He overcame him to whom the first man fell such an easy prey in man's paradise. In Gethsemane, holy and obedient, yet learning (Heb. v. 8) obedience, He took that cup from His Father's hand to drink it on the cross, where He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Under the righteous judgment upon the sin of the first man of a holy and sin-hating God He bowed His holy head on the cross, and there glorified God as He never was glorified before. He is heard from the horns of the unicorns. The answer to the soldier's spear was that blood and water now witnessing with God's Spirit that life and blessing are not to be had from the first man, but showing us whence come propitiation, purification, life, and power. That precious corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died (John xii. 24), and its firstfruits are gathered by the testimony of a devoted and widowed heart to whom His love entrusts that priceless message (Ps. xxii. 22), "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Brought up from among the dead by the glory of the

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 105

Father, life and incorruptibility are brought to light through the gospel. He breathes on His disciples life more abundant, bids them tarry in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, and, with outstretched hands blessing them, is parted from them and carried up into heaven. There God has in righteousness set Him at His own right hand far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Thus have we the double answer to the question found in more than one connection in Scripture, “What is man?” If it be asked as to the first and responsible man and all connected with him, faith reads God’s reply in His righteous sentence and its execution on the cross. If it be asked as to the Second Man, the last Adam, the Man of God’s counsels and purposes, the blessed triumphant and righteous reply—as it presses that crown upon the brow of heaven’s new Object, a Man on the throne of God—echoes through the glory, and says, “Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art worthy.” From thence we may follow to earth the Comforter, sent by the Father in the Son’s name, by the Son, too, from the Father to dwell in and with the saints for ever. He is the Spirit of adoption, of truth, of understanding, of worship, of testimony, the earnest of our inheritance, the seal of salvation, the glorifier of Christ, who baptizes the saints into one body, and unites them to their risen and glorified Head. Convicting the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, He gathers out

106 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

of it a bride for Christ, "espoused to one Husband," that He may present her as a chaste virgin to Christ. Jealous and careful while conducting her through the scene of the cross, lest her mind should be corrupted from the *simplicity* that is in Christ, the Spirit of the living God has written Christ on the fleshy table of her heart.

"The glory of the grace shining in the Saviour's face,
Telling sinners from above—God is light and God is love,"

has won her heart, so that when the question is put to her, "Wilt thou go with this Man?" she says, "I will go." As she crosses the wilderness she hears the voice of her Beloved, "I am the bright and morning Star"; and with the Comforter she responds in a heartfelt "Come!" She knows well that her Beloved will have the desire of His heart—that where He is, there she may be also, that she may behold His glory which His Father has given Him.

She hears Him say to His Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"; and the echo of her heart is—

"Thy cross has severed ties that bound us here;
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere."

She welcomes with a yielding heart the holy ends of that love in which, for her sake, He has sanctified Himself, that she also may be sanctified by the Truth. Her faith sees the Holy City—"the Bride, the Lamb's wife," and well she knows why there is no temple there, nor need for sun nor moon. Faith carries on her heart, filled with Christ, into the eternal state, that new heaven and new earth, and there, too, beholds the tabernacle of God with men.

"Thy counsels too in all Thine own,
Fulfilled by power divine,
Spread wide the glory of Thy throne,
Where all in glory shine."

“ IN THE MIDST.”

A MEDITATION.

“They crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”—JOHN xix. 17, 18.

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”—REV. v. 6-10.

“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”—MATT. xviii. 20.

“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”—DAN. iii. 21-25.

THESE scriptures came to my mind in the order given; and while pondering the first, man's estimate of the Holy One, giving Him the place of pre-eminence in the midst, the second came so precious as the contrast. There we see what God's thoughts of His beloved One are, and the three positions in the midst of the throne the living creatures and the elders. (Rev. v. 6.) When we meditate what these *three* things set forth, how full, how glorious the exaltation of our Lord, the Father's blessed Son and Servant! And with what delight our hearts join in the ascription of praise of “Thou art worthy!” Oh! what perfect bliss to know that we are nearing that moment of surpassing delight *for Him* and for us, while by faith we ante-date and in spirit anticipate that day with present songs of adoring praise of worth in the Lamb.

Then came the *third* (Matt. xviii. 20), His presence *in the midst* of the gathered ones. How passing sweet this fact—our Lord in our very midst—yet how soul-subduing. Oh, what reverence of spirit should characterize us! How solemn too when we call to mind how

much that transpires at times raises serious questions in our souls as we sit together before Him. Oh that we all may more truly realize His holy presence in our midst, and thus by the Holy Ghost worship acceptably at His feet!

Daniel iii. comes in so sweetly "for the way" in our path of testimony and suffering in the furnace with its fiery trials. He walks with His own; the fire is the liberation from the bonds that bound them. But a fourth walks with them *there in the midst* of the furnace, His *presence* the expression of His approval. Who that knows His love would say *no* to the trial if such the precious privilege to be enjoyed?

R. KENT (Bexhill, 1897).

The following extracts from letters recently received add a solemn and touching interest to the foregoing meditation from the pen of our beloved brother:—

"We hear dear Kent has gone home. . . . I feel we have lost a real gem, a shining light . . . of whom it could be said he walked with God—a gift exercised in so quiet and unobtrusive a manner, but with so much power."

"His sufferings were very great to the last, and distressing to witness, but borne with perfect patience. It was a glorious testimony to divine grace to see the spirit sustained and triumphing over all. He many times said, though racked with agony, 'I am *very, very* happy.' Again, 'We do not go to the grave as conquered ones, but as victors.' He burst forth singing, 'O for the robe of whiteness!' His last utterance, I believe, was, 'Jesus is come,' joy lighting up his countenance, and he was present with the Lord."

LETTERS TO A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN.

No 3.

THE saddest symptom of double-mindedness is inconstancy as regards the truth. The mind becomes a quicksand, in which the faith is swallowed up piecemeal until every vestige is gone. A good conscience is first put away, then by slow degrees the faith is cast off, and finally the doctrine and the state of soul are both gone. Shipwreck has been made. The man has been deceived; he is taken in the toils of systematized error—the lips of the strange woman. Doctrine without God is sweet to the flesh as a product of man's mind, and oily explanations smooth away all difficulties of conscience. But bitter as wormwood and sharp as a sword is the end.

By a sort of moral dissolving view the truth once boasted in is changed into a lie.

What was feebly rejected at the first, becomes at length zealously defended, and the man is left a beacon to the unwary of the sunken rocks of error in the sea of plausible explanations. He is a spiritual Lot's wife, a standing memento of the danger of half-heartedness. But even where the form of orthodoxy and the truth is still maintained the case is no better, but very far worse, for such a person is certainly not a beacon to warn. On the contrary, he is a wrecker to lure the simple one to shipwreck and destruction. His orthodoxy is irrecusable, but is as a fair label upon a false and

pernicious mixture. Men swallow it down with avidity, only to be wrung with the torments of spiritual poison.

But how precious is the grace of God, whose power for blessing is superior even to such a state as this. Sharp may be His rebuke, but salutary; and He alone can give repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Peter in Satan's sieve had learned that flesh is as grass, and its glory as the flower of grass. He had yet to know the profitlessness of law for blessing—powerful only to curse. The esteem of his brethren, the influence of numbers, the fear of man, the propagandist zeal of an accredited party, prestige of leadership, weight of authority, grandeur of systematized religion, and place covertly given to man in the flesh, all combined in the hand of Satan to induce a dissimulation by which even a Barnabas was carried away. Yet, beloved servant of the Lord! the voice of reproof reaches his obedient ear. Grace learned through failure becomes an everlasting adornment, and the word that brought it to the soul is valued as a memento of love. Experimentally known, it is as apples of gold in pictures of silver. It is man's honour indeed not to fail, but in confession and restoration the glory is all God's own.

THOUGHTS ON THE WAYS OF GOD.

GOD has been wont to pass His servants through some special discipline if His intention has been to use them for any particular service. He shapes and prepares the vessels that He deigns to make use of, and often by means of severe trials, in order to fit them for their work. . . .

David was a man after God's own heart; but he had to endure years of affliction, even after being anointed king. He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Never, however, let us forget that but for these circumstances we should have been without most of his Psalms, and that his sufferings from within and without, his exercises of soul, and the persecution of his enemies were the occasions which called them forth. So it was in Paul's case. But for his Roman prison, we might not have had many of his valuable Epistles. Thus does God bring the greatest blessing out of the keenest suffering and the deepest affliction of His children.

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If olives were not subjected to pressure they would yield no oil, and grapes must be trodden in the wine-press to produce the wine which cheereth God and man.

Before the perfume could rise to God for a sweet savour, the incense had to be beaten very small and laid upon the coals of the golden altar. (Ex. xxx.; Lev. ii.) The prayers of believers, the produce of their

divers trials and sorrows, are a sweet savour to God. David says: "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Rev. v. 8 and Ps. cxli. 2.)

"*At that time*" (Matt. xi. 25) "Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father." At what time? John did not know what to think of Jesus. The people called Him a friend of publicans and sinners, and upon the towns where His miracles had been done He had just pronounced His terrible "Woe unto thee!" *All* was against Him; all His work seemed in vain. But "*at that time*" Jesus said, "I thank Thee." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

From the German.

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 4.

"RESURRECTION is God's thought for us *from the first*, often the last thing with us to take up.

"Abraham did not reach it for years after he was called. In chapter xxii. all goes from him that nature could rest upon—'accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.'

"Martha describes the case of many whose thoughts are short of resurrection. 'I am the resurrection and the life . . . Believest thou this? Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, *which should come into the world.*' She confesses Him according to Jewish calling and hope; and thought surely she had it all, when all the time she is far below His thoughts."

W. J. C.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(From Shorthand Report.)

LECTURE V. CHAPTER II. 18.

YOU will remember, beloved brethren, that these addresses to the Churches give us the history and progress of evil in connection with the Church of God—a thing about which the Christian needs to be specially instructed, because it is in the Church of God that one expects to find the truth maintained. It is in the Church of God, if in any place at all, that one expects to find the character of God sustained, and therefore it is quite unlooked for, and never could have been contemplated by any honest Christian soul, that the very place where God's testimony and God's character were to be maintained, and where alone they could be, should be just the place where it was all to be denied. It is the thing which is not understood to-day, and persons are at work all round us in order to patch up and repair this vessel of God's testimony which is irretrievably broken. God will never repair it at all, and He is only waiting the proper moment to remove it altogether. The Christian needs to be instructed as to this, otherwise he will be lost entirely in the confusion.

We were noticing that the progress of evil takes two forms: (1) The introduction and establishment of idolatry in the place of God Himself, and (2) the

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rejection of Christ, who is God's man. This is just what occurred in Israel in days past. They established idolatry and they rejected Christ—the same principles of evil on which Satan has worked from the outset. God's reason for giving us the history of the failure in the Church of God and the record of the progress of evil is in order that we may know Satan's devices in connection with His testimony here. As committed to the hands of man it fails for the same reasons and upon the same principles in the Church as in everything else that was ever committed to man. That is to say, Satan has succeeded in establishing idolatry in the Church which was instituted to maintain the testimony of God, and also he procures the rejection of the man on whom all God's purposes and counsels rest for their accomplishment. It is not yet realized in the Church as to the final climax; still it will be. What we find in connection with the Church before us is that the idolatrous principles are brought to their consummation; the thing is accomplished as regards the introduction of idolatry, and that by Satanic power of course, only man is the responsible person. And then there is the other thing—the further development of Satan's purpose in bringing about the rejection of Christ in His own Church. Could one have ever contemplated such a thought? But that is what is to be.

I was noticing last time that the way the Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself to the Church in Thyatira is as the Son of God—the One upon whom all God's purposes and counsels rest, and who will accomplish them, no matter what Satan or anybody else

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION. 115

may do. And this is the way we have to do with Him. It is an immense thing to have an important person as the source of your expectations. If you go into partnership with a man who has scarcely sixpence to bless himself with, what is the good of that? But if you are associated with one who can command millions! That is a mere human illustration. But here we have the Son of God, the One who has a right by title, not merely by acquirement. By virtue of creation and as the Son of God He is the Heir of all things, and as surely as He made them and sustains them, so will He accomplish every thought of God in blessing. Then, together with this, He is the One who will not have a trace of anything evil about Him. You and I may put up with things that are not as they ought to be; but the Son of God, when He presents Himself in this character, will have everything that is not suitable to Himself annihilated. He has the eyes to pierce, to test, and observe what is not of Himself, and His feet of fine brass.

The Church is found here in a changed character, for the address to the overcomer precedes the address "to him that hath an ear." That is to say, now, from this time forward, God does not expect the whole Church to have an ear at all. He does not address Himself to the whole Church as such, but He singles out and separates by His Word the one that has overcome in the Church (not in the world), and He says, The man that hath an ear, I will speak to him. He does not, therefore, speak to a man who has not an ear. Well, beloved friends, here we have a new start of events in connection with the Church. It is no longer to the Church as a whole that the Lord

addresses Himself, but particularly to a remnant—to “the rest,” or remnant, in Thyatira.

Just to go a little into detail. The Lord is speaking to them in a remarkable way, as He speaks to no other Church at all. This is a Church noticeable for its energy and spiritual power, for the immense progress it had made, its mighty acquirements, the strength that had been put forth against the powers of darkness—it is foremost beyond all others as the one in which power and activity had been exhibited. “I know thy works.” But He says more. They were *not merely energetic people; not merely* did they break the bands of heathenism that held the nations in bondage, and bring light into the dark places of the earth, not only had they evangelized vast territories, and brought the heathen under the light of Christianity and within the bounds of the truth, but there was something else, and that was their love and their faith. Love was in exercise, and faith and patience, and the only one of the Christian virtues not mentioned in commendation by the Lord is hope. You know what the three Christian virtues are, because Christian virtues are summed up in three simple words—faith, hope, and love. If there are these, you have the whole thing, and the greatest is love. This Church had love and faith, but it lacked the hope. In one sense it had got occupied with its service and lost sight of its master. He is not a good servant who loses sight of what is due to his master, and sometimes treats him with contempt because he knows himself to be a good servant and to do his work well. We find *that* here. This Church, so remarkable for all its display of energy and divine

power, lacked the bright hope and expectation of the coming of the Master, and therefore they went on and endured all the sufferings incidental to the work, but they had not Him in view. Well, a woman comes in. The Lord Jesus Christ in addressing this Church says, "Notwithstanding I have against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants." The moment of success and power is the moment of ruin. In looking at the last Church you will remember that what we remarked was this, that the moment of deliverance or relief was the moment of danger. But here you get a step further. It is not merely relief and deliverance that we have in Thyatira, but it is strength and exaltation—prosperity; and that is not merely a moment of danger, but a moment of ruin. It always is so, and you and I have to remember it. If we ever get into a place where there is strength and prosperity in divine things, be sure that you are on dangerous ground. "He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction." And what goes before a fall, may I ask? Every one of you can tell me as well as I can tell you. It is pride. Nay, more. If I were to choose the three most remarkable instances in God's history of man, of the men who have been strong in their day and reached a position of honour, and were to remark on them, I should have to tell you about the most striking instances of failure. The first I should turn to would be Uzziah. And he is the king that had died when Isaiah saw the throne of the Lord high and lifted up. Uzziah was king of Judah, and he was marvelously helped and God was with him, acting for him,

and undertaking on every hand. He was helped until he was strong, but when he was strong he transgressed, and it was to his destruction. Scarcely is there a comma between the two things. He was marvellously helped till he was strong, and his heart was lifted up to his destruction. He transgressed against the Lord. And if we do not consider our master we do not know what we may not fall into. He was shut up in a separate house all the rest of his life, and was excluded from the temple of the Lord. Could you have a more remarkable history?

Take another equally so, and this of a Gentile—Nebuchadnezzar. He had a dream emblematic of himself—that a tree was set up in the midst of the earth whose height reached to heaven, and the leaves were fair and the fruit much; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven lodged in its boughs, and all flesh was fed of it. And then, when in the height of glory, a holy one came out of heaven who said, “Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches; shake off its leaves and scatter the fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches.” But the Lord has mercy, and as there was a remnant in the Church of Thyatira, so with regard to Nebuchadnezzar himself there was to be left the stump of his roots in the earth bound with a band of iron and brass. Well, you know how it all came to pass. God gives us warning. He gave Nebuchadnezzar twelve months’ warning, and when twelve months had passed he was walking upon the royal palace of Babylon, and said, “Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power,

and for the honour of my majesty?" While the word was yet in the king's mouth there fell a voice from heaven: "To thee, O king Nebuchadnezzar, it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee; and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee until thou knowest that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Now if God has one lesson, one grand prominent lesson, in connection with the government of the world, to teach you and me, it is that ruin follows pride, and that ruin follows success and prosperity in the Church.

One more instance. Look at Herod on his throne making a grand oration to the people of Tyre who were seeking his favour, and as he made his eloquent speech they cried out, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man," and immediately the Lord smote him. The angel did not smite him because he put Peter in prison and cut off James' head. Why did He do so now? Because he did not give the glory to God. He is a jealous God.

Does not this chapter teach that if at any time we are in a position of spiritual progress, of ease and power and prosperity, when we can say we have grown strong, then it is we may expect the very next thing to be ruin? "I have against thee that thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess," &c.

Just a word or two as to Jezebel. Why does the Lord call this person Jezebel? She it was who introduced into Israel a new order of idolatry. Jeroboam set up golden calves in the name of

Jehovah; Solomon introduced goddesses for his wives; but Jezebel introduced a god for men. Satan takes up one and another to work out his purpose, and our wisdom is not to know what Satan is going to do, but to walk with God. But she introduced a new order of idolatry in Israel; she established the worship of Baal, which had not hitherto been brought into Israel, and made a regular theological system of it and instituted a theological organization to maintain it; for she had 450 prophets which she fed at her own table. She was a murderess too, for she killed Naboth; and a persecutor, for she threatened Elijah's life. That is what we have also to do with, for what found its prototype in Israel finds its antitype in the Church. Then there is another thing about Jezebel, not that I want to dwell upon it, but she was not only the Satanic instrument for establishing idolatry and committing it in Israel, but she brought in the destruction of David's seed. For if her will had been carried out we should have had no Messiah, and that is what she, or rather the devil, was plotting. Still, we have to take our responsibility in this. That was one thing in which Ahab wrought more mischief than any one who went before him. He married the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidon, and thus he brought upon the Israelitish throne the curse of the Canaanite. The thing was developed further and made progress, and did not stop at Israel, but was brought into Judah, because Jehoshaphat, when he had riches and honour in abundance, joined affinity with Ahab by marrying Ahab's daughter to his son Jehoram. God notices all these things, and if you get the cursed Canaanite

in to a certain extent you may be sure he will go on farther. The one thing the devil is anxious about is to get the thin end of the wedge in. So here was Jezebel introduced first to Israel as the wife of Ahab, and then Jezebel's daughter is introduced into the line of promise, the very seed of David, into the family of David himself, whence the Christ was to come. The curse of the Canaanite was thereby imported into David's family, and not that only, but also the judgment Ahab had earned for himself by his wickedness in the case of Naboth. So Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab; and as soon as Jehoshaphat was dead and Jehoram came to the throne, acting on the advice of his wife, Jezebel's daughter, he kills all his brethren, of whom God notices that they were better than himself. He exterminates his brethren, and then God has to deal with him. God will not put up with wickedness wherever it is found. A writing is brought from Elijah the prophet, and that writing denounces judgment upon Jehoram, and his wives and goods, and family and people; the judgment of God is pronounced upon them all, and Jehoram is to die of a dreadful disease; and so it happened. "What a man sows, that shall he also reap." The Arabians come up and exterminate all Jehoram's children. The throne therefore goes to the youngest, Ahaziah, all his brethren being killed; but his mother, Athaliah, is still in power, and was his counsellor to do wickedly. Now mark what happens: Ahaziah goes to see Jehoram of Israel in Jezreel (it is a wonderful thing how the devil makes God's people and the world mix together) just at the time when God was

executing His judgment on the family of Ahab as pronounced by Elijah. He goes out with Jehoram against Jehu, the agent of God's judgment on Ahab's house, and is slain together with his forty-two brethren and Ahab's seventy sons. Thus the whole family, every child of David's seed, was exterminated by reason of the power of evil subtilely introduced. Moreover, as soon as Athaliah saw her son was dead she arose and destroyed all the seed royal, the little babes, with the exception of one that Jehoshabeath, the daughter of Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, had secreted with his nurse in a bed-chamber, and hid over six years; and he was the only one remaining of David's seed. How nearly the whole thing was gone! And who brought it about? Jezebel was the means in Satan's hands of the destruction of David's seed.

He first establishes idolatry and then brings it by *this creature Jezebel to its consummation*, and introduces a principle that destroys or rejects God's man entirely out of the scene. We shall see this as we go on; but I merely mention these things in order that you may understand why God calls this person, or system of religion, Jezebel.

Now to look at it historically. I have no question that this Jezebel is the papal system which began about the year A.D. 600. This phase of the history of the Church of Thyatira came to its conclusion about the year 1500, when the Reformation took its rise; and the only thing that answers to Jezebel's characteristics is the Church of Rome. Of course, as a system it continues still. You see she assumes to be a divine source of communication; she calls herself

a prophetess. Is there any Church that calls itself a source of divine communication but the Church of Rome? Not one. And that is not all. She teaches. You have a woman teaching. The only Church that sets up authoritatively to teach, apart from what is written, is the Church of Rome. She also established idolatry; and I would only ask, Where can you find as many idols and images as you want? They are found in many places; but the great source is the Church of Rome. In the year A.D. 600 there was a kind of temple at Rome called the Pantheon, dedicated to all the demons. Boniface IV. consecrated it as a church to all the saints; so you have the worship of demons under new names. And in connection with that very soon afterwards there was the invocation of saints, and the introduction of images, and the doctrine that if you worship the image you worship God, which is the reverse of the truth; for if you worship an image you worship the devil. People justify themselves on the principle that nobody believes that an image is God, but that on looking at the image and offering your homage to it the mind is carried beyond the image to the One whom it represents. But will God accept homage offered through an image? No; He will not have it, but the devil eagerly appropriates it. The Church of Rome has established it, and therefore, I think, we can without doubt identify this woman Jezebel, as found in this Church, with the papal system. Now the Lord had given her space to repent, and you will remember there are three classes of persons in connection with this false system. It is not merely a false doctrine, but a false system; and nobody can say, when God presents to us the manner

in which He deals with a false system of religion, that it does not concern us because we have not to do with such things. We have to do with such things; and any day in the week you may be called upon to act on divine principles in connection with a false system of religion.

There are three classes of persons in question : Those who suffered it, those who espoused it, and those who imbibed it. As to the first, He brings in separation; He has no other way of meeting a false system of religion. The moment a false system of religion is brought in, and it is a question whether to suffer it or not, the only course God knows and marks out for us is to separate. Because you find in connection with this Church that there is a remnant that do not have the doctrine and will not have it: "The rest in Thyatira, as many as have not the doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan." God sees a little company of people that will not have anything to do with this false and idolatrous system brought in in connection with the Church. There is no remedy, but the only course left for persons who are brought into contact with a false system of religion is to separate. God knows nothing about suffering it; there is nothing but to judge it. "I have against thee that thou sufferest that woman Jezebel." They allowed the thing to go on.

But then as to those who espoused it, except "they repent of her works,"* He will put them into great tribulation. They may say, We will do our best to keep the truth there, and we will try in every way to exclude the evil. But there is one thing we are

* This is the true reading of verse 22.

determined upon, we will go on with the system of things. We will espouse it, though we do not approve of what is taught; for the sake of convenience we will go on with it. Well, says the Lord, you shall have great tribulation. You will lose your peace of conscience and the little bit of truth you have, and you will always be trying to shape your faith by your policy.

As to those who imbibe her teaching: "I will kill her children with death." The soul that is formed on a system which introduces itself between the conscience and God is in the place of death, because there is no living communion with the Lord Himself. This system of doctrine introduces itself between the soul and the Lord—will not allow you to be in direct communication with the Lord Himself; and your soul is formed by the system. The result is death. The Lord uses the thought of death in this book in two ways very often, generally with regard to apostasy; the other signification is actual death. I have no doubt these will be true about those who are formed by this false religious system. In the first place there will be apostasy, and in the second place the judgment of death.

There is one thing said about the system itself, "I will cast her into a bed." That is to say, she will never be able to get out of the position into which she has come. You can never make an erroneous system right. You may have all the best men at work to recover it, and constantly doing their best; it will only end in failure. The word of the Lord is, "I will cast her into a bed"; and she will never be able to get out of it. Her sin will be that which characterizes her judgment; she will be fixed to it. There have been good men in

connection with the Romish Church who have spent many years to deliver her from errors into which she has been brought, but they have never succeeded. And what is true with regard to the papal system is true also with regard to any erroneous system of doctrine—you can never correct it nor deliver it. God has, by His judgment, cast her into the place which sets forth the character of her sin, and never can she deliver herself out of it. What an immense thing for us it is that we are able to adopt the plan God sets before us here.

“I will kill her children with death, and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

The Church is no longer here like a city set on a hill—no longer a light, but needing to know that light is brought in to search the reins and hearts. God does not look at numbers and grandeur, but at the motives and affections.

Now as to those who are separate from this evil doctrine. What the Word of God says is that we are to be simple concerning evil, but wise concerning that which is good. Know all you can about the good; the more you know the better, but you never have any good at all by knowing the evil. If you know the evil you have only a greater chance of falling into it, and to be in the position these people pretend to be in of knowing everything. To know the depths of Satan does no good to anybody, and the Lord says, “I have put upon you no other burden, but that which you have hold fast till I come.” You may have very little, but you have the truth. Hold fast that which ye have till He come.

We have the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ set before us. There is to be no recovery in this world for the Church. It is an utter ruin, and never will be anything else. The only thing for the Church is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that is what we are set to watch for, and it is in reference to that that our responsibility is to be exercised. We have to hold fast what we have till He comes.

The Lord's works are here in contrast with this woman's works. She was looking after this world, she was not particular as to how she got it; but whether particular or not, the one thing she wanted was the world. The easiest way to get it we see here. She made contracts and entered into alliances with the world for the sake of her own purposes; she offered a good deal, but gave very little. She entered into alliances with the world in order to get the world. These were her works, and she did not repent of them. She wanted the things here, and she did not care about those that were above. If a man is a Christian, where is his citizenship? where is his home? where his possessions, his inheritance? Not here, but up there; and here is a thing which calls itself a prophetess—a formed system, a religious organization in connection with the Church—and what she has definitely before her is this world; and in order that she may get it she has formed an alliance with the people of the world.

But now what works are to characterize those who are separate from the system and have not that doctrine? Christ's works. He says: "He that keepeth My works unto the end." There are two remarkable characteristics in Christ's works. One is

that His was a position of humiliation down here in this world. He never would take any honour here; when they wanted to make Him king, He went away. He would take no place of authority or exaltation in this world. That was one grand thing that characterized Christ's works—they were works done in humiliation and in obedience and dependence, and never in any wise whatever to acquire honour for Himself or anything that was in the world at all. "My kingdom is not of this world." What was the other thing? All His thoughts and motives and objects were away out of this world, absolutely to Him upon whom He ever depended, from whom He had come, to whom He was obedient, and to whom He was going. He always had His Father absolutely in view. Those works involved humiliation in this world, and He drew every single motive for them from the Father. You remember what He could say: "The works My Father hath given Me to do." He ever looked to the Father, and drew His motives from Him; and He was ever the object in view in all that He did. Our path is very clear then, because He says here, "He that overcometh and keepeth *My* works to the end." We must be content to take the path of humiliation in this world. Do you want to gather a great company of people? You can do that by a brass band. But the Christian applies a touchstone in connection with all his works here. Are they Christ's works? If not, don't touch them. "He that overcometh and keepeth *My* works": thus He addresses the little company that was separate from this vast system that was determined to have the world at any cost. Now those who are separate from this system and overcome keep Christ's works,

and keep them unto the end. Because if not, Satan has always some little temptation by which he will take you a few inches even off the path; then the next day you deviate a few inches more, and by-and-by you find yourself an endless distance off the path. No, Christ's works are the touchstone by which a Christian is to know whether he is doing what he is exhorted here to do by the Lord Himself: to keep His works unto the end.

You have all humiliation now, but you will not have it then. You have no authority now, but you will have it then. Why can we not wait? We *must* have the sorrow to-day or to-morrow. It must be that joy and sorrow enter into the experience of every soul of man. Nobody will deny it. Joy and sorrow are a necessary portion of every soul of man. Well now, which are you going to have first? Oh, you say, I would rather have the sorrow first; because, if I have joy afterwards, then there will be no fear of any return of the sorrow. That is decidedly the wisest thing, beloved friends. If we choose to have the joy first, what a terrible thing to think of the sorrow coming afterwards. If that is true, and it *is* true, what the Lord exhorts us to here is to have the sorrow now, and keep His works—do just as He did, after the fashion and character of His works in this world; and the time of joy will come. He says: "Hold fast till I come," and "to him will I give power over the nations" when I come, "and he shall rule them with a rod of iron"—not only authority, but irresistible power. You may have a certain amount of power, but there never was a strong man but that there was a stronger. In that day, however, there will be authority, and not only

right divine, but irresistible power to put it into effect. "I give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Well, we have only to wait just a little moment—patience, with hope. It is of no use to have patience without hope. A Christian is not a miserable man; there must be hope for his patience to hang upon, else there is nothing divine in it at all. We shall have all the authority and irresistible power, but we shall not have to break a single thing. As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces, but He, it does not say you and I, will do it. No, all the breaking will be done before we are put into the place of rule, with the iron rod that is irresistible; and it is a mercy for us, because no Christian wishes to break anyone. We do not want to have to cut down the wicked; we do not wish to do that sort of thing. We wish to exhibit grace, and love in absolute grace itself, the very thing we have learnt Christ in; and it is a great mercy to know that all the shattering to pieces will be done before the iron rod is put into our hands, "even as I have received from My Father."

Then, just in conclusion, the Lord has something better to say to us than that. Authority is a great thing: we see how people strive after it in the world—how they will do anything to get a place of authority and power. That is what makes all the trouble that goes on in the world. Power belongs to God, and He ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He pleases; and He will not give it to Nebuchadnezzar altogether. It is Nebuchadnezzar who has it to-day, and in his hands it has deteriorated and become mixed with iron and clay.

But there is a better thing than authority. There

is love, the divine nature; and Christ is not going to satisfy our hearts with authority, for it would never do so. The highest place in the world would never satisfy the heart. It is impossible. What will? The two things that correspond with the Christian's pathway in the place of his humiliation to-day. He will have the glory and the authority to-morrow; but to-day he has sorrow in grace and obedience, and, in connection with joy, his motives, his hopes, his encouragement, his desires are from a high and heavenly source—we are to have Christ Himself seen and known as the Morning Star.

What is the Morning Star? You would not see the morning star at all if the sun were shining. It is what belongs not to authority, not to power, not to rule, not to government in this world, but it is what belongs to God Himself—the unseen, the eternal, the invisible One, what pertains solely to Christ, not as in a place or position of authority at all. It is the Christ we know, who died for us, but is now hid in God. That is the Morning Star. He will come again for us before the sun rises. In Peter you find the Morning Star spoken of a little differently from what you have here. There the apostle Peter tells us that prophecy is like a light in a dark place. It is a good thing to have a light in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day star arise in your heart. Prophecy is very good in its way, but there is something better. Prophecy relates to the world and what God is going to do here; but the day star relates to that which arises in the heart. It is a question of affection, a question of a bright object known in the heart, and one that satisfies the heart, though there be nothing else at all. It

satisfies the heart as much in humiliation as it will do in the height of glory. As the apostle Peter speaks of it, it is as though a person had been watching through the night and darkness; he goes on watching as hour after hour passes, and then presently he sees the morning star arise. You have waited through the night, and you know the dawn is coming. Peter begins before the night comes, and goes through the night and sees the morning star arise—that which heralds the dawn. And remember the dawn has been heralded. But here it is different. It is like a man who has been asleep, but he rises early before the day-dawn, before the sun is up. He prepares for the day that he knows is coming. The star is here. It is a word that might be translated “early star.” It is the anticipation of the day. That is the way we have to look at the coming of Christ. We have not been through the night, but we have got up just at the end, before the day rises. We are prepared for the day when it comes; we are children of the day. The Lord is about to come; we have risen in anticipation of it, and the star is already here. The day may come at any moment. The Lord Jesus Christ says, You shall know Me in *that* way; not only shall you know Me as the One who will put into your hand all power in the coming day, but also as the One who will satisfy your heart in the meanwhile and for eternity. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.”

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 2.

EPHESIANS iii.

WE traced last week the gradual unfolding of the ways of God leading up to what we get in this chapter, and was in God's mind from everlasting. Looking back now at His ways, we can see how they led up to it. In Matthew xvi. Christ speaks of the assembly He *will* build, upon Peter's confession of Him as "the Christ, the Son of the *living* God," against which the gates of hades shall not prevail, because it was built on Christ in resurrection—the "Son of the living God." (Cf. Romans iv.) Then Psalm xxii. 22 is fulfilled in that blessed message given to Mary in John xx., "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Still the Lord was on earth, and so the Holy Ghost not yet come. Next the body of Christ is actually formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, marking the birthday of the Church, though the truth of the mystery was not yet unfolded, and there was not yet the intelligence of it. Peter, in accounting to the Jews for that which they witnessed at Pentecost, presents Jesus whom they had crucified, as *made of God both Lord and Christ*. Three thousand souls were added to them, "and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The assembly at Jerusalem

134 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

were, except the apostles, scattered abroad after Stephen's death. The chosen vessel for the revelation and administration of the mystery of Christ and the Church is, very significantly, first presented to us as consenting unto the death of Stephen, "the witnesses laying down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul," who breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, was the willing servant of Israel's hatred to "*this way*." As he journeyed near Damascus, suddenly at mid-day there shone round about him a light from heaven, above the brightness of the noonday sun, and falling to the ground he hears a voice speaking in the Hebrew tongue saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou Me?" In the dawning of that spirit of surrender which henceforth, through grace, formed his history, he says, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," but draws forth a further expression of his subjection as he asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Blinded for three days by "the glory of that light," and praying, he receives his sight, is filled with the Holy Ghost, and is baptized, and straightway he preaches Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Thus we learn that what the apostle afterwards calls "my gospel" was not after man, nor learned at the feet of Gamaliel, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: it is "the glad tidings of the glory of Christ." Then it is also revealed to him that those whom he had been persecuting and compelling to blaspheme that holy name were one with the Lord of glory. The Lord further makes known to him the purpose for which He thus appeared

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 135

to him—"to make thee a *minister* and a *witness*, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; taking thee out from among the people and the nations to whom now I send thee."

The apostle, in describing to the Galatians (i. 16) this mighty revolution which grace had wrought in him, says, "it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son *in me*."

Thus we see the preparation of the vessel to be a *minister* and a *witness* of that secret purpose of God, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. It is "the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid *in God*" (Eph. iii. 9); "Hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest to His saints" (Col. i. 26); "Kept secret since the world began, but now made manifest . . . for the obedience of faith." (Romans xvi. 25.)

This mystery has a double character: first, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in the Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him";* and, secondly, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." The apostle desired that all (Jew and Gentile) should see what is the administration of this mystery, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the

* This is the mystery of His will in which we share as fellow-heirs. —ED.

136 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

manifold wisdom of God.* They had seen various displays of the wisdom of God in creation, in the flood, in the call of Abraham, in bringing Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but now they beheld a company of people on the earth, united by God's Spirit to that glorified Man at His right hand, members of Christ, members one of another—His body and His bride. They were not of the world, even as He was not of it, and were waiting a little moment for Christ to come and raise the dead, changing the living, and in bodies of glory like His own to take them to be with Himself for ever. This was a totally new expression of this "all-various wisdom of God," and the assembly, formed by the administration of the mystery, was, as it were, the book in which these heavenly powers read it.

The body of Christ is viewed in three ways in Scripture: first, as seen in (Eph. i. 23) the counsels of God, including every member of that body from Pentecost to the rapture; secondly, the aggregate of those members at any one moment upon the earth during that period, and in this aspect too is always viewed as complete. Baptized by one Spirit into one body, it is by the presence of that one Spirit held together in that unity, each member set in the place in that body as it has pleased God. The Lord's Supper was the outward expression of that unity, and the apostle received instructions as to it from the Lord Himself in the glory. (1 Cor. x., xi.) This one body and one Spirit are still on the earth, and though the external manifestation of it is, to our shame, lost, yet faith discerns its abiding oneness, and in brokenness of spirit welcomes the opened door with which grace

* See the revised rendering of this passage Ephes. iii. 10.—ED.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 137

meets that faith, an open door to keep Christ's word and not deny His name. There is a third aspect in which Scripture views the body of Christ; viz., in its local expression: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii. 27.) In principle the saints at Corinth were thus gathered together, and though there was among them a carnal *spirit* of division which the apostle rebukes, there was outwardly but one assembly at Corinth. The latter clause of verse 27 is most important as forbidding the thought that they were members of the local body at Corinth, but rather members in particular of the whole body on earth at that moment. Thus the thought of independency of meetings is not sanctioned, for the members of which each gathered company is composed are members in particular of the whole body on the earth, and the practical acknowledgment of this it is which secures the unity of assemblies one with the other in various localities—one body and one Spirit.

"God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." (1 Cor. xii. 18.) How then can we speak of one of those members being received as a member of any other body? I cannot be a member of two bodies. With all the brokenness of outward manifestation which is so patent, alas! still this unity which the Holy Ghost formed at Pentecost abides before God for faith and obedience. Submit to God, and do not seek to make another unity. The wisdom and love of God has set each member in the very place in the body that profits the whole body. There can be no independency among the members of Christ's body (v. 21); we cannot do without one another. We learn our responsibility by knowing

138 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

what remains untouched by failure. It is the failure of the Church, as the responsible witness for Christ during His absence, that has given occasion to the unscriptural idea of an invisible Church; but it is not written there *was* one body, nor yet there *will be* one body, but it is written, "*There* is one body and one Spirit." We notice that the term "Christ's body" in verse 27 is changed for "the assembly" in verse 28 when speaking of the gifts, since these are set in the whole body on earth. Should we not have the sense of how dear the Church is to Christ? (Eph. v. 25, 27.) How the thought of his conversion must have come up before Paul as he wrote that significant word, "*so also the Christ.*" (1 Cor. xii. 12.)

"By one Spirit are ye all baptized into one body," from among the Jews, only, at Pentecost, the Gentiles later on. Peter says, "The Holy Ghost fell on *them* as on *us* at the beginning," excluding thus all ground of boasting for the Jews, as though they alone were favoured of God in this new way. It was not a fresh baptism, but an extension of what took place at Pentecost; and *now* believers are sealed into that unity on believing the gospel of their salvation. In Peter's epistles we have no mention of the body of Christ or of the Gentiles being fellow-heirs and of the same body—Paul goes on to that. That the Gentiles should be blessed *with* Israel on the earth was not a mystery; every godly Jew was prepared for this by the writings of Moses, David, and their own prophets. The Gentiles will then rejoice *with* God's people, but both distinct. Romans xv. quotes four Old Testament scriptures to show that the blessing of the Gentiles was in the mind of God, and was even now made good

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 139

in the gospel; but this does not touch the truth of the Church. It was God Himself who formed and insisted on the maintenance of the distinction between Jew and Gentile; and who in His own time and way, in the cross, reconciled both unto Himself and to each other, having in that cross slain the enmity, making in Christ risen "one new Man." Of *this* Paul gives us the first intimation.

In Col. i. Paul speaks of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, "for His body's sake, which is the Church"; a ministry "to *complete* the Word of God." The circle of revealed truth was now complete.

However devoted my life may be, its testimony is defective if lacking the formative power of the mystery. It is by the Truth (the whole Truth) that we are sanctified (John xvii. 17) and preserved from being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph. iv. 12-14.) This is important to remember, in a day when the will of man divides the truth of God into *essentials* and *non-essentials*. As to the former they say agreement is desirable; as to the latter, "we may agree to differ." On enquiry we learn that the first relates to the interests of *man* for time and eternity; while the second, alas! is generally headed by these truths we are now considering, and the practice they claim for the *glory of Christ* from His witnesses. How innate is this to the natural man and his religious philanthropy! And how contagious—how like in principle to that indignation expressed first by the traitor, ut, alas! echoed by the disciples at Mary's *wasted* alabaster box. (Matt. xxvi.) An act understood and appreciated by Him to whose heart it was so especially

140 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

grateful at such a moment. It was the fruit too of His own previous instruction to that devoted heart; when her place at His feet drew forth Martha's censure of Teacher and pupil. That satisfied, intelligent, worshipping heart was moved by these censures only as they slighted Him who was her all; she had tasted of that "hidden manna" and read "the new name" on that "white stone," and that was enough for her.

The Church was set up here on earth to be the epistle of Christ, having Christ written on the fleshy table of the heart by the Spirit of the living God. They beheld the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the unveiled face of Jesus Christ, and found in this the power to answer to their calling. They had been espoused to one husband that they might be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ; and Paul's godly jealousy for them feared lest their minds should be *corrupted* from the *simplicity* that is in Christ. The serpent beguiled Eve by weakening the power of God's word in her soul, and so he corrupts now. Simplicity here does not mean ignorance, but an *unmixed* object and motive, as "if thine eye be single (simple)." There was one name alone written on their hearts. And well the "wicked spirits in the heavenlies" knew where to strike their first and fatal blow, with, alas! such success as called forth from the Lord walking among the candlesticks, "Thou hast left thy first love." His "eyes of fire" detected, in this hitherto brightest witness, the first buddings of declension, and traced, as He only could, who knows the end from the beginning, the *time*-history of His light-bearer, for the instruction and blessing of him who has "an ear to hear" and a heart to overcome.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(From Shorthand Report.)

LECTURE VI. CHAPTER III. 1-6, 14-23.

I HAVE left out the address to the Church at Philadelphia not simply because it is more than we shall be able to take up this evening, but because these two churches, of Sardis and Laodicea, complete the picture of the progress of evil in the Church and, consequent thereupon, its entire rejection. We have had the two first stages of the Church's history, that is to say, the stage of decline and then the period of false doctrine; but the point to which we have reached this evening is the era of death. Then, of course, there is nothing more to be done, and the whole thing is rejected. We were noticing the great questions that are at stake in the history of the Church, as they have been always at stake in God's history in whatever way His dealings have been occupied with men on earth, whether with the world at large or with His people. There have always been the same questions in the presence of evil after sin had come in. In the first place, there is the substitution of the creature for the Creator, which is idolatry. This is always the first question—the way Satan begins, both with an individual soul and with the testimony of God at large, whether it be His people, the world, or the Church. The first attack of Satan has been always to substitute the creature for

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the Creator, and then, finally, to get God's Man rejected. Because however bad it is, and it is a terrible thing, for God to be put out of His place for the sake of the creature, yet there is always a resource in the Man of God's right hand—the Man of His counsels. But if that blessed Man is rejected, if the Man whom God has in reserve is rejected, then what more can be done? The whole thing is gone. Well, we have seen this in Israel, and we have been noticing it in the case of the Church. Idolatry has reached its limit and climax in the history of the Church of Thyatira. There it was not merely the question of idolatrous doctrine, by which the Christian was mingled with the world, that was found in Pergamos; but in Thyatira an idolatrous system is introduced *into the Church*, and established there under the mantle of Christ, so to speak; so that if you want to find idolatry, you need not go to the world, for it exists in its worst possible form in the Church itself. When that took place, God broke off a remnant and left the thing a judged and repudiated system. He breaks off a remnant in the case of Thyatira, and denounces judgment against Jezebel and all who have part with her, and gives warning of His coming to take account of everything and assume His power over the world. He must come and undertake for Himself, because all is ruin, idolatry having come in and become established in the Church itself.

Now there is the other question, because as long as Christ has His place, and as long as He is not definitely rejected out of the Church which belongs to Him and carries His name, and which is deputed to be His bride, there is still hope. No matter how bad

people may be and what failure may come in, He is still mighty to save and able to maintain God's testimony in spite of any amount of failure. As long as Christ is not rejected out of His Church, God's testimony is still upheld in power in the world.

That is the question that comes up in these latter Churches. I would remind you that precisely the same thing was prophesied of in regard to Israel. From Isaiah xl. to xlviii. you have the history of God's controversy with His people with respect to idolatry. It opens with the address of God, who knows everything beforehand, to His people: "Comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." That is to say, God has in view the restoration of His people; but after all it is a people that have sinned and come under His hand for judgment. The prophet goes on to say, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." When He comes He finds that they have adopted false gods instead; but everything will be put right, and where will the false gods be then? When He comes the valleys shall be lifted up, the mountains and hills shall be brought down, the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and you cannot do that till He comes. People are always trying to set the world right. It can never be set right till Christ comes to take His place in the earth. Then the valleys will be raised up, and the hills and the mountains be brought low. Nobody can do it till then, for then

the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. But in the meanwhile the people are good for nothing—it is a good-for-nothing people that God has got. I am reminding you of this as it is the introduction of God's controversy with His people with regard to idolatry. The people He has put His name upon are perfectly worthless. What is to be the testimony? "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth." Even God's own people are fit only to be cast into the furnace. "The people is grass." "But the word of our God abideth for ever." We know what the prophet did not say: "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." So that the point to which the Spirit of God brings us is that the people God has in this world are good for nothing. That is an awful thing to be said about the Church, but it is true. The people God has to-day, and that bear the name of Christ in a public way in the world, are proved to be good for nothing—that we find in the testimony we have gone through—and nothing remains but for Himself to come and take up everything in His own hands. This part of Isaiah ends with that solemn statement at the close of chap. xlviii.: "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked"; and whatever happens, that is certain.

In chapter xlix. the other question which we shall look at to-night in connection with the Church is raised with Israel, and that is as to Christ Himself. However the people may fail, they may be as grass and wither, because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon them, but if Christ is there, if He comes, He can sustain everything. So in chapter xlix. you find the

Lord Jesus Christ presented, and He says, "Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, ye peoples, from far; The Lord hath called," not merely Israel, but "me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me; and said unto me" (not Israel, but the Messiah Himself), "Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." What is the result of this blessed and perfect One coming according to the counsels of God, and taking up Israel's history and place and duty and responsibility in order to perform the promises to Israel? The result is, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: but my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." He leaves it with Him. He Himself is rejected, everything comes to confusion, is lost and ruined, and every hope of Israel in the flesh is gone. Then the remainder of the passage goes on to show that God will glorify His rejected Servant. The One whom man rejected God glorifies, and as a glorified Man He does what He could not and did not do as a humbled Man; that is, He restores the tribes of Jacob and brings back the preserved of Israel. Not only so, He says, "I will make Him to be a light to the Gentiles and my salvation to the ends of the earth"—evil will succeed no more. Evil does succeed, the devil gets his way, he profanes the testimony of God, he spoils everything that God has set up in this world—evil is allowed to have its way; but after all, God is uppermost, He glorifies the blessed Man that was rejected, and as a glorified Man

He not only restores Israel and brings back the preserved of Jacob, but is a light to the Gentiles and God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Now I say the very same history is transacted in the Church. The passage I have read to-day shows us not the question of idolatry, the Lord says nothing about that now—it is all settled, but what is before us now is the rejection of Christ. And the solemn and terrible thing is this, that the very Church which has the place of being His representative, His spouse, His bride, carrying His name, upholding His honour in this world, is the very thing that will have nothing to do with Him. I would remind you that, as a matter of fact, after Israel's idolatry had been consummated and God's discipline brought upon them, they were carried away to Babylon, and there they learned a lesson; and when in due time God in His mercy brought His people back from Babylon, and restored them to their own land, it was no longer a question of worshipping idols. Jerusalem was full of them before; an idol was to be found—a new god—in every city of Judah and an altar at the corner of every street in Jerusalem. But when they were brought back there was not an idol to be found, not an altar to a false god; but what was worse, it was among the returned remnant that the rejection of Christ was consummated, and that is an exceedingly solemn thing. As regards the returned remnant of Judah, they came back without a king. They were not permitted to set up the throne again, but they were permitted and encouraged to set up the temple. They began by building an altar; and if there was a bright moment in the history of the returned captivity it was when there was nothing but an altar.

They were encouraged also to set up the temple and build Jerusalem, but they never had a throne there. The mark of God's displeasure and His judgment for idolatry upon His people was that, though He brought them back and established them once more in their land, they never had a throne. They had a temple, but no throne. It is very striking that in Sardis also the kingdom is dissociated from its Church form, though Christ has the seven stars, that is, full ecclesiastical authority. You find here the Lord Jesus Christ presenting Himself to the Church at Sardis as the One who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. What does it mean? The seven spirits of God is not the way in which we know the Spirit of God at all, but it is the way in which His activities are manifested in the government of the world. If the government of the world is in question, then the seven spirits of God are put in motion, embracing the whole field and every form of His providential government in regard to the world. And what the Lord Jesus Christ asserts here is that all the government of the world is in His hand. But He does not associate this government with the Church. He takes up the world and acts with it in His government, and looks upon the Church as totally distinct and without place as to it. He is not working in this world with respect to His testimony in the Church as He once did. It is one of the most remarkable things referred to in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, that God made everything in this world turn to account for His testimony. Take, for instance, the case of the eunuch of Queen Candace: he had been up to Jerusalem to worship, and was going back with an empty heart, with a great need in his soul; and accord-

ing to the government of God that man was found in a certain place in the way going from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert; and in the power and providential ways of God His servant Philip is brought to the very same spot and at the same moment, just when the eunuch is reading a certain passage in the Bible. God so ordered all these things in His providential arrangements with respect to the testimony He was giving in His Church. You do not find *that* now, though He could do it now as well as ever He did; but there is the mark of God's judgment, and we have not to expect these things to-day.

Take another instance. There was Dorcas, who was much esteemed in the Church because of her good works. She was a simple woman, a sister in the Lord, and was engaged in good works, making clothes, etc., for the poor saints, and God took notice of it. At that time Peter comes at the moment when Dorcas falls ill and dies. They send for Peter. When he comes he finds Dorcas dead in the upper room, and prepared for the burial, for they had washed her. There was no doubt about her being dead. Peter puts them all out and kneels down and prays. It was not his own power at work. Then he turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, arise." She arose, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

You see how God was turning the whole world on the pivot of the testimony that He was rendering by the Church. That is not the sort of thing to-day. The mark of God's discipline, of His indignation against that which has found its accomplishment in the Church, is branded upon it. The Acts of the Apostles is full of such instances, but I refer only to

one which is the most remarkable of all. It is in chapter xi. Certain prophets come down from Jerusalem to Antioch, a recently formed assembly being there. Agabus is one of them. He gives a testimony to be acted on before the event. Here was God telling His secrets to the Church—the secrets of His management of the world, of His arrangements and providential action in the world, and He tells it to an obscure folk in Jerusalem. And here is one man the bearer of the intelligence, who makes known to the saints at Antioch that there is to be a famine over the whole world. That is not what you see to-day; but then God was ordering circumstances, and His providential arrangements with respect to the testimony which he had established in the world by means of the Church. And what is the Church to-day? They say it is an invisible Church, and I thoroughly believe it; but it ought not to be so. It was not then. And when Agabus tells them that there is to be a famine over the whole world the saints make collections, and send their contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem who are in special trouble at the time. The famine does not come for a year or more afterwards, but they send their contributions beforehand, not merely to meet a temporal need, though God acts for the temporal needs of His saints, but it was for the sake of the testimony. It was none other than Saul and Barnabas who bore their contributions—Saul, who had been newly converted—a remarkable gift to the Church. He sent the man Saul with Barnabas to carry the contributions to Jerusalem, and they get there just at the critical time for carrying on the testimony. It was brought about by the government of God, making a

famine over the whole world, to bring Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem at the time when Peter had to drop his testimony because Herod had put him in prison. Peter having escaped from prison through a remarkable intervention of God was delivered, but could no longer carry on the testimony, and you do not find throughout the remainder of the Acts of the Apostles that Peter is foremost in the work. He maintains the truth of God when it was called in question in the Church at Jerusalem, but he is no longer the active agent of Christ. No, he has to surrender it to Paul and Barnabas, brought to the spot at that moment to take up the links of the testimony.

I only mention this to show how God ordered the whole world. His providential arrangements in the world were subordinated to His testimony by the Church. That is not the sort of thing we find to-day. Here is Christ with the seven spirits of God governing the world; but does He tell the Archbishop of Canterbury or any other prominent Christian that there is to be a famine? Who knew the famine in India was coming? Nobody at all.

It is Christ who orders in this world to-day, but not making His providential arrangements in the world to centre in the same way upon His testimony in the Church. It is all done in secret, as the seven spirits of God. He is going to take up the government of the world when the Church is out of it; and already in a sense He has begun the government of the world apart from the Church, because He cannot own anything here in this public way. Suppose He owned brethren in this public way, what should we think of ourselves? Here is a little feeble few, the most con-

temptible company (I am not speaking of godliness; I trust there is this as much as anywhere, but as regards what man can look upon); God is not going to make much of such. Our glory is our nothingness; but if you or I got a revelation that God was going to bring about a universal war next year, and we went and spread it about, there would be no glory to God in it, but to us.

This Church of Sardis is the prophetic outline of what we call Protestantism—that which was gathered out from the apostate and idolatrous system of things which had submerged the whole Church at the time of the Reformation. God comes in providentially, and gives deliverance in the energy of His Spirit; and then the question is, What use was made of that deliverance which He, in the energy of His Spirit, gave? Well, not much. He says, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” That was not much commendation. But you see how true it is. The Lord does not accuse this Church of any idolatrous principle at all; but what He does find fault with is that in its very constitution, in the principles upon which it is gathered, there is no living power. It had a name to live—it was orthodox. But what was its orthodoxy? It consisted in so many articles framed by man, no doubt on truth, many of them at any rate true; or it consisted in the Westminster Confession; or in a certain number of sermons as John Wesley’s and others; or in gathering round some doctrine which may have been the truth. But here are these things formed and settled by men, acting according to the best of their ability, and the Church was formed upon those principles. But where

is Christ in it? And the thing was fossilized according to the form which the truth took in the minds of men, and there was no living power in it at all. I am not speaking of individual saints of God—you find a large proportion of true-hearted saints of God in every one of the systems of Protestantism—but I am speaking of the system itself; and what Christ says about it is, that it has “a name to live, but is dead.” He has not got His place there. He has not formed those articles. He did not state *that* confession. He has not given those formulæ. They have picked them out of His Word. That is all very true. But you may take God’s Word and give it form in your own mind. Then you have not God’s Word. You may have what is true, but you have not His Word. When Christ gives a thing He gives the truth, and what He finds fault with in the ecclesiastical arrangements of Protestantism is, that the living power of His Spirit, and the place that belongs to Himself, is not there at all. What we have then in Sardis is, to put it in simple words, a formal orthodoxy, not false doctrine. It has a formulated orthodoxy in which Christ has no place, and which He could not alter if He wished. Man may alter it, but not Christ. “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

Just to give a little further insight into this. You remember when the Jews returned from captivity, God sent them three prophets. The first was Haggai. Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, says, and the sense of this the Lord finds lacking in Sardis, “I am among you, saith the Lord.” That was the great point of God’s message to the returned Jews after the demon

of idolatry had been extirpated. The great thing to remember, and what God insisted upon, was that He was there. They did not want to make broad their phylacteries, and tithe mint, anise, and cummin; they had the living God there. So he repeats the same thing the next month by a further message: "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, and build" (because it was a question of building the Lord's house): "for I am among you, according to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you." And is not that the point of what the Lord remarks here in Sardis? *What He finds lacking* is their sense of His presence, and the abiding, supreme character of His Spirit in their midst. If we have the Spirit of God, what do we want with the Thirty-nine Articles? If we have the Spirit of God, what do we want with the Westminster Confession? Good and true it may be, but is it not to put the formulæ of men's making in the place of the living God? If you have formulæ of men's making there is no life in it at all. I allow there is truth. The Lord does not call them unorthodox. He does not convict them of false doctrine; but it is a thing without life.

No doubt they had their reasons for forming systems; they were afraid of persecution, and glad enough to shelter under the wing of the governing powers.

Of these poor reformers many had been burned, and they were glad to get shelter somewhere; but had they only understood that God was there! That is the thing lacking. He does not find fault with their

doctrine, but with the system they formed, because there is no life in it. Now He says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." There were things there that were not dead. What constitutes the real strength of Protestantism—for we have Protestantism as much to-day as ever we had? Well, it really consists in faith and the Word of God. Individuals may have that for themselves, but they cannot put it into the system; yet for themselves they may and should maintain communion with God and dependence on His Word. Now He says, "Strengthen the things that remain, and that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." "Remember how thou hast received and heard." This is remarkably put. Not remember *what* thou hast seen and heard, but "*how*." How does a person receive? He receives by faith. If there is any person in this room connected with some Protestant system, remember, beloved soul, that this is a word addressed in a very special way to those who are found connected with Protestant systems which took their rise in the Reformation, and which will, more or less, abide till the end. "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received." If you know anything of God at all, how did you receive it? It was simply by faith. It is not a question of *what*, but of *how*; and you never get anything from God for your own soul but by faith. Well, then, cleave to it. The system you are in is a dead one, and may bring in its deadening influence on you. The fact of faith's being the personal link of the soul with God is to be held fast. "Received and heard." What did you hear? The Thirty-nine Articles? No. God

calls you to remember that you heard something from His mouth—something out of His Word; and when He says, “Remember how thou hast received and heard,” He intends you as an individual, for your own personal blessing, to hold fast the principles of faith and the Word of God. Because there is a serious danger if you are in connection with any Protestant sect (I desire to be faithful and kindly) of losing the divine link between your soul and God and faith in His Word, because you cannot put life into the system you belong to. But you can maintain life in your own soul. “Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast.”

But Haggai gives us a very striking word about this. Haggai was instructed to enquire of the priests concerning the law, and it was on this point. If a man bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and the skirt of his garment touch bread or pottage, or wine or oil, or any food, shall it be sanctified? The priest said, “No.” You may have what good you please; it will never sanctify a thing which is not sanctified. Then said Haggai, “If a man be unclean by reason of a dead body, and he touch any of these things, will it be polluted?” “Yes,” said the priest. You cannot communicate living holiness to the system you belong to, though you may be the most holy man to be found—a true-hearted Christian. It is impossible to communicate holiness to a dead and a worldly thing, the outcome of man’s ways. You cannot communicate living piety to that which is in principle a dead thing. But, on the contrary, you will get touched with that which communicates pollution to your own soul.

You may say, Is there not a way out of such a

system? Yes. No doubt about that. If one may give the advice of a Christian—and, I trust, spiritual advice—in such a case, I would say that it certainly would not benefit any soul to remain in connection with such a system. How can it bring any blessing to you? You cannot communicate good to it, and it may influence you for evil. He says, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.” “Hold fast, and repent.” “If therefore thou shalt not watch.” What do you watch for? Watch to maintain the living principle in your own soul, to hold fast faith and God’s Word. You are to watch in order that nothing should come between your own soul and living faith in the everlasting God and His own precious Word. If you do not watch what will be the result? This is said to the whole Church, of course. “I will come on thee as a thief.” He comes unawares. Protestantism, as we have it, will by and by relapse into a mere system. That is to say, living faith, personal connection with God, will in that coming day be utterly eliminated from these systems which we call Protestant. Do you not see the tendency to-day? Do we not find societies for everything? A man is scarcely allowed to go on his own course with God. In Protestant sects you will find that all the energy of the Spirit and all testimony has more and more become absorbed into associations, so that you have evangelization societies and societies for preaching to the heathen. A man cannot go on in dependence upon God, but in connection with a society; and as soon as these works of God—these agents of grace—become associated in a form of organization—a society—immediately the mischief is done.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

157

That is, a society will go on when all the Christians are gone out of it. You have societies for the propagation of the gospel, for preaching to the heathen, missions to the Chinese, etc. You have Young Men's Christian Associations (I trust I am not offending anybody, I only mention what everybody knows). All these things are to be found to-day, and what does God think of a society, of a Young Men's Christian Association or a Young Women's Christian Association?

I say an association and a system is a thing abhorrent to God on this account, that it is dead. You cannot put life into an association formed by man; and there is but one association in which there is any life, and that is the Church of God. There is no other. It is absolutely exclusive; there is no other association which is living, of which God can say it lives, but the body of Christ. Every other religious association has this judgment of Christ upon it, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." It is a very solemn thing to remember that.

In a moment, it may be ere we leave this room to-night, every living saint will be transferred to heaven. Suppose that happened. The Young Men's Christian Society would still exist; it might lose a good many members, but the society remains, and as long as the money comes in so long does the society exist. That it is the Lord hates, and it is of *that* He says, "*I will come on thee as a thief.*" He will ignore absolutely its ecclesiastical position and treat it as the world, for as a matter of fact it is nothing more nor less than the world.

But He delights to find a few names. He does

not say their ecclesiastical position is right; but He does speak of certain individuals, not in their collective capacity at all. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." They have kept clear, taking up Haggai's figure, of the man who touched the dead body. Here are persons who have been careful to keep up the life of their soul in private communion and with the Word of God, receiving His message in communion with Himself. They did not know much else, but went on in their ecclesiastical associations; but what they did know they were careful about, and that was to keep up the living link between their souls and God by means of His Word. And the Lord says, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." He will give the public expression of His approval of a man who, in the world and amidst a defiling system, was careful to keep away from what figuratively touched a dead body.

"He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment" (this is the same approval of Christ); "and I will not blot his name out of the book of life." It is a solemn word, because all the rest will be blotted out. Here is a dead system, and in that dead system there is a variety of names—a register with all the names down. Every person who calls himself a Christian is, so to speak, down in that register, but after all the system is a dead thing. But if there is a soul that is not dead, the Lord says, "I will not blot his name out." All the rest will go, but of the man who is careful to keep up the union between his soul and God by means of faith and the Word

He says, "I will not blot his name out." If there is no personal communion with God, can the Church save you? Can you be saved by the Thirty-nine Articles? No. By nothing but the Word of God. And so He says, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." He confessed Me there, and I will confess Him in the heavenly scene. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

I will now just open out the subject of the Church of Laodicea; not to go into it largely, but to show how the bad state of things is intensified to the solemn extent of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. What! You think it possible? Not only is it possible, but it is prophetically declared that He Himself is outside of this thing.

It has become morally incapable of recognizing anything that is according to God at all. It is incapacitated from understanding what is suitable to Him. Oh, what a dreadful state for so-called Christians to have got into! Impotent as to their conscience, and not because it is a dead system! The Lord does not say this thing is a dead system; He does not call it Jezebel. He says nothing to Laodicea such as to Jezebel; nor does He call it "dead," as He speaks to Sardis; but He says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." The fact is, Laodicea might have divine principles, not human formulæ: it is not a question of the Thirty-nine Articles. These people would not have the Thirty-nine Articles; they know the Word of God well enough, and they know what

divine principles are, and they can go to the Word of God, and will not have anything which is not to be found there. But they do not understand what is suitable to God in His nature. There is plenty of knowledge—rich and increased with goods and need of nothing: as to that they may perhaps have a greater grasp of truth than any Christian ever did since the beginning of Christianity to the present moment. What they lack is not knowledge of truth, but conscience. You remember what was said by Malachi, the last prophet God sent to the Jews. It corresponds very closely with what the Spirit of God says to Laodicea. He finds fault with them because they had no moral appreciation of what God was. They had a temple and the altar set up; everything was in order, all the sacrifices went on, but they did not understand God a bit. That book opens with the divine complaint, "I have loved you. . . . And ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" They had no sense in their souls of what God's heart is full of. "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated"; but "ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" You have sent us to Babylon, and put us under governors and rulers that oppress us; we have no oxen in the stall: we do not call that love. God says to them, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise My name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon My altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee?"

Their conscience is dead to what is suited to God

and what He requires. They have everything but a conscience, and I need hardly say—a heart. That is what He found fault with; and He says, “Ye have wearied Me with your words.” And they say, “Wherein have we wearied Thee? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord . . . or, Where is the God of judgment?” They took advantage of the grace that spared them to deny the holiness of His nature. They had no sense of what He was Himself. They had the priest and the sacrifices; but *they brought the blind and the lame and the sick*, and not the best of the flock, and the Lord had to say, “Cursed is the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth a corrupt thing unto the Lord.” They treated Him just as they would a false god. They considered their own convenience, not what was suitable to God.

He says, “Return to Me, and I will return to you.” But they say, “Wherein shall we return?” They absolutely did not know that they had gone away from Him. Again He says, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me.” But they say, “Wherein have we robbed Thee?” We see the perfect incompetency of the conscience under certain conditions to appreciate anything suitable to God at all. “Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. . . . Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Then, lastly, He says, “*Ye have been stout in your words against Me.*” They say, “What have we been speaking against Thee?”

"Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" I mention this to show the similarity there is between what is said to Laodicea and the last words God addressed to His people, whom He brought back from Babylon to present Christ to them. And when He came they would not have Him, but the state of their souls was such that they had no sense of what was pleasing to God. No wonder that when He personally came they did not receive Him. They set a watch for Him to kill Him, and cried, "Crucify Him!" But they began by a total absence of any appreciation of His moral beauties and excellencies. It is utter incompetency of heart and conscience.

I have spoken of Sardis and Laodicea as giving what I call the era of death in the Church, when it has come to such a state that Christ is rejected. May God show us His mind in such a time as this; because the history of the Church began with having left its first love, and ends with being spewed out of Christ's mouth. That God has a path for His own I am perfectly certain. He has a path of faithfulness now, and we shall see how it opens out before us; but there is also power and grace in Christ not only to give us a path and sustain us in the midst of evil, but to come for us in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

GRACE IN THE PSALMS.

BOOK II.

It may be helpful to trace some features of the grace of God as presented in the second book of Psalms. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy water-spouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." Psalm xlii. 7 presents the truth of what was due in principle to every sinner on account of his sins. And, as seen in Jonah ii. 3, how helpless and hopeless is their case; how entirely beyond all possibility of recovery by anything they could do, as well as beyond the power of mere human help. Such is the case of every person who has sinned against God. But, blessed be God, Another has come in, and has gone down under the waves and billows of the wrath of God so truly that we who have believed know most certainly that it is past for ever for us. Christ's own statement in Matthew xii. 39, 40, shows that in Psalm xlii. we have the sinner's case into which the Saviour came.* The Saviour's coming into the sinner's place is the first necessity, but the next is that *God's* light and *God's* truth must be sent out. "Send out *Thy light* and *Thy truth*: let *them* lead me." (Psalm xliii. 3.) How slow man is to realize this; how he tries what he can do, and how he turns to his fellow-man for his religion. But "faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the

* The sign of Jonah applies to the utter ruin and removal of the first man from before God in the cross.

Word of God." (Romans x. 17.) It is humbling, but true, that not a ray of light, real light, can be had as to man's ruin or God's grace and salvation from our fellow-men as the sources of it. But the light and truth from God as to the giving of His beloved Son and the results of His work having come out to the sinner in the gospel of His grace, his condition is *wholly* changed. Instead of being banished from God under the waves of judgment he is brought right to God's dwelling-place, or in the words of our psalm, "To Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacle." Instead of being in misery and cast down he is a worshipper, yea, one whose joy is told out upon the harp, and able to know God as his "exceeding joy." If this should fall into the hands of one who is wretched, let me entreat of him to contrast Psalm xlii. 7 with Psalm xliii. 4, and let him see that the only cause of the entire change is God's light and God's truth having come out. Nothing else but the simple reception in faith of God's good news can make this wondrous difference. But the mind of man objects to this. It is too sudden, too easy. Let me urge upon my reader once more, then, that the salvation of the ruined sinner must be entirely the work of God revealed as Saviour.

But when we are saved the path through this world is found in Psalm xliv. 22, "For Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." The Holy Ghost has Himself applied this scripture to the believer in Romans viii. Even if men have no right thought of God, they do know that to be His through faith in Christ will entail suffering, aye, contempt and ridicule too. Nothing enables us to

endure this but the having first known God revealed in His grace. But to suffer with and for Christ is worth while, nor should the truth be given up when we are hard pressed. Turn to Psalm xlv. 10, 11, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own country, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." There is but a step between suffering in faithfulness for Christ and being in the full enjoyment of His love. He will own those who once merited God's judgment and were afterwards the objects of scorn to the poor world, but whose beauty He now greatly desires as His heavenly bride in the Father's house. And is this prospect not enough to cheer us through the "little while" that remains ere He comes to take us to Himself? Is it not sufficient recompense for all we can be called upon to suffer? Then we "*shall go no more out.*" (Rev. iii. 12.)

But finally, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm xlvi. 2.) This corresponds with 1 John iv. 17 ("boldness in the day of judgment") and with 2 Cor. v. 10. The apostle knew the terror of the Lord. But he felt as to it for others. There was no terror for him. "He could long to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better." (Phil. i. 23.) And so with us; we earnestly desire to be clothed upon. (2 Cor. v. 2.) The prospect of meeting God in eternity is too much for the man who knows Him not; it fills him with dread. But the saints can look on to being around heaven's throne wholly unmoved by fear when it takes the character of actively judging this scene. (Rev. iv.

4, 5.) "We are killed all the day long" (Psalm xliv. 22) is now changed for, "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." (Psalm xlvii. 3.) Instead of being sheep for the slaughter, as now, the saints will have the victory over every foe through Christ, and as associated with Him. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan *under your* feet shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.) In Psalm xlviii. is the absolute security in "the city of the great King" from all the power of evil, and God Himself known there. No foe can force those towers and bulwarks, and no tongue tell to the full the joys of those palaces. "As we have heard, so have we seen" (Psalm xlviii. 8), is the answer to, "We have heard with our ears, O God." (Psalm xlv. 1.)

How powerless is man's boasted wealth when face to face with death. (Psalm xlix.) Neither can man's religion merit salvation. (Psalm l.) God is not and will not be debtor to man on the ground of man's works. But a poor broken-hearted singer, made to feel this, and taught by God Himself to own and not cover it ("truth in the inward parts"), is the one that can call God "the God of his salvation," and who is enabled now through faith in Christ to "sing aloud of God's righteousness." (Psalm li.)

That these psalms speak of the remnant, that the sorrows are those of the pressure of God's hand upon them in governmental dealing, there is no doubt; and that the blessing spoken of is their blessing on the earth is also clear. But God's principles are the same, though the judgment *now* revealed is wrath from heaven. The full truth of the Lord Jesus, God's beloved Son become man, and His undergoing the

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

167

wrath of God upon Calvary, so that God might be just and justifier of Him who believeth in Jesus, is that and that only which meets our case. Whilst in the pathway we share His sufferings as well as suffer for Him. Our prospect is the full bliss of the Father's home enjoyed in company with Him, the Son, and He our joy there; whilst (*climax of grace and love*) He owns us to be His. Let us value this wondrous love. Let it constrain us. But what must be endured by those who despise it? B. G. (Gateshead).

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 5.

"GODLINESS and prayer are, I doubt not, at the root of the apparent blessing here. Earnest, prayerful sisters quietly moving in and out among the people must tell sooner or later, because God is faithful.

"It is truly a day of small things, but the Lord *is* working. It gives me great confidence, in a day such as this, to remember '*The Father loveth the Son*' equally as much to-day as when those words were uttered, and it therefore pleases Him to work for HIS sake. This true and precious thought has been quite an inspiration to me.

"We are apt to look around and within and feel, if we do not say, 'We cannot expect God to work'; whereas if we look above *at Him* we get quite different thoughts.

"Occupation *with* Him leads to believing, hopeful occupation *for* Him." E. F. BIRD.

No. 6.

"I TRUST we gain spiritually. The knowledge of *God*—how vast—how blessed! Conveyed to us, do you not think, mainly in ordinary and often humiliating experiences—for it is not ever through our necessities, neither by intelligence, nor by sentiment of ours—that 'no flesh should glory in His Presence.' How little He makes of our reason—insignificant! He could not be displayed there, except in its abasement. But the heart is a *big place*, full of sin—sins, sorrows, fears—and there the Searcher, the Healer, works, in touching, gracious revelation of *it* and of *Himself*. How beautiful is Luke vii. 36 to end, 'light' and 'love' doing their wondrous work in the disclosure of *Jesus* to a poor sinner."

R. H.

 "ALL IS CHRIST."

II.

A MEDITATION.

"'T is only in Him hiding the conflict we endure,' as we sometimes sing. The secret of perfect peace and satisfaction is communion with Himself and in sharing the Father's thoughts of His Beloved; then we are taken in spirit out of this passing scene of varied exercises into the sphere of the Father's everlasting delights. There all is Christ."

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(From Shorthand Report.)

LECTURE VII. CHAPTER III. 7.

WE were noticing last time, beloved friends, that the question between the Lord and the Church in these three last Churches was no longer that of idolatry, which had been the character of His complaint in the four others. What He found fault with, what He judged and rebuked and sought to correct in the four first Churches was idolatry, setting the creature before the Creator. What Paul said would characterize the last days was that men would be lovers of self and of pleasure, lovers of money, but not lovers of God. They would love the creature more than the Creator. That is the chief character which the Lord exposes and judges in connection with the four first Churches. We find the thing fully established in the case of Jezebel—a religious system inside the Church in which idolatry is cultivated. The Church as a whole is then given up and a remnant broken off. The question is now still deeper and more serious, and a far more critical and delicate one; that is, What do men think of Christ? What does the Church think of Christ? When God had carried His people away to Babylon and given them a very severe lesson as to the evil of idolatry, and corrected it for the time being, He brought a remnant

back in order to have the deeper question tried with them, whether they would have His Christ or not, and what they thought of Him.

The same thing is now at issue to-day, not between God and the Jews, but between God and His Church. That is a solemn thing for us. Well, we were looking at Sardis last time, and we just touched on Laodicea, and I was noticing that the three post-captivity prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, correspond in the character of their teaching with what we find here in connection with these three Churches. The message directed to Sardis is on the same principle, but, of course, in a different order of things, as the message addressed by God through Haggai to the people. That is to say, they had to be careful of two things—to remember that God was among them and with them, that was the one great point; and the other was that His Spirit remained among them as He covenanted with them when He brought them out. But it was all to no purpose; they made their system without consulting God, and without recognizing Christ's presence, and without depending on the Spirit. Their systems may have been very good; I would not say a single word against the orthodox faith of the Protestant or Reformed Churches; but they settled their doctrines and made their formulæ and arranged their systems according to their own thoughts, consulting the Word of God of course. But did Christ give formulæ to His Church? Did He embody Christian truth in thirty-nine articles? I hope nobody will think I am trying to find fault with men better than myself; but these questions need to be raised, and you do find that the thing which the Lord warned His

Church against in Sardis, is the very thing they did. Here was He with the seven stars and the seven spirits of God—perfect competency to order everything, with ability and will to do it, yet He was not consulted in a single thing. Would He have ever established a system of religion, however good, in connection with the governments of this world which had rejected Him?

But to pass on. We have now to be occupied with this Church at Philadelphia; and I would remind you of what I was saying last time about Laodicea; for I take Sardis and Laodicea together because they embrace the last stage in the Church's history; together they embrace the phase of death in connection with the Church. Oh these godly systems of religion, which surround us upon every hand! how can you say they are dead? Beloved friends, I would not say it for the world, but what does the Lord say? He says, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but art dead." It is simple enough when you look at it, because no man or body of men can impart life to a system of their own formation. They cannot give or keep life for themselves; how then can they create a living system? However good it may be, it must be dead if man makes it. And I was noticing last time that there is but one living system and association of men in the universe, and that is the Church of God. And what the Lord says here is, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but art dead." But as regards Laodicea, I was pointing out to you, and I thought it very forcible, how closely Laodicea corresponds with what Malachi has to say of Israel. You will remember that the great defect was impotency of conscience. A temple was set up; a priesthood and all the sacrifices going on regularly

according to the order, yet there was perfect incompetency of conscience to recognize what was pleasing to God.

I will now show you that what Zechariah says corresponds with this Church in Philadelphia. He comes between the other two prophets, and you will remember that the whole question with Zechariah was how long the Lord would not have mercy on the cities of Judah and Jerusalem, against which, he says, "Thou hast had indignation these seventy years." This was not the seventy years of the captivity, but that which dated from the destruction of the city, and the burning of the house. For he is occupied with the restoration of the city and the house, and the indignation which had been upon them seventy years. The Lord spake and said He would return with mercies to Jerusalem, He was prepared then and there to accomplish them; but the state of the people did not allow it. But He would return with mercies to Jerusalem, and His house should be built therein, and He would again stretch out a line over Jerusalem; and further, He says, "My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad, for" (this is the great point of it all) "the Lord will yet comfort Zion, and will yet choose Jerusalem." He is determined to do it, but the thing was, how? Because they had no sense of the state in which Jerusalem really was: but the Lord gave a most solemn description of it. Joshua represented Jerusalem with all the order of holy things and sacrifices, and yet he is seen clothed in filthy garments standing before the Lord, and Satan at his right hand to resist him. The Lord in sovereign mercy intervenes and says, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath

chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And so he has his filthy garments taken away, and a change of raiment given him, and a fair mitre set upon his head. And the Lord says, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth My servant the Branch." He is the man to do it. -That is all I want to insist upon. The starting-point is this, that the Lord has a man, and He calls that man "the Branch," and He says, "This is the stone that I have laid before Joshua." That man alone is to be the establishment of blessing. Blessing can only rest there. There is no other place on which it can rest, not upon a man at whose right hand Satan stands to resist him, nor on a man that is clothed with filthy garments, but it can rest on a man who is the Branch. "My servant the Branch," says the Lord. This is the stone that is set before Joshua. Then in the fourth chapter you get the two instruments by which God will bring about this blessing in the millennial day. They are the king and the priest. Everybody knows that you must have a king and priest if you are going to do any good for the world. God will maintain His testimony in this world by His king and His priest. "And they poured oil out of them into the golden candlestick with the seven lamps." It is the way God has designed to maintain His testimony in this world. He will have a king and a priest to do it, and they are both found in one person. The blessed man who is the foundation is the only one who can rule for blessing, and Zechariah brings him forth. "Take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech,

the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch." Here is Joshua with the golden crowns on his head, representative of Christ. "Behold the man!" Here is the king and the Priest, the man that is called the Branch. "He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord"—yea, as nobody else can do it. "And He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne." He is this prince, "and He shall be a priest upon His throne"—king and priest in one person—and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Zechariah does what another of the prophets did, that is, he presents a person, the one in whom all God's blessing will be accomplished, both as the foundation stone and also the accomplisher.

You will remember of course that He had to be presented; but how was He to be presented to Israel that He might not only be both the foundation stone and the one to build up God's blessing on it, but also associate others with Himself in blessing? "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation." That is the way He was presented; but He comes in humility, because He did not want to reign alone. "He is lowly, and sitting on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." And the Lord says, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." But the whole question comes in here. Here is the man—the King, and also the testimony about Him; but He

comes in lowliness, in order to have companions in His kingdom, and the result is He gets rejected. That is the solemn thing, and in chapter xi. you have the rejection. It comes in very remarkably in connection with the flock of slaughter. The prophet has to shepherd the flock of slaughter, and he has two staves to do it with—one is Beauty and the other Bands. And he breaks the staff Beauty to break his covenant between the Lord and the people; and having rejected them and written on them, "Not my people," he presents this blessed lowly Man to them, and proposes the question to them—What do you think of Him? What price do you value Him at? That is the question you see, beloved friends, to-day with us. Well, he puts it to them in this way: "If ye think good" (there was no compulsion about it), "weigh me my price; if not, forbear." They had to do as they pleased about it. So they weighed the price for Him—thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord says, "Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them." And the prophet takes the thirty pieces of silver and casts it to the potter in the house of the Lord, and breaks the staff Bands to dissolve the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

So you see again how everything rests on this one person. Israel's faith and Judah's faith, God's blessing for them, everything rests on the Man, and this Man is rejected.

I should like to speak of the two remaining chapters (12th and 13th), for they give the two consequences of rejecting Christ. And I may say that they are the invariable consequences of having to do with God, and we all have, if there is to be blessing. They are the

two non-penal consequences of sin. If there is to be blessing of soul, you will have to pass through these two things, as God puts Israel through them. He says, I will make them repent, and I will make them confess. And you will find God will always do that. So He brings them to confession and repentance. He says, "I will pour out the spirit of grace and of supplications upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." He was no other than Jehovah; estimate Him as they did at thirty pieces of silver, it was no other than Jehovah who came in that lowly way. "And they shall mourn for Him" (it is a real thing when God brings us to mourn about sin), "as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." That is the confession, and then you get the moral cleansing. It is grace of the highest kind for God to do this for any soul of man; but He must do it if any soul is to be blessed.

"In that day I will open to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a fountain"—not of blood, but water. It is moral cleansing. We not only have our conscience cleared from imputation of guilt, but we have to be cleansed for the company of our God. Well, we get repentance and confession; but it would not be worthy of God to let you escape His discipline. There is discipline as well as confession, repentance, and forgiveness, in sovereign grace. God is a moral governor, and He does not allow people who plunge into sin to get off. This is shown in the next chapter. But the way in which God made His people feel the iniquity of

their sin in the rejection of His Son—the Anointed One—was in that they rejected the One who was the root of their blessing, and the fruit of it was therefore cut off. It was not governmental dealing with Christ; but Christ's death was governmental dealing with God's people. They lost the head and the source of their blessing—the only one who could undertake for them, and there they are, scattered to-day without altar or priest or anything at all, except money-getting, and they have that. Now, you see, God deals with them by taking away the Christ He had given to them in His love. Of course, He was taken in atonement for our souls, but in doing that there was governmental dealing with Israel. But now He takes up the remnant? In that day there shall be two-thirds in the land, and they “shall be cut off and die.” It is a solemn thing to be in God's hands. And He says, “The third shall be left therein. And I will bring that third through the fire.” There is no getting out of God's hands when once you are in them. “Our God is a consuming fire.” “I will bring them through the fire.” Was it to destroy them? No, but to refine them as silver is refined, and to try them as gold is tried. His object is blessing in the end; but the way is very straight. “Then shall they call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.”

I have just quoted these passages to show you how everything turns on the blessed Man of God's purposes and counsels, the Man who is everything to God and everything to us. You see the application of it to this Church at Philadelphia. Everything here is Christ. He says, “These things saith He that is holy,

He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." It is all Christ presented to us in these three blessed characters. He had not presented Himself in this way before in these addresses to the Churches. He told them only what He *would* be—the sword coming out of His mouth, feet like brass in the furnace, and eyes as a flame of fire, all the characteristics of dignity and majesty, and divine penetration and power to judge. But now what is represented here is simply His moral character in manhood when in this world. Holiness and truth is what characterized the Lord Jesus Christ on entering the world. He says of Himself, "He whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world." It characterized Him all His course through. The apostle Paul declares that this was the very thing that marked Him out as Son of God, the Spirit of holiness, and resurrection from the dead. His path through the world was one scene of absolute consecration to God. It not only characterized Him in coming into the world, but characterized His every step through it. And, moreover, it is the character He has in going up on high. He says, in going out of the world, "I sanctify Myself." For you and I could not be sanctified in a divine way unless we had that blessed One on high. It would be impossible for any soul of man to be holy in a real and true way unless he had the Man Christ Jesus on the throne of God. Why? Because we need a controlling object for our souls. "I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

He is the holy and the true, and we know very well how obedience perfectly characterized that blessed Son.

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

179

But more. He has this key of David. I wonder whether you have found the key of David a comfort to your heart? He expects this to comfort us very much. Here we are in the last days of the Church's history, in the moment of its irretrievable ruin. He anticipates that when He presents Himself to you and me as having the key of David, it will delight our hearts. If you are like me, perhaps you will say, I have never very clearly understood what it means. I will tell you what I believe it means. It is not the sword of David, nor the throne of David, nor the key of the house of David, as we get it in Isaiah xxii., but it is simply the key of David. I believe it is David's knowledge of God's heart. A poor shepherd lad, brought up in the wilderness, feeding a few sheep, accustomed to look up to the sky and behold the mighty works of God, his soul impressed with the teaching of the Holy Ghost both in Scripture and creation—that shepherd lad learned the heart of God beyond the legal ordinances imposed upon man in the flesh.

So when he became a fugitive, and had a band of men around him who were debtors, distressed or discontented, they had the right man to follow nevertheless; and when you have the right man to follow, you are right yourself. When he had that band of men following him, and they were driven into the wilderness and famished, he goes to the tabernacle of God, straight to the priest, and says, "I want some bread," and there was only holy bread that had been placed on the table before the Lord. David says, "Give it to me." He was hungry, and his followers too, and he would take the bread that was lawful for

the priests alone to eat. He had got God's mind and the secret of God's heart about God's King and those who followed him. That is the key of David. He knew the grace that was in the heart of God—superior to all legal ordinances and limitations of law.

Another instance was when the destroying angel was sent with his flaming sword stretched over Jerusalem to destroy it. Here was the guilty man, the one who could say, "These poor sheep, what have they done?" *I am guilty.* He goes forth, calmly and immediately, in view of that sword, and places himself under it to be smitten. I have no doubt he felt God was *not going to smite*, but he was *prepared for it*. A beautiful example of the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who went under the judgment of God that we might be spared.

Well, He presents Himself to us as one who knows the grace in the heart of God and has the key of it. There is besides that which He does—He opens and no man shuts. He does what He likes in order that the testimony may reach souls. There is plenty of time for using the iron rod; that will come in its due course; it is not what He is engaged in to-day. His heart moves His hand to-day, and He is engaged in opening and shutting doors for the testimony of His grace.

Now He speaks to the Church and says, You are prepared to listen to what I have to say to you.

"I know thy works"; there is no need to trouble about them, but I have set before you an opened door. You have your place of testimony. Sardis and those at Sardis may be forming their associations for carrying missionary enterprise to the ends of the earth, and be counting converts by thousands. That is all very well

for Sardis; but here the Lord opens a door, and they keep His word and do not deny His name. They are not going to undertake anything that would deny what is expressed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They are not going to give His honour to another, nor to depend upon human organizations or worldly ways for carrying on the testimony of God. No; they are just going to keep His word and not deny His name.

Then He opens the door and He gives them a place of testimony. In connection with this Church He declares further, "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; I will make them come and worship before thy feet, and know that I have loved thee." Who are these people? They are simply those who have place and position of authority as God's people, recognized as God's people in the world—the synagogue of Satan. Whereas those who stood for a rejected Christ, and who kept His word and did not deny His name, are counted as the off-scouring of the world. As in David's day, there was King Saul with his mighty men destroying God's priests, and David chased about like a hunted partridge. That is the case to-day. There are these two parties. Those who profess to be God's people on the earth—that is to say, they have their Sabbath day, their order of priesthood on earth, a successional religion, their ten commandments, their legal ordinances, using the law, not perhaps as a means of justification, but as a rule of life. (They will have the law in some shape.) These are the people who say they are Jews. God has nothing to do with the Jews to-day, and He will not have any pretended Jews who

182 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

think they occupy the place God gave to the people in days past, with the Sabbath, the law, ordinances, earthly religion, place of worship on earth, etc. These boast of being God's people here. Very well, that is not Philadelphia. Philadelphia is the hunted, the rejected, and despised thing. But by-and-by there will be a change. The tables will be turned presently, and the Christian, if he has a spark of apprehension of the Lord's mind, says, "I am waiting for to-morrow"; then those who blaspheme and despise and reject will have to come and worship before their feet and know that Christ has loved them.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 3.

WE have had before us the Church as the "Body of Christ" in the three ways in which Scripture presents it as such, viz., first, as seen in the counsels of God, and composed of all saints from its birthday at Pentecost until the rapture; secondly, as the aggregate of its members on the earth at any one moment during that time, and maintained by the Holy Ghost in the unity which He formed at Pentecost, and, lastly, in its local expression at Corinth. Now we have before us in Ephesians ii. 11-22 the Church as a *building*. To the end of verse 21 it is looked at in its progressive form, going on to completeness in the Holy City of Revelation xxi. 9-27, and in verse 22, in its present complete form also, the present habitation of God

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 183 .

through the Spirit. The building as seen in verses 21 and 22 is coextensive with the body as to the saints, of which each is composed. But the figure of members of a body, united to their Head in heaven and to each other by the Holy Ghost, and members one of another in mutual dependence on each other, conveys a very different thought from that of living stones, builded together on the foundation of Christ as the Son of the living God, the chief corner stone, for an habitation of God through the Spirit. In the former the Head in heaven is prominent, and all privilege is consequent upon union with Him as such, while, in the latter, prominence is given to the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the house of God, and the privileges resulting therefrom.

Scripture, with no uncertain sound, distinguishes not only between "the Church, which is His *body*," and "the *house* of God, which is the Church of the living God," but also between the progressive building and the present completed habitation of God on earth. They have their respective histories and results. If we would rightly divide the Word of Truth, and be workmen approved of God, we too must seek to mark these distinctions, that we may walk as members of the body of Christ, and know how to behave ourselves in the house of God, discerning things that are excellent.

In Ephesians ii. 20, 21, and 1 Peter ii. 4, 5, both of which speak of the same building, no builder is named, but in Matthew xvi. 18, which also points to this progressive and perfect building, we find the Builder is Christ Himself. He there speaks of the commencement of His building as then future, and tells us the

184 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

foundation would be on Himself, according to Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Against a building on such a foundation (compare Romans i. 4), begun, continued, and finished by such a Builder, the gates of hades cannot prevail. In this building man's responsibility has no place as a builder.

Our chapter is silent as to the builder in verse 22, but 1 Corinthians iii. is not so, and man is there presented as carrying on the building of which Paul as a wise master-builder had laid the foundation. When man's responsibility enters, the door is open for failure, and his work to judgment. Yet is the building looked at as *God's* (v. 9) and still the *temple of God* (v. 16), because, though the failure of man may introduce wood, hay, or stubble, or even that which defiles, still the Holy Ghost dwells there. And we must not allow the sense of His presence here to be weakened in us, because that presence is not to-day marked by those outward manifestations of power visible even to the world, which were witnessed at Pentecost. Nor should we forget His restraining power now exercised over evil. This building of verse 22 was doubtless at first in its normal condition and composed of only true believers. Habituated as we are to contemplate failure in ourselves and in the house of God generally, we need to be reminded that such was never the divine intention, nor a necessity of our calling, either individually or corporately. The knowledge of Himself which God has graciously vouchsafed to us, and the provision so worthy of His name which He has made for keeping us from evil, alike forbid the thought. We are left thus without excuse to trace, to our own

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 185

unfaithfulness, the failure, alas! so manifest. Do we approve the spirit of him who said to God, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"? or of those in Judah whom Jeremiah rebuked, who could stand before God, in the house called by His name, while practising much that was hateful to Him, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations"? That God would dwell in the midst of a people separated to Himself, in time as well as in eternity, is plainly seen in Scripture. *After* He redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and brought them to Himself, He speaks (Exodus xxv. 8.) of this His desire for that moment, when He said, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Its pattern was given to Moses in the mount, and when He had finished the work "*as the Lord commanded him,*" a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. The tabernacle was sanctified by His glory, and the children of Israel knew that He was the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and that dwelt among them, and the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day and a fire was on it by night in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Redemption was the ground of Jehovah's throne among them, and the blood of the goat, on which the Lord's lot fell, sprinkled seven times on and before the mercy-seat, and the constant fragrance of that morning and evening burnt sacrifice, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Such a privileged and responsible people as those who with their families encamped around that tabernacle could nowhere else be found

186 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

at that time. Yet they were but a company, limited to Israel, with unpurged consciences, and consequently were prohibited access into the holiest, and were without an object for their hearts, in that Jehovah for them still dwelt in the thick darkness. This could not satisfy the love of God, which yearned after the nearness and confidence and love of His saints. (Psalm xl. 5, 10.) In Ephesians ii. and Revelation xxi. we find the counsels of God unfolding themselves and displayed in their result. Those with whom the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ now surrounds Himself are gathered from out of Jews and Gentiles. Our chapter shows us how the living stones for this building are prepared by the cross of the Lord Jesus. Therein He hath reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God in one company, having slain the enmity thereby, and has abolished therein the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. So that now, believers from among Jews and Gentiles have peace with God and with each other, and through Christ have both access by one Spirit unto the Father. A blessing as new and as entirely of grace for the Jew as for the Gentile.

Thus prepared from among Jews and Gentiles for God's dwelling-place, they are being "builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [of the New Testament], Jesus Christ Himself being [not the Head here, but] the chief corner stone; in whom all the building *fitly framed together groweth* unto an holy temple in the Lord." Revelation xxi. 9-xxii. 5 presents the Church complete as the "Holy City" and "Bride, the Lamb's wife." But according to the symbolic

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 187

character of that book, the varied glories of Christ are shining out, as Ephesians i. 10 and 21, 23, present Him, in view of this "dispensation of the fulness of times." Thus are revived again those Messianic rays of that glory which His rejection by Israel had caused Him to conceal for a time (Mark ix. 9), while He unfolded heavenly relationships. The metropolitan character of the Holy City is here largely portrayed. In Revelation xxi. 1-5, where *time* is no more, nor the Mediatorial Kingdom, the Holy City comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. The 1000 years of her reign with Christ have left no trace of age, nor wrinkle, nor dimness of that bridal freshness and glory which verses 9-27 portray.

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be *their* God."

Ephesians ii. 22 lets us know that God has not deferred His dwelling with men till the millennium and the eternal state, but has His habitation in this building, composed of living stones, from among Jews and Gentiles, "an habitation of God through the Spirit," not in a temple made with hands as in Israel. We need to keep this distinct in our minds from the presence of Christ, in the midst of two or three *gathered* to His name as promised in Matthew xviii. 20, with heaven's sanction on their discipline.

Acts ii. 1-3 gives the divine answer on earth to accomplished redemption, and the consequent presence of the Redeemer at God's right hand. This is a highly-privileged and responsible place where God dwells by His Spirit. In Acts ii. 38 Peter tells us

188 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

some of its privileges. Hebrews vi. 4-6 tells us too of privileges found there of which souls might partake ("partakers of the Holy Spirit") and yet be lost, as none of these privileges necessarily entail life. Peter charges Ananias with lying "to the Holy Ghost" (Acts v. 3), thus showing the solemn character of that lie; "and great fear came upon all the assembly." Paul in Romans xi. addresses the Gentiles, who had been made partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree, and yet might be cut off.

Looking at the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth, in its normal condition and order, we are instructed in 1 Timothy iii. 15, 16, in the behaviour suited to God's house, by unfolding the mystery of godliness, displayed in the path of the Lord Jesus from Bethlehem to His present place in the glory. The Second Epistle to Timothy tells the "*man of God*" how he may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared and furnished to every good work, when the house of God has reached the condition of to-day.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

HEAVENLY PLACES AND CONFLICT THERE.

No. 1.

THERE are three things in Ephesians i.—the character of our blessings, the place, and the person. In chap. ii. we have God's action toward us—the standing of every believer, however weak. There we see God's sovereign power, making us to sit together in that Man who is

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 189

set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. You are either in Adam or out of Adam and in Christ. It was God's counsel to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt under the shelter of the blood of the passover lamb, then through the Red Sea and Jordan into the land of Canaan. Oh, it is a sad day that we live in, a sorrowful day! The great mass of mankind are rejecting the testimony of God's love to the world, and besides these there are three classes of people. The first class are full of doubts and fears, and say, "I don't know whether I am a Christian or not; and sometimes I think I shall go to hell at last." The second class know that their sins are forgiven, that they are children of God, under the Father's care going through the world, and they are glad to be saved from hell, and that they will go to heaven when they die. But the point lies in not only what we are saved from, but what we are saved to. I think you will agree with me that the third class are the saddest of all. They say, "We know all these things," but they do not walk in the power of heavenly things.

Let me ask you, Are you in earnest? Do your souls want to realize and enjoy heavenly things? We are told to set our affections on things above.

In chapter vi. we have condition of soul. If you asked some Christians where they would find conflict in the Bible, they would say, "In the well-known seventh chapter of Romans." But that is not conflict; it is a soul under law, helplessly under the power of sin. Or they will perhaps point to Galatians. But that is not conflict; it is the flesh and the Spirit contrary to one another. There was no conflict, as the Lord's host, till Israel got into the land. In the

190 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

wilderness Amalek came against them, but that was an assault of Satan, and they had to defend themselves. It was overcome by Joshua fighting for them, while Moses had his hands held up in prayer. The lusts and passions are not conflict with Satan, though Satan may act through them. But how do we enter the land? There is Gilgal, the place of circumcision, where they keep the passover and eat the old corn of the land. But when they crossed the Jordan, Jericho was in front of them with its high walls; but these fell down after they had walked round them, carrying the ark of God and blowing a few rams' horns. We enter the land as victors. "Be strong in the Lord." Generally we think we have strength, and say, "I have the Holy Ghost in me." No, you have no strength and no wisdom, but Christ is made unto us of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification.

In 1 Sam. xiv. there is a good illustration of being strong in the Lord: Saul has the priest and the ephod and all Israel with him, but no power. Jonathan says to his armour-bearer, "Come, and let us go over to the Philistines." They arrange a sign, namely, to go up if they are asked. The Philistines are on a hill above them, like these enemies in heavenly places. And Jonathan goes up in the most humiliating way "upon his hands and upon his feet." The result is that God comes in, and there is an earthquake, and the enemies destroy one another.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It is not open persecution here. Then he goes about as a roaring lion; but also he acts as the serpent, seeking to act on people by false doctrines against the Person and

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 191

work of Christ. Satan works in two ways—to get us to confide in our own strength or in our own wisdom. The first of these is Ai. The spies said, It is only a little city; do not let all the people go wearying there; a few hundreds will do. The Gibeonites are the second. “They did work wilily”—like it says here, “the wiles of the devil.” They came and spread their old garments and mouldy bread before the princes, and they were deceived. Had they laid them before the common people *they* might have said, “Let us ask the Lord about it.” But the princes believed them, and a source of mischief was introduced which lasted until the days of Saul.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but our conflict is with the universal lords of the darkness of this world—against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Why do we often feel depressed? Why are we often cast down? It is the pressure of what is above. What are we thinking about all day? Satan is seeking to draw us off by occupying us with the things around us; but God did not mean our minds to be a playground for Satan. It is an evil day we live in—a sad, sorrowful day, whose special character is, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

The armour is not against God, but against Satan. The first thing in the armour is “the Truth.” The loins are the place of strength. The Truth is to be the girdle for the motives, the affections of the soul. “He that sanctifieth and the sanctified ones are all of one.” “As He is, so are we in this world.” Do you believe that the Father’s love rests on you as it did on His Son now at His right hand, where He is drawing down all the love of the heart of the Father?

192 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

"The breastplate of righteousness." Again I would say, this is not armour against God. It is practical righteousness—a good conscience. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and man." He could look up to heaven and say, "I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He who judgeth me is the Lord." Beloved, we do not want to go on covering up sin. Have you little tricky ways in your business? If so, Satan will succeed in shutting your mouth. He will make a coward of you, and put you out of the conflict altogether.

"Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We are to let the peace of Christ preside in our hearts, and to have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and thoughts. If we look at Christ in His life down here we see Him always at peace, come what may. Should any one of us be a trial to our brethren? Nay, we should rather be full of graciousness and gentleness. We ought to be the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was surrounded by a little company among whom were discontent and murmurings, envyings and strifes. On one well-known occasion they were walking by the way, and seemed to have lingered somewhat behind from following Him. I have no doubt He in His blessed grace waited for them, and when they came to Capernaum He said so sweetly to them in the house, "Of what were ye reasoning by the way?" They were silent, for they were ashamed; they had been disputing who was greatest among them, as they did afterwards

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 193

in Luke xxii. And then He taught them such a blessed lesson—that the way to go up was to go down, even as He was doing Himself, going down to the darkness of the cross, and God has exalted Him.

“The shield of faith”—what is this? It is not the faith that saves; it is trust, confidence in God, which is one element of faith. The fiery darts are infidel thoughts; but falling on the shield of faith, they are quenched. “And take the helmet of salvation.”

Then there is one offensive weapon, “The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” The Word of God can only be wielded in the power of the Spirit. Cleverness will not do, nor intelligence. Satan will come to us with his “Ifs” as he did to Eve in the Garden of Eden. When Satan came to the Lord in the desert, and took Him up and set Him down on a high part of the temple, and said, “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee,” He said, “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” What a lesson to us! How often souls twist that passage.

There are two aspects of the application of the Word. The first is in Hebrews iv., “The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,” &c. This is how it acts within us. The second is in John xvii., “Sanctify them through the truth: Thy word is truth.” This is how it acts outwardly.*

The last thing is prayer. Do we pray not only for individuals, or for meetings near us, but for all saints throughout the wide, wide world? Paul said

* This paragraph is introduced here as applying to the sword.—ED.

he had great conflict for the saints—agony is the word. When we are in our agony is it not generally about our own little troubles and trials?

One word more. The Bible says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." But with many it seems to be, Seek ye first the things of this world, and then, *if you can*, heavenly things. If you speak of our being heavenly it provokes a smile. The Lord give us to know more of what our portion is in Christ.

(February 9th, 1896.)

TRIALS BY THE WAY.

"THESE trials by the way do call out our sympathies in the bowels of Christ to each other, and give us to realize in a very real way the bond divine that unites in our union with each other as members of one body. The Lord be praised for it. So that it is by no means loss to get a bit of suffering and weakness at times. It makes the opportunity the Lord needs, and, while withering up the hindering principle, and practically bringing in death for it, room is made for the Lord's tender sympathy and care to express itself—or, shall I say, for us to more distinctly enjoy that which is ever in exercise toward us. My earnest prayer is that our souls may reap a rich blessing through it in a deeper communion with the Father and the Son—our hearts more truly disengaged and free to listen alone to Him. There has been much prayer for me in subjection, I trust, to the Father's will. I have felt the seriousness of their prayer a good deal, remembering Hezekiah. (Isaiah xxxviii. 9.) The Lord's time for our departure

DEVOTEDNESS.

195

to Himself is the best, and, if interfered with, it is a calamity. Perfectly restful, I had, and have, neither wish nor will in the matter, only desiring His glory, and that Christ may be magnified in this poor body. I but want to give my little testimony to the Lord's grace, and to say how firmly the foundations stand all the rude blasts of adverse winds, for your own comfort when similar circumstances have to be met and passed through. Another thing I wish to say, because you have been equally involved in the matter, is the satisfaction and real joy of heart one felt in looking back at our late conflict over the recent heresy. To be able to say, Well, perhaps our testimony has been indeed very poor and feeble, but, Lord Jesus, so far as one's poor heart knows, we have not surrendered Thy truth or suffered any reflection upon Thy peerless beauty and glory; this is a joy in the thought of going into His blessed presence above."

ROBERT KENT. (May 3rd, 1897.)

DEVOTEDNESS.

Unrevised Notes of Ministry at the Lord's Table.

WE all have conscience, but, besides that, there is heart. Some persons have a very good conscience and very little heart; and some have a very bad conscience and a great deal of heart. The Lord came down here into the circumstances of man in order to draw out the heart and the affections. The woman in Luke vii. was a case of conscience, though there was affection for the Lord. But she stood behind Him—a suitable place for her. There was no heart in Simon. He had invited the Lord that he might be able to say, "Yes, I know Him: e dined with me."

In John xii. it is a contrast to the Pharisee's house; Martha's home was a humble one, as we may suppose. Mary pours the most costly thing on Him. There was one heart in the world at that time that went ahead of all others in entering into the counsels of God. The Lord said, "She hath done it for My burial." And as we sit here this morning we remember His death. What waste! What waste! Do we not hear the voice of Satan, dear brethren, in these words? Waste to spend it on this poor Man Who is scouted by everyone—Whom they are going to haul up before the judge, and hang on the gibbet! "This might have been given to the poor." Ah, the Saviour's reply! What a word was that! Let us test our hearts by it, dear brethren. Do we think it waste to give up something for Christ? Here the heart is vindicated by the Lord.

In John xx. we have another example of devotedness to Christ. Mary Magdalene was very ignorant, perhaps culpably so; but she gets up very early in the morning, before the sun rises, to pass by all the careless world and go to a tomb. Perhaps none of us would have done as much. She stood weeping. She is not afraid of the angels. They ask, "Why weepest thou?" "Because they have taken away my Lord." Woman's first sorrow was in a garden (Gen. iii.), and since then there has been nothing but sorrow on man and woman and the whole world. Yet the angels say to her, "Why weepest thou?" and the Lord says to her, "Why weepest thou?" It was a word to wipe away tears. Then He says to her one word—He calls her by her name. She answers, "Rabboni!" Here we get the heart satisfied. Are *we* satisfied with Christ?

C. McADAM. (October 26th, 1890.)

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

(From Shorthand Report.)

CONTINUATION OF LECTURE VII. CHAPTER III. 7.

THERE is just one more thing with which the Lord comforts this Church. He says, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience." That is, He is going on in grace until a given moment, and then He will take up judgment. He does not mix the two things. He is persevering in grace despite the ruin. People would think it perfect folly to do so. Nevertheless, He continues in it because it is the principle of grace, and the day of judgment has not come. So that meanwhile everything runs counter to His mind and will in the Church.

You find the Pope at Rome in all the grandeur and pomp connected with religion in this world, and He lets it go on and increase, and fill the whole scene. It does not matter; there is one thing He is occupied with, and that is grace; and He leaves judgment till the day of judgment comes, and therefore He is patient. And here is a company of poor people who are patient also. They take it as a matter of course; and the scorn and contempt they bear and suffer, because they know the day is coming; and they are persevering with one single thing in the meanwhile, and that is the word of God's grace. What were we commended to when the apostle left us? What did

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he say to the elders of Ephesus when he was departing out of this world? For they were not to see his face any more. He commended them to God and to the word of His grace, not the word of the law. That is what we have to go on with. That is the patience the Lord speaks of here. "Thou hast kept the word of My patience, and I will keep you from the hour of temptation."

What there is here will have to be shaken to pieces.

Everything you see around you—the religious institutions, so suitable to the social and political economy of the scene around us—will have to be shaken to the ground; and, thanks be to God, we are going to be kept out of it. That day will come upon the whole habitable earth to try them that dwell upon the earth.

These dwellers on the earth are a certain class of people that have their hopes here; not merely their business (we all have that sort of thing) but their hopes are here, their desires are here, their objects are here, and their religion here. Very well, then, they will come under this day of tribulation, that is coming on the whole habitable world to try them that dwell on the earth; and thanks be to God for the man that has the outside place. He knows he will not be in the trouble of that day. God will have His heavenly saints out of the world before that day comes; it is a blessed thing to know it beforehand. How many know it beforehand? Is there anyone in this room who does not know for a certainty that he will be kept out of this day of temptation? We are entitled to know it. I do not doubt that it is only the man who is in the outside place that has the consciousness of it in his soul, but it is an immense

thing to know you will be kept out of it. The Lord expects us to understand what He means; and so He does not here tell us in precise terms how we are to be kept out of it; but there is only one way, that is by His coming for us and taking us out of the world altogether. And so you see, dear friends, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to catch His saints out of the world is very distinct from His return in power and glory to shake to pieces everything that man has, and to take His own power and to reign. It is a distinct thing, and it has a distinct effect upon the soul. And that which sustains the soul in the outside place is not the knowledge of the glory that is coming, but the knowledge of the grace that takes us out of the world before the day of tribulation.

Now He says, "Behold, I come quickly"; so that you have not to wait very long. "Hold that fast which thou hast" (because it is a responsible position), "that no man take thy crown."

The encouragement to "him that overcometh" follows. He that overcometh keeps Christ's word—the word of communion with Himself—and does not deny His name by mixing it up with the world, which would be a practical denial of it. He takes the outside place with a rejected Christ. Such will not have the outside place presently, for He says, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out." Well, what sort of pillar would you like to be? I believe, dear friends, that here the Lord refers not to a pillar that sustains an edifice. I would remind you that there were two pillars in the temple of God, and they did not hold up anything at all. One was called Boaz, and the other Jachin. The one

signified, "In Him is strength"—that is, Christ only; and the other, "May He establish him." Here, I believe, we come in. That is, a pillar indicates the position in which we are set. And I would just refer to Isaiah xxii., which I have no question at all is alluded to when the Lord says, "I have the key of David," etc. You remember the circumstances of that chapter. Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian armies at the time; and the prophet takes that position to carry forward the mind—the heart—to the future day when Jerusalem will be surrounded by the Assyrian foes again, who will then be destroyed. But, as you find at the opening of the chapter, the city is captured in the midst of its ease and prosperity; and there was a wicked scribe, called Shebna, who was building a fine place for himself. The Lord marks him, and judges him, and takes him down from his place, and substitutes for him Eliakim.

The two words Jachin and Eliakim are similar in signification. One is, "May He establish him," and the other, "God shall establish him"—really the same sense. And you remember how the chapter proceeds. The Lord says: "I will clothe Eliakim with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the house of Judah. And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And he shall be as a nail in a sure place. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons." It

is this Man, this blessed Christ, on whom everything depends. The false Christ is taken away, and the true Christ substituted. And what He says is, You shall have part with Me when that day comes, when I am substituted in place of the man whom the wicked one has put forward in this world. There is to be a man of sin introduced who will set himself up as God, and sit in the temple of God. Everybody knows it. It is the iniquitous man of Satan's choice; and the blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, will substitute him by-and-by. When that time comes, He says, you shall have part with Me. You have had part in My rejection, and you shall have part in my establishment. "I will make him a pillar," and he shall have part with Me, as Eliakim, who was substituted for the wicked Shebna. How beautifully it opens up. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, he shall go no more out."

These things are stated for our encouragement, to stir up our hearts while in this world. And may I ask, Do you find this a great encouragement? He says, "I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name." There are two prominent thoughts here—the one is that the Lord will give you a name; and the other, He will write His name. I need hardly say that a name signifies what a person is. We give names indiscriminately; the Lord does not. He gives names to express what the person is. That is, these names are to be written in order that they may be recognized. Now the Lord is going to write, to express these things

in the man who has the outside place with Himself, so that they shall be recognized. "I will write upon him the name of My God." That man shall be the expression in the coming day of glory of what God is in His counsels as to man. Who is the man of God's counsels? Not the first man—not Adam, not any of Adam's race. Who then is the man of God's counsels? Christ, and all who belong to Him. The man who has the outside place with Christ to-day knows well from this scripture that he shall be in that coming day the expression of God's counsels, as associated with Christ.

Then there is something more. How beautiful are the thoughts of God for man! Even in nature He thought of a wife for him; and you know that when He created that first man, Adam, the first thing He said was that it was not good for the man to be alone. He formed the woman, and brought her to him. This is the point here. If you have the blessed Christ setting that man forth in the coming day as sharing in the expression of what God's counsels in man are, you also find that man set forth as part of the expression of what God's counsels are for the bride of Christ. There are the Man and His bride. The soul that is content with the outside place with Christ to-day knows that he shall be established in the inside place presently, and that in the poor good-for-nothing soul taken up from the gutter of this world there shall be the public expression of what God's counsels in man are, and of what God's counsels about the Man's bride are. He says, "I will write upon him the name of the city of My God." It is not a mere city at all. It is the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is a city inasmuch as in heaven it exercises governmental power; but when

it comes down to the earth it is no longer a city, but a tabernacle. As a matter of fact, it is the associate of Christ, the Man and His bride. He says, I will take care that you have your part in that, and shall be among others the public expression of it. As the apostle tells us, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." But the man who has the outside place knows it beforehand.

There is another thing. "I will write upon him My new name." What is Christ's new name? It is the name that always belonged to Him; that is to say, it is the name that belongs to Him in connection with God's eternal purpose and counsels, in connection with the new creation of which He was always the bright and glorious and personal expression. Never was He man before entering into the world, but, becoming man, He has gone up on high. He has many other titles too, but this is the great thing. He is Son of David, having the power of government and many other glories; but it is a special and peculiar joy to be identified according to the power of that Christ with what He is Himself. Well, He says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." For what Christ addresses to the angel, the Spirit of God addresses to you all and to me too.

Now I have already spoken of Laodicea, and referred to what was said on the previous occasion, but I return to the subject for a few practical remarks.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich." He addresses this last Church according to the three ways in which He presents Himself. "I am the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

And this is just what the Church ought to have been ; but it has failed, and He has to take up the place Himself. What is the Amen? It is the place of establishment we have in association with Christ ; in Him is the Yea and Amen to the glory of God by us. But the Church has lost the faith of it altogether, and instead of waiting to participate with Christ in the glory which God designed, the whole Church to-day is running after the glory of this world. Do they not want it? Are they not political? Do they not vote for place on School Boards, etc.? You know better than I do what these things are. It is the race to-day to see who can acquire the greatest political power with the least expenditure and trouble. Well, He says, That is not like Me, I am the Amen--the establishment of what God has designed in the glory that Christ will be manifested in. And as you have deserted it I must take it up Myself. So He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. . . . As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

"Gold tried in the fire." True riches consist in being the righteousness of God in Christ. It is because we are the righteousness of God in Christ that we have a title to the glory. God will never put a man into the glory who has not a title to be there, for He never does a thing unjustly ; but He gives us a title to be there ; and that divine title does not consort with running after the glory of this world (you don't want a divine title for that), and neither does it consort with having Christ outside the door. Here is an assembly of persons, and Christ is outside the door—that is quite possible to-day. It is evidently a possible thing to have a company of persons with Christ's name on

them, and Christ outside the door after all. How, then, can you claim to be the righteousness of God in Christ if you have not Christ? No, He says, you cannot have this thing without Me. "I counsel you to buy of Me gold refined in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed." If a man has a divine title, God gives him proper clothing. You remember what He did for Adam and Eve. He provided them as driven out with what was proper for their place, and so it is with a saint throughout eternity. If He gives us a divine title, He provides us with what is proper, even the white raiment which is the righteousnesses of the saints. It is that which by reason of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and faith in the blessed Saviour, is the natural outcome of that person's life. How does it consort with a Christ outside the door? Do you think the white raiment agrees well with saying you are rich, and increased in goods, and want nothing, and Christ outside the door? If you have these things let us be in the same place where Christ is. It is a great thing to see that you are in the same place where Christ is. You will be so by-and-by if there is a spark of faith in your soul; and it is in Him we are established and in Him we are accepted. If this be so, why should you not be associated with Him in His place on earth? *White raiment is the practical response in us to what Christ is as the faithful and true Witness.* He says, "I counsel you to buy of Me," etc. Answering to His position as the beginning of the creation of God, He says to Laodicea, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." You pretend to see—why don't you see that I am not there? It is a striking thing. You say you

are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but you want the eyesalve to see I am not there. It is want of conscience really. We do see come out in every line of this history what is put forward so strikingly in the prophet Malachi, that there was impotence of conscience to recognize anything that was suitable to God. Now He says, "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*" It is love that rebukes. I have said before there are the two things: His government, and that He brings you to repentance and confession—that is grace. There is the love of communion and the love of rebuke—which is the better? Communion is the better, but it *is* love when He rebukes.

"*Behold, I stand at the door.*" We sup with Him. If you look at the apostle John you will find he talks of the supper in a different way from the other evangelists. When he speaks of the supper, it is not a question of the Passover, but of washing their feet. I believe that is what the Lord wants to do here. Open the door, and I will come in and sup with you. He does not say more, but you remember that the occasion of the supper in John's Gospel is similar in principle to what we have here. Just as that last supper was the end of the Lord's ministry and the end of Israel's history as God's people, to whom Christ was presented, so here we have the end of the Church's history, and end of the presentation of Christ to His own Church.

Remember there are two moral principles which the Spirit of God introduces in connection with that supper, and they are of immense importance. The time had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father. What a thought it was for

ADDRESSES ON THE REVELATION.

207

the Saviour. He had never been in His Father's house in manhood before! What a thing to think about, to look forward to, to anticipate, to be in His Father's house in manhood! The Father had ever been with Him, and He had ever abode in the bosom of the Father in communion, but never in manhood had He been in the Father's house. And He was going there. And the time had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father. That was the main principle in His soul. But also He loved His own that were in the world. He had objects of love here, and He was not going to have them separated. His love had fastened itself upon those poor things in the world—the men who followed Him and accompanied Him in His temptations; it was those men that His heart clung to, and He was not going to give them up because He was going away. He loved them unto the end, and yet He would go to His Father's house.

And the actual circumstances of that supper are remarkable. The critical moment had come, Satan—the devil—having put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Him, while the Father's purposes were about to be accomplished too. If the devil had arranged his schemes and brought them to their ultimate point and climax—if they were matured for execution, the Father's plans and counsels were matured for execution too. Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, and absolutely that He had come from God, and was going to God, then "He rose," etc., and washed the disciples' feet. These were the elements of the last supper. The same thing is here in principle. The climax has come; the critical moment has arrived; the devil's

plans are matured; the principle of rejection has come in, and is fixed, one would say, in the heart of the Church, or of many of those who are of it. But the time has come for the accomplishment of the Father's purposes and counsels of glory with regard to His Son, and God will do it. As to the poor Church, He will stand outside and knock, and if there is a single individual to let Him in, He will come in and sup with him. And I do not doubt what He will do with the man; He will make him sit down to meat, but He will wash his feet first. He does not sit down with defiled feet. He washed Judas' feet, though *he* did not eat the supper.

Here we come to the close of these most interesting and important lessons; and may God fix the principles He has brought before us, and the instructions He has given us—the warnings, counsels, and exhortations—fix them in our hearts and conscience, to bring about the results He desires in the day of Christ's rejection—rejection not by the Jew, but by His own Church. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.

CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE.

No 4.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

WHEN our sins are forgiven, is not the question of the punishment of them settled for ever?

† Yes; as regards the mind of God they are as if they had not been. His bowels of mercy are in exercise toward us instead of His wrath, and thus we

have the knowledge of salvation. (Luke i. 77, 78.) Of course, it supposes confession; and then, through the blood of Christ, we know not only His mercy, but that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

How strong a ground of confidence this gives our souls!

†Most deeply needed too; especially after we are converted, and have come to know that God is light, and that we walk in the light as He is in it.

Oh, but I thought that after conversion we had not to trouble any more about forgiveness.

†We need to trouble about sin if we commit it, for it is offensive to God; and least of all does He pass it over in His children. Moreover, when the point is the present government of God, a sin cannot be forgiven until it is committed; and besides, our whole intercourse with God, who is our Father, is involved.

But did not Christ bear all our sins in His own body upon the tree?

†Thank God, He did! and all my sins were future then. So that all punishment is past for ever for every believer from the beginning to the end of time. *That is the ground of righteousness upon which we are justified by faith from all things, and are sanctified and perfected in perpetuity.* For He has done the work which takes away our sins eternally, cleansing us from all sin—a work which purges our consciences from dead works.

Gladly one owns the truth of that; but then the need of forgiveness is a difficulty.

†Not a difficulty, but a necessity. Punishment is gone for the believer, and conscience is purged; God

remains just, and we remain justified. But that is only the greater reason why there should be no allowance of sin on our part. He never allows it; but if we do, then of course communion is broken. Is it never to be restored? and is there no way by which the poor sinner may be brought into forgiveness and favour?

That is just the point. Is the way identical for saint and sinner?

†Certainly, in its principle. It is not the asking for forgiveness, but the confession of our sins. The prodigal, in Luke xv., says not, "Father, forgive me"; but, "I have sinned . . . and am not worthy to be called thy son." So Peter, ever impulsive, prayed the Lord to depart from him because he was a sinful man, showing a divinely-given sense of the impossibility of associating Christ with what was sinful. It was confession and a holy fear. This God approves of, where before there was that of which He disapproved, and He forgives. The forgiveness may be eternal as when we come at the first, or governmental whenever the occasion arises. Confession must always precede it. Thus David says, "I have sinned against the Lord," and Nathan replies, "The Lord has also put away thy sin."

Judas confessed, but he was not forgiven!

†No; he confessed to the priests, not to the Lord. Saul is another instance of confession without faith.

I have read in a recent religious tract that in confessing to God we must "tell Him everything as if He knew nothing about it." But there seems a want of reality in the thought.

†It is mere sentimentality, and that is never truth.

Such a God would not be the true God. To Him all things are known, and the Spirit of God most strenuously insists on this, for it is the basis of grace and of true repentance and confession. Acts, thoughts even afar off, every motive and word, are all known to Him. (Ps. cxxxix.) This gives true confidence in confession (*vv.* 23, 24), and is of great importance, for while confession is according to *my* knowledge, forgiveness is according to *His*. If our heart condemn us not, we indeed have boldness toward God; but what searches and tests is not our own knowledge, but the fact that He is greater than our heart, and knows all things. (1 John iii. 20.) What gives confession its holy character is not only that "I acknowledge my transgression," but is the recognition that "I have sinned and done this evil in *Thy sight*." (Ps. li. 3, 4.) This is the opposite of His not knowing anything about it, or that we are to confess to Him as if He did not. He is better acquainted with our sins than we are, and, knowing this, the soul is strengthened to discern itself, and is delivered from a legal and pretentious scrupulosity. In restoration Peter says, "Lord, Thou knowest all things," and is transparent in the presence of One who foreknew and forewarned him of his fall, and beforehand had interceded for him.

Justification and forgiveness are, then, different things?

†Justification is judicial, and is once for all. Forgiveness is a matter of favour, though now based on righteousness, and may be repeated as often as the need arises. The one is by faith; the other is upon repentance and confession. Under law justification could never have been known; forgiveness should have

been known whenever the sacrifice for sin was brought. In Christianity justification and eternal forgiveness are identified (Rom. iv. 6-8); but governmentally forgiveness is consequent upon confession.

The blessed Saviour, you will remember, prayed for His murderers upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

† And His precious intercession was surely heard, so that the glad tidings were preached first at Jerusalem and to the Jews everywhere. But, rejected by them, it was sent to the Gentiles, and the Jews were broken out of the place of privilege and blessing. Thus in the government of God all their sins were brought up again and bound upon them, so that the accomplishment of Psalm ciii. is still deferred. All their iniquities are not yet forgiven, notwithstanding the Saviour's intercession; nor are their transgressions removed yet from them as far as the east is from the west.

For this they must await, no doubt, the day of national repentance and confession.

† When they will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son. Then will they be forgiven, in answer still to the Saviour's prayer, but not apart from confession, if blessing is to come. "They shall call on My name, and I will answer them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, Jehovah is my God." (Zech. xiii. 9.) Yet remark, the basis of their national justification and salvation is laid already in the death of Christ, without which the advocacy could not have availed. By reason of the death and blood-shedding of the blessed Saviour, they will never be punished

nationally according to the just judgment of their sins. For He died for that nation. Their affliction will, in consequence of His death, be for chastisement and blessing, and reckoned in the day of pardon to be double for all their sins. (Isa. xl. 2.)

Do you mean that they are not only to be pardoned nationally, but justified?

†Certainly; and they are the only nation that ever will as such be justified. In the Book of the Revelation we see many individuals redeemed *out of* every tribe and tongue, and people and nation; and they stand before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands. (Rev. v. 9; vii. 9.) But the only national companies sealed for blessing in the millennial day are Israel's twelve tribes, and the special Judaic remnant gathered around the Lamb upon Mount Zion. (vii., xiv.) They are not only a pardoned, but a righteous nation. This, of course, is, and can only be, due to the death of Christ and His precious blood; for they are, *par excellence*, a sinful nation. (Isa. i. 4.) But in the day of salvation, when faith is brought to own that Jah Jehovah is the Rock of Ages, and they confide in Him for ever, then shall they sing, "Open ye the gates, and the *righteous nation* which keepeth faithfulness shall enter in." (Isa. xxvi. 2.) This is more than forgiveness. "Thy people shall be all righteous." But how? "They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." (Isa. lx. 21.) To be righteous they, and we too, must be pardoned; but we and they are pardoned not because we are righteous, but as having sinned.

Then, if I understand aright, there is eternal forgiveness, which is practically identified with justification, and there is governmental forgiveness.

†And it is this repeated need of confession and forgiveness that is so little understood, and yet so important, in God's ways with men, as well as in the Father's government of the family.

Can there be governmental forgiveness which is not eternal?

†They are always distinct. Administrative forgiveness relates only to this world, and may be exercised by man, if qualified to do so. Paul, we know, forgave in the person of Christ (2 Cor. ii. 10); and the power of binding and loosing, committed to Peter (Matt. xvi. 19), and extended to the apostles, as remitting or retaining sins in connection with the gospel preaching (John xx. 23), was established among the two or three gathered together unto Christ's name. (Matt. xviii. 18, 19.)

That was for godly discipline.

†No doubt; but it was forgiveness, or the reverse, divine in character, though administered by men, and abides in force to-day wherever such a company is found. Thus it is administrative or governmental. But eternal forgiveness is once for all, and of course is the blotting out of sin for ever by the blood of Jesus Christ. (1 John i. 7.) It is the absolute and eternal forgiveness of all our sins for His name's sake. (ii. 12.) Never can it be repeated; and we know it is ours for good and all. It is this eternal forgiveness that is preached to us in His name. (Luke xxiv. 47.) Believing on Him, we receive it now (Acts x. 43), and know that we have it. It is final and irrevocable, as justification itself, with which it is associated (Acts xiii. 38, 39), and is as unchangeable as the nature of God from whom we have it. Man has no part in bestowing it,

RESURRECTION.

215

except by proclaiming it in the gospel. The only Man who had power on earth to forgive sins eternally was the Son of man, but He is God. That none can forgive sins thus but God only is true enough; and this authority is delegated to no other—neither to priest, nor clergy, nor church. We have eternal forgiveness immediately from God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13); and we know it by His Word. (Ephes. i. 7; Col. ii. 13.) Indeed, the apostle John was expressly commissioned to write his epistle because our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake.

RESURRECTION.

No. 2.

THERE are three instances in the Old Testament of the raising of the dead and three in the Gospels, the resurrection of the Lord Himself being altogether unique and in itself apart. But since the coming of the Holy Ghost, there are as yet only two. We await the third, which is the glorious moment when death is swallowed up in victory.

It cannot be doubted that these instances, both as regards number as well as character, are given designedly by the Spirit. The first most plainly sets forth grace. What spiritual mind does not recognize this to be the first and prominent principle displayed in raising not merely the dead, but from among the dead? We find the history in 1 Kings xvii. of the raising of the son of the Gentile widow of Zarephath. Grace is the teaching of the whole narrative, as the Lord so blessedly declared in the synagogue of Nazareth.

The one thought that fills the woman's mind is that death is the judgment and result of sin. "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come to me to call mine iniquity to remembrance, and to slay my son?" This the prophet repeats before the Lord, and in spirit identifies himself thrice with the child in death. Jehovah hearkens to his prayer, and the soul of the child returns.

Moreover, in the Gospels grace it is which so strikingly appears in the raising of Jairus' daughter. The new Jewish hope by virtue of Messiah's presence must perish, and for ever, except for grace. But if grace intervenes to restore by raising from the dead, it is equally valid for the unclean, and even, therefore, for the outside Gentile. There can be little doubt that this new and blessed principle of sovereign grace is especially in view in Matt. ix., where it is contrasted with the old legal dispensation, under the figure of the new wine and the new skins, and is connected immediately with the raising of the ruler's daughter.

The second time that resurrection power was exercised is in 2 Kings iv. No Gentile is in question here, but all is done that the compassionate care of Jehovah for His people may be manifested. (See also viii. 1-6.) The son was given to the Shunamite, but not of her seeking, and of this she reminds Elisha when the child dies. He was thus the evidence of Jehovah's unsolicited love, and to Jehovah, therefore, directly she must needs go. The mother entered into the mind of God about it, and had laid the child upon the prophet's bed, for with the man of God he must be identified in death. Beautiful anticipation of God's

RESURRECTION.

217

thoughts, and a recognition that His peculiar gifts and callings are without repentance.

Turning to the New Testament, it is this unsought compassionate care of His people that shows itself so clearly in the raising of the widow's son at Nain. The gloom of death broods over that scene as the funeral *cortège* sets out. The mourner was a widow, and the dead had been her sole support. No cry for help was heard, for there is none to redeem; but suddenly Jesus approaches, comforts the weeping mother and touches the bier, and the bearers stop. He compassionates the bereaved widow's sorrow, and speaks to the dead, and raising him by His word to life, He gives him to his mother. It is a glorious display of the love and compassion of God.

A third time God deigns to reveal to us His glory in resurrection; not now so much as exhibiting grace nor compassion for His people, but rather that mighty power that takes occasion by the victory and utmost effect of evil to exalt itself the more gloriously. Elisha, the mighty prophet of resurrection, was no more. The power of death had reached even him, of which his sepulchre and his bones were proof. Moreover, the incoming year had brought up invaders of God's land. (2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.) Unchecked, the floods of evil overflow, and reach even to the neck, but its success only serves to glorify the power of God in resurrection. "As they were burying a man, behold, they espied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood upon his feet." How closely this plain narrative corresponds in principle with the third great

exercise of resurrection-power by the Lord Jesus, as recorded in John's Gospel. (Chap. xi.) Death and corruption had reached his friend—Lazarus was dead, and Jesus was not there. It was indeed a valley of the shadow of death, and every heart but His was subjugated by its power. Passing through it, in sympathy He weeps. Evidence of His love to Lazarus no doubt, but how infinitely deeper the source from whence flowed those tears. The ruin wrought by sin, the dark spell that alienated the human heart from God, and caused the full success of evil and the judgment of God to coalesce in bringing down to the grave that being formed in His image. This and all the irremediable misery that held the creature hopelessly in its grasp, weighed upon His heart, and found expression in His tears and groans. Four days had Lazarus been dead, and by this time stank. The power of evil, too, in rejecting Christ had driven Him away who was the Resurrection and the Life. (John x. 39, 40; xi. 7, 8, 16.) There was full opportunity for him who had the power of death to exercise it. But the utter ruin of man, and the success and present power of the enemy, were turned to the glory of God, and that the Son of God should be glorified by it. And He could say, "I rejoice on your account that I was not there, in order that ye may believe."

When once the blessed Son of God is come, then God is most excellently glorified in respect of that which had entirely compromised His name and nature. Sin becomes the occasion of displaying His righteousness, and death His glory in resurrection, while man, the deeply interested subject, witnesses in impotence

RESURRECTION.

219

the grace and power that intervenes on his behalf. The dead man swathed in grave-clothes, his face bound round with a handkerchief, comes out of the tomb, demonstration that the Man who had cried, "Lazarus, come forth," was no other than the Son of the Father. In principle it was the absolute annihilation of the whole power of evil when at its utmost height. The Red Sea's depths and Jordan's flood alike bear witness to the same truth.

The two instances of resurrection, subsequent to the coming of the Holy Spirit, set forth in a striking way the same principles as are presented in the first two recorded in the Gospels, and correspond also with that of the widow of Zarephath's son and the son of the Shunamite. The raising of Dorcas (Acts ix.) is clearly connected with the special grace which, while admitting the Gentiles (Acts x.), still continued to be exercised toward Israel, in spite of its consummated rejection of the gospel. (Acts vii.) Saul comes out the apostle of man's enmity against Christ (viii.), but only to be taken up as the vessel of heavenly grace to Jew and Gentile. (ix.) Linked with this we have Peter's ministry of supplementary grace (ix. 32-xi. 18); and the raising of Dorcas is the illustrious expression of it.

The second occasion of exercising this glorious power is in the raising up of Eutychus. Grace is not the point in this case, but God's compassionate interest in and care of His saints. While Paul is preaching, the youth, overtaken by deep sleep, falls from the third story, and is taken up dead. But Paul, descending, fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms, said: "Be not troubled; for his life is in him. . . . And they brought away the boy alive, and were not a little

220 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

comforted." Thus, in view of death, the Spirit insists upon these principles of God's intervention on man's behalf, whether of grace for Jew and Gentile alike, or compassion for His saints. He is unchangeable and eternal, and manifests Himself in grace and compassion whatever, yea, because of, the ruin of His creature—the same in an apostate kingdom, among a Christ-rejecting people, or as dwelling by the Spirit on earth.

As already noticed, we still await for ourselves that full, final exercise of resurrection-power that swallows up death in victory, when death, having reached its utmost bound, will be obliterated for ever as regards the saints. This, corresponding in principle with the resurrection of Lazarus, and of the man let down into Elisha's tomb, is the third of the series. His grace, as well as His compassion, toward His saints is indeed gloriously manifested therein; but it specially displays that glory and mighty power of God, which takes occasion by the highest exercise of evil to put an end to it for ever. May we live in the power of it, the power of Christ's resurrection, in anticipation of that day.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF
ROBERT KENT.

No. 2.

FEATURES OF FAITH.

Cain and Abel came to God with two different kinds of offering; and, to look at them both, one would think Cain's offering the most beautiful. Abel brings a lamb which he has killed, a ghastly sight. He has shed its blood and taken out the internal fat; and he

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 221

offers the lamb to God with the fat. Cain's offering is of the exquisite fruits of the earth, which he has cultivated with much labour and the sweat of his brow. Yet God accepts the one and rejects the other, and bears testimony to Abel's faith as well as to his gifts. Faith is that principle which makes all the difference between one man and another. In Heb. xi. God takes up some of His Old Testament saints and puts them together, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, to exhibit certain characteristics of faith. These four should characterize us all as saints.

Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. The way of it is fully developed in the gospel of God, unto which Paul was separated as an apostle. (Rom. i. 1-3.) It was concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; not about saving sinners, that comes afterwards. Paul was not ashamed of the glad tidings, for it was the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed on the principle of faith to faith. Christ was set forth a mercy-seat for the remission of sins that are past, sins of the Old Testament saints (Rom. iii. 21-26); and at the end of chapter iv. it says righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Thus we are justified, that is, cleared before God. In Phil. iii. Paul describes it as the righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. He would not have his own righteousness, which would be on the principle of law; he counts it dung and dross. Our righteousness is described in Scripture as "filthy rags." We are made the righteousness of God in Christ. "In Christ" God sees us. These

222 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

are foundation truths. In many places, and even here in Bexhill, you may see many a house with a great ugly crack on the front. An ordinary passer-by would say, "Ah, it looks rather shaky"; but an architect with a practised eye would say, "There is something wrong with the foundations." It is of no use to look to the upper story first, to heavenly truths, the foundation must be right first. We must have peace with God. We must come to God presenting Christ, the Perfect One, the Perfect Offering.

Then in Enoch we have another character of faith. Nothing is mentioned about the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis iv., but we have their occupations. In chapter v. there is nothing about their occupations; but the line of Seth, the appointed man, and their ages are mentioned. There is a short sentence in this chapter which you must have noticed; it occurs eight times, "And he died." A story is told of a man who went into a church or chapel where this chapter was being read—not a very interesting chapter, one might have said, for an unconverted man to hear, but the sequel shows that God is Sovereign in His way of blessing souls. He heard the account of these men who lived, some of them, well-nigh a thousand years, but the end of each was the same—"he died." It made him think that his own brief span of life might soon end, and then, what next? He was converted to God. Enoch lived three hundred and sixty-five years, and it says twice in three short verses that he walked with God. *Do you walk with God?* Do not think for a moment that I am putting myself on a pinnacle; we are all poor failing things. "In many things we all offend." Enoch was a family

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 223

man, and had doubtless his trials and sorrows. It says he had sons and daughters, and surely difficulties in bringing up his children. He lived in the same world that you and I do, a very wicked world it was; and in the name of his son he spoke of the deluge that was coming. We know from the New Testament that Enoch was a prophet, and spoke of the coming of the Lord with His saints to judge. This was nearly six thousand years ago, and the Lord has not come to judge yet. But Christ is coming to judge. How blessed this is! He walked with God, and God communicated His thoughts and mind to him, and he had His approval. It says in Genesis, "He was not." If this were all we might think he died like the other eight men in the chapter, but in Hebrews we read that he was translated. This is our prospect, to be caught up. The air is the meeting-place.

In Noah we have the fear of God. During the one hundred and twenty years that he was building the ark, or superintending its construction, he was a witness to the world around him. I have often thought with sorrow of the results of Noah's preaching. None of the men he preached to went into the ark. Noah and his wife and family alone went in. The first rain that fell was in judgment. There had been no rain on the earth before the deluge—a dew came up and watered the ground. But now the flood-gates of heaven were opened. The fear of God is a great thing; and we, "knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade man." But oh, the darkness that there is in souls! When one speaks to them one finds that darkness shrouds them.

In Abraham we see obedience; he obeyed God.

224 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

He went out, not knowing whither he went; and when he came into the land all he got of it was a grave, into which he put the dearest object of his heart. Do you say, Is that all I am to have? There is something besides: God turned the gaze of Abraham to heaven. He showed him a city, the heavenly one; and he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. God shows us, not a city, but a heavenly Christ, "all that the Father has," that is, Christ. If you seek the things above you will be *supremely satisfied*. God was not ashamed to be called their God. He would be ashamed to be called the God of some people. Oh, if you are like one who tries to hold these heavenly truths in one hand, and this world in the other, you can never know what fellowship with the Father and the Son is, the infinite blessedness of the Father's delight in the Son. A Christian who does this is always miserable, because, being a Christian, he is spoilt for this world, and yet is not in the enjoyment of what belongs to the other.

May we worship God, walk with God, fear God, and obey God, and be looking and longing, and *watching and waiting, for the Lord's return*. We need to have our hearts' affections engaged with the living Man at God's right hand.

July 22nd, 1894.

PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED.

IN Joshua iv.-v. 13 we have the principle of taking possession of the land of promise. The heavenly things are our things; they belong to us and we belong to them—they are our own, that to which we belong.

Paradise was given to man, and he was turned out of it as a sinner, then the world sprung up as it is now. God never owns it in any way and never will. When the Son of God came into this world He was driven out of it; that closed man's history morally, though God knew from the first what was in man's heart. "Now is the judgment of this world." There is no way back at all to an earthly paradise, and no way of going on with God in this world as it is. He has prepared a better, and has revealed to us a place which does belong to us, and to which we belong.

The Lord Jesus Christ who came down from heaven is our life. He came down from the Father and went back to the Father, and is the power of eternal life to us there. That life came down from heaven, was manifested on earth in the Son. He died and rose again to accomplish redemption, and redeemed us for the heavenly place. In Christ as dead and risen we belong to heaven and are shut out from earth. He died to all that is in and of the world. He completed this work that we might have part with Him there; He

226 PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED.

could not have part with us here. According to righteousness which He has wrought the only place which belongs to us is a heavenly place. We have no place in the first man except condemnation and death, and in the second our place is in redemption and life. We are not there, in fact, yet, but in passing through earth the wilderness saint has a place in heavenly places though in the body.

Our battles begin when we get in. As soon as the Israelites had crossed the Jordan there was continual war, for the Hittites, the Canaanites, etc., were still in the land. In the wilderness, after Sinai, there was no war. What characterized the wilderness was the testing of man—faith and practice tried. In Canaan it was conflict, in the wilderness it was the care of God. The effect of crossing the Jordan was that the Lord stood there with a drawn sword in His hand.

What the Israelites went through up to the Red Sea corresponds to the exercises of heart which we go through before we get to the knowledge of redemption. From the Red Sea to the Jordan, when we have redemption and are for ever delivered, we then get to the wilderness, and have to walk with God. After they cross the Jordan corresponds to our going into heavenly places, and there conflict goes on. We have not conflict in the wilderness, but God's care for us as we pass through circumstances which test our hearts. When we sit down to eat the old corn of the land, then conflict begins, not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

After the Israelites had apprehended the bloodshedding they were still in Egypt; there was no faith for walk, no courage, no victory. It is the

PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED. 227

state of a soul before redemption is known, setting out right, it may be, seeing that the blood is the only thing which can answer before God, which meets His holy judgment against evil, but having no consciousness of victory. So at the Red Sea they are stopped; they could not get any farther. They must get now another thing—they must have deliverance.

At the Red Sea Moses says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." God has come down in love and taken us totally out of the place we were in—"hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

In Romans iii. we are shown our sins, and there is also the answer to them; but further than this, Christ has wrought salvation and taken us out of our old standing. Redemption is wrought; we are not in Egypt. It is not a question of fighting, or of weakness and infirmity incapable of coping with Pharaoh; God took them actually out, and so us. The redemption which God has wrought has taken us quite out of the scene. God has to deliver us. "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." The death and judgment which Christ passed through, which drowns the enemies, saves us. They went through on dry ground, and they were brought to God. "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you *unto Myself*"—not to Canaan yet, but to God.

Jordan, instead of being death and resurrection for us, is *our* death and resurrection. Now "I am crucified with Christ." God hath raised us up together. This is more than not being delivered and desiring to be, and more than the path of faith in circumstances, it is my place in heaven. Israel had desires to get free,

228 PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED.

and so has many a soul under sin. It would look by victory to get out of it and for grace to help it. But it does not get free, and has to discover that it wants deliverance. "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" We never get peace by victory, and never will. All the exercises in Egypt are to show us that we cannot get out of it. It is more humbling to discover what we are than what we have done—that we are out of the presence of God, without strength, than that we have sinned. Peace is the way to victory. When I get broken down and humbled, and know what I am, then I give up the thought of getting my own deliverance, then I find "He has made peace."

The prodigal has his condition settled by his father; the progress was to find out what he was in his rags. All was blessing directly he met his father. Many souls have set out and have not got free. Were you to question them, "Are you ready for the day of judgment?" they are not, they have not met God.

Duties begin with the relationships in which we are; we must be in the relationship to have the duties. One must be a Christian to have the duties of a Christian.

When we get to Jordan we get to life and resurrection. If I know that I have died with Christ I must then see to the things which are above. I am no longer alive in the flesh. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." We belong to the place in which He is risen. It is not a question here of deliverance, but to win victory from Satan, and of possessing those things which God has given to us. "All things are yours," but I must set my foot on it to realize it. Satan says, No. But this

PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED. 229

is sure, all God gives is ours in Christ. Now I want to get it in possession.

This is conflict with spiritual wickedness. The power of death which Satan wields is gone—gone as to hinder our being in heaven in spirit. Christ took part in flesh and blood, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Paul had the sentence of death in himself—held himself as a dead man. Death is nothing, or rather gain. “We are always confident”—this is the triumph of having life in Him who is risen. Get this, the consciousness of belonging to heavenly places.

Then there is the condition we are in there. We are to sit down and eat the old corn of the land; it is ours to eat there. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” We can sit down and feed on the things that belong to us there. I am there on the title of Christ. We have “boldness for the day of judgment,” and “we shall be like Him.”

We must now apply death. Never in Scripture are we told to die to sin; we are *dead* to sin. “Ye are dead,” “Reckon ye yourselves therefore to be dead indeed unto sin,” etc. We are “dead with Christ,” we have passed the Jordan, and Christ who is dead and risen is my life. Such, therefore, must I hold myself. Being in Christ and Christ in me, I must now say, “I must bring in death practically on all that I am,” as “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Israelites were to place in Gilgal the stones

230 PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED.

which they carried out of Jordan from its very depths. Christ has died, and death is the thing which belongs to me. I am in Christ, who has overcome death, and so discharged all that it is a joy to go. But if I am here it is death to the flesh. I bring out from the place where Christ died the memorial of death. It means death to sin—death to what is evil and sinful. They set up the memorial where the ark had been—where grace has been in the blessed love of Christ. I realize the death of Christ as perfect deliverance, but what did it cost Him? He went down into the depths of Jordan—into the dust of death, and I have the memorials of His love and grace.

If you talk of being in Caanan it is death. There are many things which are not lust, yet which prove I am not holding it in the practical place of death. My vanity, pride, or anger rises; this is not lust, but will unbroken. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." "Christ died unto sin once."

But there is another thing. In the same place where the memorial was set up they were circumcised. It was not so in the wilderness. Many Christians have never thoroughly broken with Egypt, and therefore never have the consciousness that they belong to heaven, not to the world. If we were literally dead and risen we should have nothing to say to this wretched world; and if dead to it in spirit I have nothing to say to it thus. I have "part with" in His death and resurrection and am *out* of it. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." I have broken with the world, and it should be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We are sent to be witnesses in this world of the life of the Lord Jesus, to

PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED. 231

show what He did who was perfect divine goodness in the midst of its evil, its wretchedness and corruption. We come short, but what I have to do is to show a goodness which nothing can get the better of. We are sent from God with the life of God to manifest this life of Christ. I know the position, but I have to *make it good*. I have practically to carry this with me—now with Christ there I am circumcised.

Another point is this. It is a difficult lesson that the world is going on the old way. There is a new way—Christ. “Follow thou Me,” He says. Adam had a way, and we have a way, but how are we to find it? There is *no* way in itself in the world, for if in the far country we could not do anything right. There *is* no way. But if the Son of God has come down and walked through this world, then there is a way—a new divine way, not avenging the wrong or setting things right, but bringing God in.

When in the land they keep the passover. They are able to celebrate with joyful hearts what had saved them in Egypt—sweet and blessed remembrance in heavenly places of what Christ has done. If I am through the veil I am not saying that I am going to cross Jordan, but I am looking back upon my deliverance. What love! What obedience! How perfectly God was glorified! “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again.” Have we got eyes through grace to see and feast on this? not coming as sinners, but on the other side and knowing the perfectness of what the blood has done.

One other element is that conflicts are there. God adapts Himself completely to the condition, He comes

232 PURPOSE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE PLACE POSSESSED.

to redeem, and to dwell in a tent ; then, after Jordan, with a drawn sword as Captain of the Lord's host, and He could dwell in a house, dwelling with us, giving us victory, putting Himself at our head.

If I am engaged in winning souls or in winning promises, there is conflict. I shall find the resistance of Satan, spiritual adversaries and direction given for this from Christ as Captain of the Lord's host. Moreover, I must have holiness : "the place whereon thou standest is holy." There are no victories without the Lord as Captain of the Lord's host. He will not allow sin. His judgment of evil has never changed, and wherever evil is it is evil for Him. He cannot have anything in the Christian that is contrary to Himself. He may bear with us, but He must be for us and true to His holiness. It is right that there should be such an inward depth of heart that we know we belong to a Captain who has said, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." In the sin of Achan God made them find it out. If we have any strength it must be God's strength.

If your sins are not discharged they never can be, for Christ can never die again.

The circumcision of God's people is wrought in Canaan.—*Notes of a lecture by J. N. D., at Brighton, about the year 1866.*

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 4.

WE have still before us in 1 Cor. iii. the assembly of God in its character as a building, "The habitation of God through the Spirit," "the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Not now, however, as in Ephesians ii. 20, 21, Matthew xvi. 18, or 1 Peter ii. 5, is it the work of Christ only, where necessarily no failure is contemplated, nor judgment in view; but here it is as entrusted to man's building, and so open to failure and judgment. For this reason 1 Cor. iii. presents a phase of the assembly of God very distinct from what we have had hitherto. The manifested form of the descent of the Holy Ghost in Acts ii. 2, 3, when He filled all the house where they were sitting and sat upon each of them, explains the terms of the Lord's promise in John xiv. 17, "He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you." He was now in each believer and with them collectively, both of which privileges are repeatedly enlarged on in Scripture, as well as the fact, already alluded to, in speaking of the *body of Christ*, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." In 1 Cor. iii. 16, we find a responsibility consequent on the presence of the Holy Ghost in *God's house*, and addressed to all found there. In 1 Cor. vi. 19, we

234 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

have the individual responsibility of a saint of God, consequent on *his body* being the temple of the Holy Ghost.

In Acts ii. 22-47 we get Peter's testimony to Israel from this new standpoint—openly accredited as it was by the presence of the Holy Ghost—concerning Jesus whom they had crucified, and whom God had made both Lord and Christ. Peter called upon them to separate themselves from that untoward generation, promising them the gift of the Holy Ghost, when by repentance and baptism for the remission of sins they were received into this new place of blessing on the earth (Acts ii. 38-40), the house of God. To this company the Lord added daily the spared from among Israel, showing not only that Israel had been set aside as God's dwelling-place and witness on the earth, but that they had been replaced by this His new witness and dwelling-place by the Spirit. Alas, that it should prove itself in the hands of man no more faithful than what it replaced, and end by becoming so corrupt as to be spued out of Christ's mouth.

In Acts ii. we are doubtless still in the company of true believers only, though by the work of man we may soon find such as Simon (Acts viii. 12, 13) introduced into this place of blessing. Yet it does not cease to be the house of God, for the Holy Ghost is still there. In 1 Cor. iii. with the possible result of man's work issuing, not alone in "gold, silver, and precious stones," but, as, alas! it so soon did, in wood, hay, and stubble, and even work and workmen which defiled the *temple of God*, the apostle does not on that account cease to remind those whom he addresses of their privilege and responsibilities consequent on their being the

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 235

dwelling-place of God's Spirit: "Know ye not that *ye* are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Again, verse 17: "For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In verse 9 he speaks of himself and his fellow-workmen in this responsible work as engaged in *God's* work, and belonging to *God*, and speaks of the saints as "*God's* husbandry" and *God's* building.

As a wise master-builder, Paul had laid the foundation of this building in Corinth, and "other *foundation* can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The superstructure he commits to his fellow-labourers, with a needed warning as to how they carried it on, for their work should be tried by fire.

It will help us to understand the aspect of the assembly we are now considering if we observe how comprehensive is the address in 1 Cor. i. 2, embracing "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." And the warnings of chapter x. 1-11 can only be understood and applied in this light. Hebrews iii. 6 speaks of Christ as *Son* over God's house in contrast with Moses as a *servant* in his time, and looks at the Hebrews as belonging to God's house, if they "hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

The privileges which are found in the house of God are described in Hebrews vi. Persons might be "enlightened," have "tasted of the heavenly gift," be made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," have "tasted the good word of God," and "the powers of the world to come." Yet it is said that if such fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. 2 Thess. ii. speaks of this "falling away" or apostasy.

236 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

It is a proof that all these privileges may be enjoyed externally without the quickening work of the Spirit of God in the soul.

If the sense of the word "enlightened" in John i. 9, and "partakers" (partners) in Luke v. 7 (*not* v. 10, which is a different word), together with their application, so simply put in Hebrews vi. 7, 8, be considered, it will not only help to clear away the difficulty of many a young saint as to this "falling away," but will explain the external privileges which are found in the house of God. The ground which only bore thorns and briers, and whose *end* is to be burned, enjoyed the same rain and sunshine as that which brought forth herbs meet for them by whom it was dressed.

In answer to the question (Romans iii.), "What advantage then hath the Jew?" the reply is, "Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." In Romans xi. the branches of the wild olive, made partakers of the root and fatness of the good olive tree, are exhorted to continue in God's goodness—"otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

The seven churches in Revelations ii. iii. are each represented by a golden candlestick, as the Lord's responsible witnesses in those places; and though He is about to spue "*the church* of the Laodiceans" out of His mouth, till that takes place He rebukes and chastens and knocks at the door, treating them still as His light-bearers.

Blessed and solemn as is the reality of the presence of the Spirit of God in God's house on the earth to-day, we must preserve in our hearts and minds, as a very distinct privilege, the presence of the Lord Jesus

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 237

Himself in the midst of two or three *gathered* together unto His name. With heaven's sanction to what they do in His name, well may one's heart exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

We have seen in 1 Cor. iii. 9, 16, 17 that though the failure of the workmen in God's house may introduce there what is not of God, yet God's Spirit still remains there. This is not to approve what is not of Himself, though He bear with it till His vessel of witness be set aside by judgment. The Spirit of God never attributes to the external profession—result of man's labour and responsibility—that security and blessing which belong alone to the work of God—that which Christ builds. The external profession has its own privileges, as well as the special form of judgment to which it will in consequence be subjected, as Hebrews vi., 1 Cor. x., and other scriptures have already shown us.

How withering the rebuke, "Are ye not carnal, and walk according to man?" (1 Cor. iii.); how seemingly strange to the Corinthians with their estimate of man and his wisdom, yet how provoked and suited in the presence of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"! Politics in the world, with its parties and their leaders, is natural and welcome to man, from the highest to the lowest; but how unbecoming to saints of God to import such a spirit into God's house! The apostle could not speak to such as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. The *spirit* of division so rebuked here had not in the apostles' time reached the state of actual open and accepted sectarianism, which is the shame of the Church of God to-day. With a sad heart he forewarned the elders of Ephesus of this

238 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

(Acts xx. 17-38), not, however, without commending them to the ever all-sufficient resource, which is our blessed position to-day: "GOD AND THE WORD OF HIS GRACE."

The will of man, "seeking his own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," has plunged the professing Church into the present recognized state of schism. One's heart is, however, supported by the hope of that morning without clouds, happily so nigh, when the Head of His body will present His Church to Himself, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, like Himself, and to be with Him for ever, to His eternal praise. It is wholesome, too, to remind our consciences *now* that "we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ," where He will review, *in His light*, all our wilderness path. The sufficiency of His grace, there so fully to be manifested, will rebuke the many excuses of our unbelieving ways, which savour so much of Israel's infidel spirit that could stand before Jehovah in the house which was called by His Name and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." (Jer. vii. 10.) In the meantime He has not only taught the faith of His saints that "there is one body and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling," but has set before us an open door that no man can shut, that we may practically say "Amen" to this blessed truth, keeping His Word and not denying His Name.

Passing allusion has been made to the warnings of 1 Cor. x., as showing the aspect in which the Church of God is there viewed; but we have other and moral lessons from these warnings, introduced as they are by the closing verses of chapter ix. The apostle does not suggest that one who is born of the Spirit may be

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 239

a *castaway*, but he does suppose that one may be a *preacher*, may be *baptized*, and partake of the *Lord's Supper*, and yet be *reprobate—lost*. He would warn all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, within that comprehensive circle of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. iv. 5), that ordinances and external privileges are no security for the soul.

The language used to describe the external privileges enjoyed by Israel (*vv.* 1–4), with a view to their application to us, "upon whom the ends of the ages are come," speaks of them as a people under the care and government of God in the desert.

Verses 6 and 11 would emphasize the fact that it is *the things that happened* to Israel, rather than Israel themselves, which are types, written *for our* admonition. These things are recorded in a moral order, which serve to combine with present admonition a history of the declension of the professing Church, similar to what the Lord gives us in Rev. ii. iii.

Our first admonition not to lust after evil things is taught us from Num. xi. On the shores of the Red Sea, in the freshness of faith and hope, they praised Him for the past and trusted Him for the future. But after having sung that blessed song of Jehovah's glorious triumph on their behalf, the lusting of the mixed multitude (in them not *so* culpable), found, alas! a ready echo in Israel's *unsatisfied* and so *dissatisfied* hearts. They remembered the flesh-pots, the fish, the cucumbers, and the melons, etc. etc., of Egypt; now their souls were dried away—there was nothing at all *beside this manna* before their eyes.

What was it to the Lord Jesus to have to say to

240 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love"? and, alas! she has not repented and done her first works. A heart that lusts after evil ("*other*," Mark iv. 19) things makes a liar of Him who says (John vi. 35), "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. And again, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "Children, keep yourselves from idols."

Happy the souls that, through grace, can sing with the spirit and with the understanding, "Jesus, of Thee we ne'er would tire!" When the church at Pergamos *was dwelling* where Satan's seat is, where Antipas was slain, and there were those that held the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes, the encouragement to the overcomer is, what *his* heart would most value, "to eat of the hidden manna," treasured up in the holiest in that golden pot. It speaks of *God's* estimation and appreciation of that "bread of life"—His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased, "that hidden bread of Christ once humbled here."

The admonition of Aaron's golden calf is our next warning. Moses *delayed* to come out of the mount, and the demand of that unbelief which could not walk forty days without something for sight and sense was, "Up, make us gods, that shall go before us"—a wickedness to which Aaron, alas! became such a ready servant. (Ex. xxxii. 1-6.) If we are not proving the truth of 2 Cor. v. 7, and walking in the enjoyment of those unseen and eternal realities which the Spirit of God reveals to faith, there will surely be a demand for a golden calf, and there is no telling who will make it.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 241

Next we are set to learn a warning from Balaam, who, having failed to move Jehovah to curse Israel, "taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." This is associated with moral and ecclesiastical corruption. In the church of Pergamos it was held as *a doctrine*, and, together with the way of Cain and the gainsaying of Core, it is used by Jude to characterize the ripening apostasy. No one can "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" without having to confront continually this popular doctrine. May we know how to meet it by submitting ourselves to the voice that says, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." (Jer. xv.) Numbers xxi. tells us of the sin that called for the fiery serpents. Forty years before, when in fresh remembrance of the flesh-pots of Egypt, they found the *manna insufficient*, and they said, "There is nothing at all beside this manna," but now, after having fed on it for forty years, their hardened hearts declared, "Our soul *loatheth this light bread*"—awful condition. "Neither let us tempt Christ."

The closing admonition is from the occasion of Kadesh-barnea, where Caleb and Joshua, having rent their clothes, say, "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land," but the congregation "bade stone them with stones." "And the glory of the Lord appeared." Only Caleb and Joshua of those over twenty years old at that time entered the land.

Not an alarmist, but a faithful watchman, closes these admonitions with, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," adding, "But God is faithful." In the close of our scripture

(1 Cor. iii.), after having rebuked them for “walking *as men*,” he reminds them that “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” “Therefore,” he says, “let no man glory in men”; and adds, “For all things are yours.” If we know and enjoy what is ours in Christ to-day, for eternity and time, it will keep us from seeking after vain things which cannot profit. And do we know that the “spoilers,” “through vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and *not after Christ*” (Col. ii. 8, 18), find an ear for their deceptions in unsatisfied hearts that are “not holding the Head”?

LETTERS TO AN ANGLICAN.

No. 1.

THANKS for your letter, in which you rightly say that “the true religion is the divine revelation given by our blessed Lord,” and that “the Bible is the written revelation of God.” It therefore follows that the Bible and the true religion must be in divine agreement. Moreover, if what is put forth as the true religion is not in agreement with the Bible it is false, and to be rejected by the Christian. The Bible, therefore, is the test of truth and the rule of faith.

There is, however, some confusion in what you say as to the Church. First, you make it “a faith,” then “a religion.” Whereas the Scripture declares that the Church (or assembly) is the body of Christ, the assembly of God, and the dwelling-place of the Spirit, and con-

sists of those who have believed the gospel and, in receiving the Spirit, are made members of the body of Christ.

You remark that "the Catholic faith insists on dogma, that it be precisely laid down and openly confessed by the Church," and that "the necessity of dogma was forced upon the Church in the fourth century, and that the Catholic faith was formally settled in the eighth century." Previously you had said that Christ and the Holy Ghost had at the first communicated the Catholic faith to the Church. These contrary statements place you on the horns of a serious dilemma, for how could Christ and the Holy Ghost deposit with the Church at the first the Catholic faith if this was not settled until eight hundred years afterwards? On the other hand, how could this faith impose itself on the Church in the eighth century if it was already communicated to it at the first?

From whence, then, does this which you call "the Catholic faith" derive its authority? Not from Christ and the Holy Ghost or the apostles, as given at the beginning, for you teach that it insisted upon being received eight hundred years after. Nor is its authority derived from the Scriptures, for you say "the Catholic Church denies that the Scripture contains the whole revelation of the Faith." It follows then that this so-called "Catholic faith" has not divine authority and is not "from the beginning." For there can be no other divine authority than Christ and the Holy Ghost immediately; and the apostles and prophets, as vessels of inspiration, have given the absolute and perfect rule of faith in the Scripture. If you say the Catholic Church is holding anything else as divine authority

and rule of faith it would be apostate, not abiding in that which was from the beginning, nor in the truth.

But remark that the Scriptures had absolute authority even with those who were divinely commissioned and inspired of God to communicate His mind and truth to men and to the Church. They confirmed their words and assertions by the sacred writings then in existence. Christ appealed to the Scriptures and opened the mind of the disciples that they might understand them. Each of the inspired penmen cites the Scriptures as alone being of divine authority. (1 Cor. xv. 37; 2 Peter iii. 15, 16.) Paul in departing commends the saints "to God, and the word of His grace, which is able to build" them up. (Acts xx. 20, 27, 32.) To Timothy he writes, "Every scripture is divinely inspired and profitable . . . that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted." (2 Tim. iii. 17.)

What need, then, is there of dogma, or decrees, or Councils? Scripture is divinely inspired and able to make wise unto salvation, and is, therefore, the rule of faith. Seeing, too, that the man of God may be thereby perfect, no other rule of faith can either be needed or admitted or used to supplement.

It is clearly laid down in 2 Thessalonians iii. 14 that among the other inspired writings the epistles of Paul have express authority over the faith—the heart and conscience of man: "If any one obey not our word by this letter, mark that man"; and "If any one think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him recognize the things that I write to you that it is the commandment of the Lord." (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) Again, "This we say to you by the word of the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15); and "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be

read unto all the holy brethren." (v. 27; see also Col. iv. 16.)

These quotations from the books which you recognize as the inspired Word of God show plainly that the Holy Spirit rested upon His written and recorded communications as the rule of faith binding upon the conscience. The witness of uninspired men has not the slightest value or authority in establishing the Scriptures—these stand alone and are established by God. The Church that admits anything besides the Scriptures as the revelation of the faith opens the door to the doctrines of men and demons.

You are correct in saying that "the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and those who have received a gift of ministry alone possess a divine commission to teach." But it is not true that "her Head has appointed Councils to be the one authority to declare the faith." Her Head, which is Christ, never appointed any Councils but apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers. (Ephes. iv. 15.) This, too, was after He had died and risen again. It was then the Church or assembly was formed by the Holy Ghost come down, and the faith was immediately declared by Peter. Paul, too, announced the gospel without conference with any man. He did not receive it from man, nor was taught it but by revelation of Jesus Christ. And we have it direct from him without any Council. The decrees, therefore, of so-called Councils and the Creeds, were they even to be relied on, are only second-hand, and are at best the utterances of uninspired men liable to error. Indeed, the Councils were full of error, and contradict and denounce one another, as you know.

The apostles and prophets have passed away, but they still practically teach in their writings, and are the foundation of the Church by that which they were inspired to leave on record.

You infer, however, that the Scripture is not the rule of faith, inasmuch as you say it does not "contain the whole revelation of the faith." At any rate, the apostle Paul uses it as such, enforcing by what was then written the revelations given him by the Holy Spirit. (See Gal. iii. 8, 22, 30.) Peter, too, makes a point of writing down what he taught, in order that the saints might have the precious faith and promises kept in their remembrance. He specially warned them against those who should come after calling themselves prophets and teachers, and wrote his epistles in order that after his decease we might be mindful of the word spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the apostles at the beginning.

This proves that he relied upon what he then wrote, as well as upon the epistles of Paul, as a rule of faith for the saints. (See 2 Peter ii. 1; iii. 16.) This rule too would be needed, because prophets and teachers bringing in heresies would arise among them—ignorant and unstable men wresting even the Scriptures.

The Church is nothing if it does not hold the faith; but you are mistaken in saying it is a spiritual religion. As viewed in its divine perfection it is a spiritual house, in which all are priests (1 Peter ii. 5; Rev. i. 6), and is the body of Christ. Moreover, you greatly err in saying that the Spirit is actually conveyed by the sacraments, for He came upon the saints at the first when they were simply together in one place. Indeed, it does not appear that the original company of one

hundred and twenty ever received Christian baptism at all. In the case of Cornelius and the Gentile company in his house the Holy Spirit fell upon them immediately they heard the Word and *before* they were baptized. Thus Paul in writing to the Galatians says they "received the Spirit by the hearing of faith." Again, "We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (v. 4.)

It is thus evident that baptism as a sacrament was not the means of conveying the Spirit, though the orderly way of reception was first baptism and then the Spirit. As Peter says, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

You conclude by saying that "the faith of the Church is independent of the Bible," yet you own that "the Bible is the written revelation of God." Now, the word of the report of God by the apostles was God's Word. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) All else, not by these inspired men, was merely "men's word," or worse. We have nothing from the apostles and prophets that is not written, for they have long since passed away. Therefore the faith you speak of must be "independent" of God's Word and not that which was from the beginning. (1 John ii. 24.) It is, therefore, faith in mere men or worse, and therefore false and destructive—not in God at all.

I fully own, however, that you teach that the Church has faith in something, but I read further that you say "the Church is the ground of faith," and is "a religion." This is but reasoning in a circle—that the Church is founded on faith, and that faith is founded on the Church! But the one serious point is this, that the faith you speak of is not of God at all!

But permit me affectionately to urge you to cast aside all the vain imaginations of men, and to bow your heart and mind to the written Word of God as one who by nature is helpless and ruined, dead in trespasses and sins, whom no Church, so-called, no ordinances, whether baptism or other, can save. You must have salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ alone and His precious blood-shedding. Thus only through faith can you receive "the promise of the Spirit"—the Spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father. Thus shall you know with joy that God in Christ has forgiven you all trespasses, and that you are accepted in the Beloved. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin.

RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY.

THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF OUR LORD.

THERE cannot be a passage of deeper interest to our souls than John xiii. The departure of our Lord out of this world is not exactly the cross; its agonies are not before us there, but His leaving the world to go to the Father. His departure from it necessarily involves His bringing us into a new atmosphere with new aims and objects. In Philippians ii. 5-11 we see the *moral manner* of His entering this world, I do not mean His birth; but here we see Him departing out of this world, having loved His own which were in the world to the end. And He was going to the place where He would love us to the end. When He was here, though there was nothing to point to Him outwardly, the moral grandeur of His Person attracted great crowds around Him.

When we think of where He came from and the utter contrast of everything this world presented to Him, we may well understand what *joy* it was to the soul of Jesus to depart out of this world *unto the Father*. He was the man of sorrows here, characterized by it, as He is the man of joy now. There will be one who is emphatically the man of sin. But Jesus was the man of sorrows. And we have entered little into the nature and reality of Christianity if we are not

250 RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY.

men of sorrow too, and therefore men of power and men of holy joy, having His joy fulfilled in ourselves. He never spoke of His own sorrows, He always felt for the sorrows of others, and He gives us His sympathy now. But here He had no sympathy, He turned to His Father. We shall not get on at all if we are dependent on the sympathies of the saints. We know, too, sometimes in our little measure what it is not to be understood, and that not by the world, but by the saints.

He did three things: He annulled Satan, that is, destroyed the power of Satan; He finished His work here according to the mind and thoughts of God; and He overcame the world. When He burst the bonds of death and rose from the grave and went up to God, it was as the Destroyer of the power of Satan, the Overcomer of the world, and the Glorifier of the Father. There are three steps in Philipians. He emptied Himself as God, then He humbled Himself as man and became obedient, obedient to God, unto death, even the death of the cross. Now we get the answer of God to all this. You remember that "wherefore." It is as we see in Acts, where the apostle shows in his preaching that God was doing just the opposite to what they had done. (Acts ii. 23, 24.) "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." In the name which He had when He entered this world, the name by which He was known among men, there is a mighty mystery, as there is in everything connected with Him. It means Jehovah the Saviour; yet it was the name He had as a man. God has given Him His name in a new way, and beings in heaven and earth and under the earth bow at that

RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY. 251

name once despised on earth. It is in manhood that God gives it to Him. It says in Acts, "He hath made Him both Lord and Christ"; that is, in manhood. It says in Psalm cx., "The Lord said unto my Lord," that is, the David's Lord, "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." "Jehovah said unto my master." It is a name used of men,* and is the name of supreme authority and power with which Christ is invested, which we little enter into, though it affects us in every way in our lives, as in subjection to Him.

It indicates the place in which God has set Him, the glorious answer of God to what He did. He has seated Him at His own right hand, has made Him Lord, set Him over all the works of His hands, and has reconstituted Him Messiah in a heavenly way. It brings out the glory not only of God, but of *the Father*, that because of what He has done every tongue should confess Him Lord. He has a new name besides, and many other glories. He must have thought of the more than royal honours—it is a poor word—that awaited Him when He was leaving this world.

In John xiv. we see the result—the place into which He brings us by leaving this world.

PARKSTONE. (May 22nd, 1881.)

* It is used of Jehovah in Ps. xevii. 5; Zech. iv. 14, vi. 5-8; Micah iv. 13; Josh. iii. 13; of Joseph in Ps. cv. 21.—ED.

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 7.

"I WAS struck with the order in Romans v., 'patience' before 'experience.' Eliminate the patience, and surely the tribulation would be but the experience of Satan's power. But with 'patience' in its proper place the experience becomes the experience of God's goodness, and tribulation *worketh* patience. So in James i. 3 and v. 11 Job's was a wonderful case in point. For his very failure served to bring God's faithful goodness more into relief, as Elihu showed him, though he was *hardly then in a mood to receive what Elihu said*. But he did not resist it. What a character and energy is given to hope, based on God's love being known in the cross, by the expression of what God is in a path of trial here below. Deuteronomy viii. shows God's purpose in it."

W. J. L.

No. 8.

"WE shall soon meet where the fulness of joy is and eternal pleasures; in the meantime, the little while of His absence, we pass through tribulation and learn endurance, and that leads to experience, and that to hope and other blessings which are rich gains to us. We go on step by step in all truth led by Him."

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 5.

IN 2 Timothy ii. we have a fresh witness of the constant, unwearied, painstaking love of the Lord, far-seeing as it is, marking out the path of faith in which He can be with His own in the midst even of confusion, which we have brought upon ourselves through our unfaithfulness to Him. Paul, His chosen vessel for the administration of the mystery—sustained by His grace, as a faithful minister and witness—had, as a wise master builder, laid the foundation of the assembly. Now, as an ambassador in bonds for the truth's sake, he writes from his prison; looking on the time of his departure as at hand. He speaks of all Asia having turned away from *him*; would have Timothy know the approach of perilous times, noting certain vocal indications of “things waxing worse and worse” in the house of God; instructs him in the grace for the path of faith and faithfulness, in which the *man of God* may overcome, and so be a true witness for his absent Lord. No reformer's charge, for the house of God, is committed to Timothy, nor indulgence granted to go on with the iniquity therein, much less a word to quit that house. Each of these has, alas! in its turn, been suggested, but that charge, whose end is “love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned,” says, “Let every one that

K

254 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." The *man of God* is to purge himself from "the vessels unto dishonour," and thus be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Not neglecting watchfulness as to his personal character, he is to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The apostle does not hide from himself, or from his beloved son in the faith, the gravity of this path—the faith, courage, and endurance which it calls for—but would present the sufficiency of the resources for every emergency. In speaking of his own circumstances, past and present and future, as a servant of the Lord (i. 12), he says, "*Nevertheless* I am not ashamed: *for* I know *whom* I have believed," etc. This was the stay of his heart. How much that was precious and comforting did this "*nevertheless*" introduce! Could any difficulty of the path be too great for Him whom he knew so well, and in whom he trusted? The man of God has not received the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. The grace that is in Christ Jesus is the source of his strength; he must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, keeping himself free from every entanglement; he must strive lawfully; and must labour first before expecting fruit. Chap. iii. 16, 17, assures his heart that divine guidance for every step of this path of faith is provided in the Scriptures, and thus he is preserved from every temptation to human expediency. Only in the pure light of the Word of God can the true character and extent of the departure of the assembly of God from its original calling be seen. We are in danger of becoming

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 255

accustomed to the present confused and corrupt state of the house of God. And owing to the success with which the spirit of Jannes and Jambres has imitated the truth much exercise is called for, to separate the precious from the vile and discern things that are excellent, that we may be "pure and without offence till the day of Christ." That "the end justifies the means" is a widespread principle of to-day, though in some connections a lingering voice of conscience would conceal it. Is it of God? Such principles are exposed in their true issues in such scriptures as Judges xvii. 5-13, where a Levite is seen lending himself to be the connecting link between Jehovah and Micah's house of idols! May we lay to heart Romans xiv. 23, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," which will enhance for us the importance of 2 Tim. i. 13, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." These sound words we possess through God's grace in Paul's epistles. The danger of a heart that is not in communion with the Lord, in looking at the present state of the house of God, is to resort to human expediency to meet the difficulties of our path, and unbelief is ready to judge that evil has got the better of the Lord. Jeremiah vii. 9, 10, is one of many sad instances of this depraved state of soul that would seek to make the Lord responsible for their evil, saying, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Again, in Jeremiah xviii. 12 Judah replies to the Lord's call to repentance, "There is no hope, *but* we will walk after our own devices," etc. Saul, too, would cover his disobedience to the word of the Lord by sacrifice, and has to hear that "to obey is better than sacrifice"

256 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

(1 Samuel xv.), a lesson which, alas! the Church of God has been slow to learn. The remnant returned from captivity in Babylon, so soon fallen from seeking the Lord's interest to building their own ceiled houses, would justify their self-seeking by saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Looking at the present state of the house of God, it is fruit of the gangrene of Hymeneus and Philetus, amongst others, and many are the evil excuses which would seek to save the cost of separation from evil. These are rebuked by this second precious "nevertheless," which leaves no room for man's conclusions or ways, but says plainly, "*Nevertheless* the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Who can excuse association with iniquity in the house of God, in the face of this scripture? *To what end* has the Lord set before the overcomer an opened door that no man can shut?

In speaking of things *as they are*, and the path of the saint of God in their midst, separation from evil associations necessarily occupies us largely, and in such a condition of the assembly as our epistle portrays the order of our way is, "Cease to do evil—learn to do well." Yet let us not forget that a *positive* path as the result of occupation with, and delight in, a perfect Object is that to which we are called, as briefly told in the experience of the writer of our epistle, "For me to live *Christ*." Again, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 257

be any praise, think on these things . . . and the God of peace shall be with you."

Such a path does not excuse indifference or neutrality as to the actual evil in the house of God, nor will such indifference or neutrality find any sanction from "love out of a *pure* heart, and of a *good* conscience, and of faith *unfeigned*." Nay, rather, if a man would be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work," he must needs, in departing from iniquity, purge himself from the vessels unto dishonour, which are, alas! found in the house of God. Were these instructions given to the assembly of God, as described in Acts ii. 42-47, we could understand the difficulty of their application; but our eyes must be indeed blinded and our hearts hardened as to the glory of our absent Lord, and His desires for His own, if we fail to see in our epistle, and others which portray the moral and ecclesiastical condition of these last days, the perfect discernment of Him who is holy and true. He would not only give us His thoughts for His Church in eternity and on earth now, so that we might judge of its present condition thereby, and discern between *what is of God* and *what is of man*, but has also set before us "an opened door which no man can shut"; so that we might keep His word and not deny His name. That "the foundation of God standeth sure," having this seal, that "The Lord knoweth them that are His," is a great comfort; "for if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But to have our hearts recalled to the fact that "the Lord knoweth them that are His" speaks very plainly of the state of confusion in the house of God. This surely is

258 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

not an epistle of Christ—manifestly declared—known and read of all men—the fruit of Christ written on the fleshy tables of the heart by the Spirit of the living God. The Lord's faithful probings of Peter's heart wrung forth from him the cry, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." True but humbling confession, of which his conduct in the hall of the high priest's palace was but too true a witness. What eye but that of Jesus could have seen love to Him then and there? And was this "To me to live Christ"? Paul had no need to speak of the work of grace in the Thessalonians; their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father, made them examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia and every place.

The exhortation of Jude, too, to earnestly contend for the faith which *was once* delivered to the saints, speaks of how faint were the traces of that "faith of God's elect" in his day, when he had to warn of the indications of apostasy. Had we not a "nevertheless," a divine resource, in the presence of such pressure and success of evil, our hearts might well be wearied and our minds faint. What else is there to keep the man of God from a similar suggestion to that to which the faithful David fell a victim? The anointing oil of his God was upon him, yet, under the pressure of Saul's persecution, he *said in his heart*, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; "*there is nothing better for me. . .*" Alas! Ziklag and its humbling history leave us a solemn warning, and may every "man of God" lay it to heart. Yet, through the faithful grace of his God, David found a *nevertheless* as he stood on

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 259

the ruins of *his* Ziklag and "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Happier for David had his faith discerned that the same grace which proved his only and sufficient resource now was as near and as ready to help ere he *entered* Ziklag. Happy it is to trace the marks of restoration in his soul, fearing to move another step without consulting the Lord. How humbling to know how soon such lessons are forgotten, and so actions marred which otherwise would have been pleasing to God. "Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I might not sin against Thee," would have preserved David from placing the ark of God on *his* new cart. *His oxen*, of course, stumbled; *his* servant fell under God's righteous judgment. David was *displeased* and *afraid* of the Lord, and the ark was left in the house of Obed-edom till David learnt what submission to the word of God might have taught before, that "none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God. . . ." He also confessed, "For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order." "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." When the anointed eye discerns in the pure light of the truth the present state of the house of God, seeing there the fruit of the workings of the will of the flesh mingling with that which is of God, and in brokenness of spirit says, "I have contributed to the confusion and corruption," is it not due to the Lord and becoming for me to charge my conscience and heart with this enquiry, *Is there a divine path marked out in God's Word for to-day* in which

neither the heart nor the feet of the man of God partake of this confusion—not a path of isolation, but in company with two or three gathered to the Lord's name as members of His body, and so enjoying His presence in their midst? To deny that there is such a path provided for faith and faithfulness by the Lord's unchanged grace is to admit that evil has got the better of the Lord and so to adopt an alternative, which the will of the flesh is ready to welcome.

LETTERS TO AN ANGLICAN.

No. 2.

It is not a little extraordinary that you should call it heresy to own the Scriptures as the alone rule of faith. *You allow them to be given by God through inspired writers, to reveal His mind without teaching the least particle of error, only infallible truth.* How, then, can it be heresy to absolutely receive and obey them? You say it is exercising private judgment about the "written Word." Not so. It judges me instead; and I bow to its authority alone, as the Word of God, irrespective of every other thing—Church or aught else. Moreover, having heard the words of the Lord Jesus, and believed the Father who sent Him, I have eternal life.

This scripture (John v. 24) shows how far from the truth it is for you to assume that our blessed Lord Himself "dogmatically lays down in John vi. that the reception of the Holy Eucharist is absolutely necessary to salvation." In that passage He distinctly teaches

that "eating His flesh and drinking His blood" is equivalent to believing on Him as an incarnate and dying Christ. "I am the bread of life; he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst." Again, "Whosoever sees the Son, and believes on Him, hath life eternal" (v. 40); and "He that believes on Me hath life eternal" (v. 47); "I am the living bread . . . the bread is My flesh" (v. 51); "He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has life eternal." (v. 54.)

Undoubtedly He connected the truth He was then teaching with the offering of His body, which He was about to make "once for all." But that sacrifice was not an unbloody one continually offered—a fiction pretending to perpetuate the shedding of His blood upon the tree. In contrast with all such types, or figures, or counterfeits of the true, He has neither offered Himself *often*, nor does He *often* suffer. But now *once* in the end of the world He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice, and *once* has He been offered to bear the sins of many. (Heb. ix. 24-28.)

As to "*ἀληθῶς*" I agree; it is "true," as opposed to "false." The verse might be rendered, "For My flesh is truly meat, and My blood is truly drink." It is the Spirit that quickens. His words are spirit and are life—the words of life eternal. (John vi. 63-68.) Those, therefore, who receive them in faith do indeed eat His flesh and drink His blood. For these words refer not to the supper, but to His death—the true food and the true drink, and thus in believing we have eternal life. The Lord's Supper alike refers to His death, but not as the communication of eternal life in partaking of the

bread and the wine. For if so, then once having partaken a man could never perish (John vi. 51, 54, 58); or, if perishing, would still have eternal life, which is folly.

Moreover, if the words "This is My body. . . This is My blood" were to be taken as meaning that the bread our blessed Lord gave His disciples was His flesh, and the wine His blood, it would not at all prove that the wafer given in the Sacrifice of the Mass is so. But it has been already shown that by faith in Christ incarnate and dying, and now ascended, we receive eternal life, not by the Eucharist. Since your premises are therefore incorrect, all your reasoning on this point is null and void.

You speak of testing the "doctrines and dogmas of the Catholic Church." If by this is meant the inspired truth of God given in the New Testament, to this there is no need to apply any test. It alone must be received, and fully, as binding on faith and conscience. By it everything and everyone must be judged—Fathers, Councils, creeds, dogmas, or aught else. As to the seven so-called sacraments which you mention, it is, I believe, a matter of general knowledge (if not you will correct me) that Peter Lombard in the twelfth century was the first who taught there were just seven. That there were only two originally is, I think, admitted by Cardinal Bessarion. At any rate, Christ only ordained two—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. It is also well known that the doctrine of the change of the substance of the bread into the substance of Christ in the Eucharist was not decreed definitely till the thirteenth century. The contrary was taught previously by the most famous doctors.

If by "the dogmas of the Catholic Church" you had in view the doctrines special to the Church of Rome, you will remember that she is rejected as erroneous by the oldest Churches, and that what she most recently has decreed as a dogma of faith was denied for centuries by the most important body in her.*

In fact, the dogmas and doctrines special to any so-called Church cannot stand the test of universality. To the Scriptures you dare not apply any test. They are to be received in the absolute submission of faith.

The texts you quote on baptism are all-important. The first, Rom. vi. 4, speaks of baptism unto death; the second, Mark xvi. 15, connects baptism with faith unto salvation; the third, Ephes. iv. 4, simply states the fact of "one baptism" only; the fourth, Acts xxii. 16, connects baptism with calling on the name of the Lord for the washing away of sins. Not one of these passages speaks of being made members of Christ and children of God by baptism. All clearly indicate that baptism is the initiatory act of reception among Christians. The case of Cornelius shows that the Holy Spirit was not conveyed by it, for God had already given them the Spirit, purifying their hearts by faith, and therefore baptism was not to be denied.

It is consequently very wrong for you to say, "Belief, unless accompanied by the work of submitting to Christian baptism, is a mere nothing and of no higher value than the prayers of Mahomedans," for in the case of the 120, as well as of Cornelius, God gave them the same gift of the Holy Spirit, when they had believed

* This is equally true of the papal infallibility, decreed in 1870, as of the doctrine of the immaculate conception, promulgated in 1854.

on the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from baptism, which latter Cornelius and his company received subsequently. Now faith is not of any merit in itself, certainly not more, as you say, than the prayers of Mahomedans. The importance is in the Person believed and in what is believed. In Christian truth faith is given of God, and it is God who is believed as having raised Christ from the dead. Thus believing God we are justified by faith, even as Abraham was when he believed God. (Rom. iv. v.)

This brings us to an important subject. You assert that I am a Protestant and object to the doctrine that "faith without works is dead." Certainly it is the duty and privilege of every Christian to protest against error; but I believe and acknowledge with all my heart that the saint is justified by works and not alone by faith (James ii. 20-26), and without works faith is dead. But when a sinner is in question, whether a Gentile without law or a Jew under law, he can only be justified by faith alone without works; for he has only bad ones. (Gal. ii. 16; Rom. iii. 28.) It is quite evident, surely, to you that a man cannot be justified *by* his sins; he needs to be justified *from* them. "A man is justified by faith without works of law"; and God justifies "the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

No. 3.

GRACE AND GOVERNMENT.

Dent. iii. 24 ; 1 Kings xix. ; 2 Cor. xii. ; Matt. xxvi.

I HAVE read these four scriptures as setting before us four characteristic prayers. We must look at them in three ways—the two first together, then the third and the fourth. The hardest lesson for us to learn, I suppose, is “that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing.” “The flesh profiteth nothing.” In three of the four passages (putting the fourth in contrast) we have prayers from the hearts of men in deep exercise, connected more or less with this evil principle within us. At the end of Moses’ history, after he had led the children of Israel for forty years, during which he had loved them, borne with them in all their crooked ways, and sought to shelter them, and pleaded for them in the fulness of divine love, we find him at last coming out as at the beginning. He came out then truly in faith to be the deliverer of God’s people, but it was in the energy of nature. For forty years God took him aside to discipline and train him, and then he leads the people for forty years more, and at the end of this time, eighty years altogether, the very thing that came out at the beginning is manifested in a still more terrible way. It is good for us to look at it; for this thing is what you and I have in us to-night,

266 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

and cannot be improved. The more we go on with the Lord, the more terrible it becomes, if allowed to have place, because God has linked His glory with us in a very distinct way. It is more terrible in us than in Moses. As you find in Psalm cvi., at the end of the journey the people chode with him, and "he spake unadvisedly with his lips." For that one failure, the only one, his way into the land was barred; and now, when speaking of it to the people, we find how deeply he felt it. The possession God had given to the people was dear to him, because it was God's own gift to Israel; he desired to go into the land. But his failure shut him out—his allowance of the principle opposed to God that is in you and me. It can't be changed; it is the same from the beginning to the end. This is intensely solemn. It appeared a little thing, but barred Moses' entrance into the land because it is more terrible at the end, and God's glory is more distinctly linked with His people. Moses was bound to give a true expression of God's character, but he failed to sanctify God in the eyes of His people.

God has left us down here, too, for this purpose. He has set us in the world and linked His glory with us, as we read in John xvii., "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "I have also sent them into the world"—sent into the world, even as He was, to be the true expression of God's character here; not only to have God's word in testimony, but to present the character of God to man.

Moses failed in this; but though he failed to give a true presentation of God to His people, God nevertheless took care of His own name and glory. But this does not set you and me free from the responsibility.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 267

He was sanctified in the eyes of the people, but Moses' allowance of the flesh shut him out and brought down the hand of God in government. Having brought us so close to Himself, and because He is holy, it is on that very ground He deals with us. There are His grace and His government, and we are the subjects of both.

God dealt with Moses and shut him out of the land, but He felt for His poor servant. He says, as it were, You can't go in, Moses; your failure has shut you out. But I will show it you. So God takes him to Mount Pisgah and shows him all the land. God's grace comes out there. He sympathizes with His servant and showed him the whole extent of the land, and then He puts His servant to sleep. "He buried him in a valley." There is no funeral like that anywhere else. In the Epistle of Jude you read of the archangel Michael contending about the body of Moses. This was the occasion, I suppose, when he did so. God buried His servant doubtless by angelic hands. What wonderful grace! What wonderful faithfulness! In what Moses did he was in the mind of God, but nature came out in the way he did it.

But let us apply it to ourselves. Unless we keep the old nature in the place of death, we falsify God's character in the eyes of man. As a consequence of failure in this, Moses prayed, "Let me go in," but God answered, "Let it suffice thee."

In our second passage (1 Kings xix.) we have another kind of prayer from another burdened heart. He says, "Let me die." He is a wonderful man of faith, standing isolated and alone amid that company of idolatrous priests. By divine power he stood—a wonderful scene,

268 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

one solitary man standing for God in the face of the enemies of God, where the full power of evil was manifested. (1 Kings xviii.) Was it possible for a man to stand firm amid such circumstances, knowing that there was not another to stand for God in Israel save him? Yes; but the next chapter shows us the same man under quite different conditions. He had gone on in the testimony, but without maintaining the secret of communion. The moment that the words of our lips are beyond our spiritual condition we are in the place of danger.

There must be the two things—the power of God equivalent to the testimony. The words of our lips must correspond with our heart's affection. Elijah had been carried on in the energy of the Spirit, but had not been in company with the Spirit of God in his soul. He is not in communion with God, and falls under the burden of the work he had undertaken. He goes into the wilderness and sits down under a juniper tree and prays just the opposite of Moses' prayer. He says, "Lord, take my life."

Elijah says, "I am not better than my fathers." Did he think he was no better than his fathers? No; for he repeats, There is not another man besides me who has stood for Thee—a proof of what our poor wretched hearts are. He had not trusted God's care of His people, nor sought out the 7000 besides himself that had not bowed the knee to Baal. So with us; we credit ourselves with being better than we are, not seeing Christ in one another. In truth we are only exalted in our own eyes, and must be abased.

But can there be a more miserable spectacle? Occupied with himself, he says, "I am no better than

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 269

my fathers"; "take now my life"—let me get out of this place. But his prayer was not answered. Look at the tenderness of God's love. It was then—poor failing creature that he was, occupied with himself—that an angel comes, not a raven. When he sat beside Cherith's brook it was the ravens came, but now he is ministered to by an angel. How sweet, that in the moment of our failure, when we have turned from God, He ministers to us. Ah! there is no change in His heart, whatever we may be. What grace, that He should be the servant of our necessities!

It is true Elijah gets out of the testimony, but not in the way he desired. He passed through Jordan, but actually he did not die at all, but went up by a whirlwind into the heavens. He goes out in God's way. May we not say that like Moses he had his prayer answered in company with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Was it not better than he asked?

I would now speak of the third prayer; but you must keep the two first together. The first shows us how the evil principle brought out the government of God; the second displays the self-occupation of the servant; but in 2 Cor. xii. another, who had travelled through this world in perils and sufferings, prays; and what does he say? As Moses and Elijah, his prayer is definite and unqualified. Moses' is, Let me go in; Elijah's, Let me go out; and Paul's, Take it away. The Lord is dealing with him in full preventive discipline. How wonderful to be the subject of His care in this way. He had been to paradise and heard unspeakable things, and for fear that he should be exalted the Lord gives him a thorn for the flesh (not in the flesh)—something to keep in check the thing that

270 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

would bring dishonour on the Lord. It was not because of failure, but this evil principle is in him, and the Lord gave something to prevent his falling.

Just think of the Lord watching over us so! And He sees danger of allowing this evil principle, so, in faithfulness, He deals with us in one way or another. You may say, "Lord, I don't know what this means; I judge myself, but I am not conscious of anything that needs this thorn." Then comes the answer, "It is necessary because I see something in you; and in order that you may not run into this or that I give you something to keep it in check." When the declaration day, the day of judgment, comes, we shall see what was the infinite love of God that thus dealt with us. Should we not even now receive His faithfulness because we know His love? That blessed hand never leaves us.

Paul says, "Take it away"; and then the Lord says to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." What a wonderful word of Christian attainment; but what did he attain to? To take pleasure in infirmities. Look at the distresses he passed through for Christ. (2 Cor. xii.) Could we rejoice in such circumstances? If, like Paul, it were to learn something of Jesus we had never learnt before, who would not glory in that?—in circumstances that give Jesus an opportunity to be everything to us, to carry us along, and to bring us through? Ah! that is Christian attainment. He did not get his prayer answered, but he got something better. And so it is through all these three prayers.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT. 271

The Lord always gives us more than we ask for. We look to God for blessing, but are we willing to be blessed in *His* way? But it must be; for He will bless us in His own way, and this only is true blessing.

The fourth prayer is in Matt. xxvi. There is no comparing it with the others; it is beyond that. To take the shoes off our feet becomes us when we speak of it. Here is another man, the Son of God. There was no evil there to be dealt with; no fear of evil coming out there. Every step of this blessed Man, who walked all the pathway through for the glory of God, gave joy to the heart of God. Behold Him here! Scarcely can one speak of the divine grace of the blessed Saviour who went down under the hand of God in judgment on our account. He takes His chosen disciples, and, selecting three of them, He goes a little way from them and pours out His heart to God.

The three Gospels differ in their expressions. In Matthew it is "My Father." In the darkness of that hour He who was the divine Victim going to the cross fully realizes the relationship that existed—"My Father." In Mark it is "Abba, Father"; in Luke, "Father"—all precious distinctions. See how the perfections of the Lord Jesus, this one blessed Man, came out in a marked way in these distinctions. In Matthew His soul realized the blessedness of the relationship He stood in. The prayer in Mark is that the hour as well as the cup might pass from Him. Thus Paul prayed that the thorn might be taken away, but there was not the same dependence and self-renunciation. Here there is no will but what is in harmony with the heart of God. He prays, "Not My

272 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

will"—perfect subjection to the will of God. Look at the deep intensity of the sufferings. He has not yet drunk the cup, but He suffers; He is now feeling the weight of it. Luke tells us that an angel comes to minister to Him, and Satan tries to press upon Him all the consequences of taking it—all the forsakings of God, the hiding of His face, all the fruit of disobedience—but in absolute obedience on His part. And though Mark tells us that he says, "Take away this cup," yet He adds, "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done." Here we find the perfect Man who, in obedience, goes under the hand of God in judgment.

How marked the contrast, beloved, when we see God's saints side by side with Jesus. We have this evil principle, the flesh, in us; and how distinctly it was true of them, as of us, "That in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." What Moses and Elijah could know nothing of we *do* know; and let us seek to keep the flesh under the sentence of death, bearing about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, and thus to realize how God gives us power to refuse the old nature. Let us see to it that we hold these things firmly and not think it a light thing. We have to bear about in this world the glory of God morally in our walk and ways, and in our conversation—to set forth God's character in *grace*. Are we doing so? Is God sanctified in me? Do I give a true expression of Him? He does sanctify Himself, but do we sanctify Him? If we manifest the flesh we tarnish His glory, and, like Elijah, plunge ourselves in misery; the enemy comes in, and there is failure. May the Lord give us grace to have our eyes fixed on Him, to maintain communion, and not to let the words of our lips go

beyond the expression of our hearts. The Lord never takes His eyes off us. He helps us, it may be with a thorn, as in Paul's case. Is not that comforting? And if we do not understand it now we shall in the coming declaration day.

Oh! to be able to say, as Jesus did, "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done."

GRACE IN THE PSALMS.

No. 2.

HAVING had in Psalms xlii-li. the presentation of grace to the sinner, as well as the way in which it is appropriated, we now come to a number of psalms where details of circumstances are presented, and the moral state of the scene in which the saint is.

In Psalm li. we have a heading which plainly indicates the state of the person who seeks cleansing from his sins, and the hiding of God's face from them, but not from himself. But no sooner does the soul lay hold of the truth of grace than he is the object of the enemy's opposition and hatred. If Christ comes and brings grace for sinners, antichrists will soon follow to oppose. Antichrist personally is not here yet. "He who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way"—but it is the last hour, and there are many antichrists. Thus in Psalm lii. we have Antichrist presented under the incident of Doeg and his slaughter of the priests. Then in Psalm liii. the general state of that time is seen answering to the personal Antichrist's own character. God looked down, and describes what

He saw. Everyone is gone back, etc. None doeth *good*, not even one. This is taken up in Romans iii., to prove what man's state is. God looks down upon the scene in Antichrist's day, and describes it in its fully developed state, but the bud and the fully developed fruit are the same in nature. In the psalm it is the *fully developed fruit*. In Psalm lii. 3 he loves evil rather than good, lying rather than to speak righteousness. But in Psalm liii. there is not only the absence of good, but they eat up My people as they eat bread.

There seems to be in this an important moral lesson for us, viz., that, as Titus ii. states, grace teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously, and piously in this present world. But it is and must be *grace* which does so—God's free grace when we were sinners, and nothing but sinners without excuse. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, just as they are, without the smallest ground of excuse. But the heart in this way learns the goodness of God (Psalm lii. 1), and in faith receives that *goodness*, and is henceforth characterised by goodness. But Antichrist is opposed to this, and so also is the spirit of Antichrist. Let any person deny, falsify, or modify the statement of the goodness of God, and we may be sure that goodness from him need not be expected, for goodness is not and cannot be indigenous in a fallen creature. And this is clearly seen in the First Epistle of John. Those that knew God knew love, and could consequently love one another. But those that loved not knew not God, for God is love. They might deny that eternal life was really given to the babes; they but proclaimed their own

ignorance of God, and of His grace and goodness in doing so.

Psalm lv. presents the personal Antichrist illustrated in the Lord's case in the person of Judas. In this connection it is well to note verse 21. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." (Compare Rom. xvi. 17, 18.) But the resource is sure, "Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and He will sustain thee." Smooth words are no indication of love or meekness either. We must have the truth of God known and prized, and then His nature and character, which was manifested in the Person of the Lord here on the earth, may be, by the Holy Ghost's power, manifested in truth in us. But if so, there will be plain (not smooth) speaking when God and Christ's honour, or the well-being of the saints, are in question. But in Psalm lvii. the full power of the enemy is seen. His soul is among lions, and he lies among them that are set on fire, so that there can be no delay. God must be exalted above the heavens, and then the praise and thanksgiving promised in Psalm lvi. 12 are rendered. Psalm lx. is the triumphal taking of the power and the celebration of God as the source of it. It is a suffering and glorified Christ that leads the praises. And how true this is in connection with us. He proved the sorrow to the full, and He now has the joy to the full. And if we love Him we shall rejoice in His joys and triumphs, and not only in *our* deliverances. Psalm lxi. is the overcomer of all the enemy's power, and that from the place of the greatest weakness. God will lead him to a rock which is supposed to be impregnable. And this corresponds with David's own history. He

276 THOUGHTS IN DEPARTING TO BE WITH CHRIST.

had been sheltered from the lion and the bear, and God would now give him victory over the giant. So here, Thou hast been a refuge, a strong tower, from the enemy—that was already proved—now he wants to be led superior to the greatest strength of the enemy. And our place is to learn from this not to fear the greatest power of the enemy at the time of our greatest weakness. God shall bruise Satan under *your* feet shortly, as Joshua made the children (whom the fathers said would be a prey) put their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan. Psalm lxii. gives the effect on the soul of passing through these exercises. God is known, so as to be waited upon only; and men are known in their character of violence and untrustworthiness.

B. G. (Gateshead).

THOUGHTS IN DEPARTING TO BE WITH
CHRIST.

THERE are only four passages where we get instruction about the intermediate state (Luke xxiii. 43; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. v. 10), and in every case the word "with" gives the leading thought. It is to be with Christ. Suffering marks our path thitherward, but if it brings Him a tiny ray of glory we should be glad. None but Christ can fill these little hearts of ours; and yet they are not little, but so large that the whole world cannot fill them—none else than God. We are entirely in His hands—suffering? yes; it may be agonizing, but we would not want one pain less. He is preparing the vessel for His glory. Soon will the suffering days be over, but never to be forgotten. No!

THOUGHTS IN DEPARTING TO BE WITH CHRIST. 277

no! to be remembered to the praise of Him for ever who has brought us through. The love and grace known so many years we lean on in departing, only the circumstances are changed. It does not matter even when what is valued most, the Word and the power to think of it, is taken away; all the reality of it abides in the heart.

To have loved and used it is well, but when all is done one can but say, "I am an unprofitable servant; I have only done my duty." Peace we get when we see the work of Christ for us, but joy and gladness depend on seeing Jesus. Pain and weakness may hinder the expression of praise, but only cause it to burst forth afresh, like a pent-up stream when the hindrance is overpassed.

There should be much worship at the grave. It is the place not of gospel but of worship.

How great a resource is prayer; but how little realized until, in utter weakness, it reaches the source of all true power.

To preach the gospel must be, and is, by the call of God; and He gives fruit, however small our intelligence may be; but His glory is alone the object. This is served equally, nay, more resplendently, in agony and weakness when preaching is no more possible. Fain in such a case would we say, perhaps, "Lord Jesus, take me if it please Thee. I am all ready, Thou knowest it, for it is Thyself who hast made me ready." But His reply is, "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness." In the moment of fiery trial let us then be brave (it is for His glory), be very courageous, be not dismayed. We shall not fail in any wise, for He holds our hand. Oh, to praise Him, even

in the fires. To praise Jesus here is our highest privilege; we can have no higher *there* in the "rest of the saints above."

"To me Thy joy to tell,
Those courts secure from ill,
Where God Himself vouchsafes to dwell,
And every bosom fill."

Oh! for more praise!

We lay our dear ones in the tomb, not as vanquished and defeated ones, but as victors looking forward to our meeting and worshipping together in the glory.

Come what will, in time or eternity, things present or to come, whatever the circumstances or the power, Lord, Thou art all I want. To be absent from the body is to be with Jesus—present with the Lord.

RESURRECTION.

No. 3.

IN conclusion, it is perhaps necessary to touch upon another though similar kind of manifestation of divine power, viz. the bringing up again of the dead, not for life in a natural nor in a glorified condition, but temporarily at the will of God, purely for testimony to men. This it is that the spirit of evil has ever pretended to or sought to imitate. So-called intercourse with the dead is one of the most ancient and universal of the snares by which the wicked one has sought to gain ascendancy over the souls of men; and so far from being an exploded fallacy in these days of progress and enlightenment, it is now perhaps more largely practised than ever. The feeble heart of man is ever ready to

become a prey to this deception, cast as he is, like a rudderless ship, adrift upon a vast sea of fearful possibilities and perplexities. He would know the unknown, but apart from God. That God alone can bring up the dead as dead, or speak by them to the living, is a rule to which there can be no exception. Never has He used man as an instrument for this. An Elijah, an Elisha, or a Paul or Peter, has raised the dead, but it was to *life*; and no saint of God has ever placed, or sought to place, the living in communication with the dead. God has done it, and could do it still, in making manifest the utter impotency of the spirit of evil personating the dead, and of its human abettors, who in wickedness pretend to this power.

The bringing up of Samuel, to the horror and utter amazement of the woman of Endor who had the familiar spirit (1 Samuel xxviii.), is proof conclusive of the power of God, as well as of the feeble credulity of man, and of the fact that for a little gain they will lend themselves to subjection to spirits, powerless as these are over the dead. Christ alone is Lord of dead and living.

Other instances of the power of God bringing up the dead are found in the presence of Moses and Elijah in the company of Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration; and in the "many bodies of the saints which slept," which arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.

These are the only three cases in Scripture of bringing up the dead. That it was an actual appearance in the body is beyond doubt. Matthew precisely says so of the saints who came out of the graves. Moses and

Elias speak by word of mouth with Jesus ; and Samuel does the same with Saul. Yet, if their actual condition is considered, Samuel expressly speaks as one still in death, where Saul and his sons should be on the morrow. In his case judgment was denounced against the first man, the people's choice ; the second instance was a testimony to the glory of the Second Man, who was after God's own heart ; and the third bore witness to the efficacy of His accomplished work.

Dives in Hades desired that Lazarus might be sent in this way to his brethren, to testify to them ; but Abraham, in his reply, speaks of a positive resurrection from the dead. (Luke xvii. 27-31.)

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 5 (*continued*).

IN the times of the judges "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes," resulting in what we have already seen of Micah's household gods, with a Levite for his priest, and blasphemously saying, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." How truly it has been said, "To maintain in practice the possibility of union between the Lord's name and evil is to blaspheme it." The attitude of conscience and heart before God, in which the ministry of Samuel vii. puts Israel, in order that God may appear *for* them, is well worthy of our ear. There was not only putting away the strange gods and preparing their hearts to serve the Lord only, pouring out of Mizpah's water, with fasting and confession, but that sucking lamb was offered as a *burnt* offering wholly unto the Lord. This spoke of "the foundation of God" standing sure. There were their hearts encouraged and recalled to the place of acceptance which Israel ever occupied before God and its abiding ground. This gave to the frequent returns to *Gilgal* their true value; namely, to supply afresh the strength for conflict. There is wholesome instruction for our souls in seeing that the days of the judges, in which "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," were character-

L

282 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

ized by the angel of the Lord coming up *from Gilgal to Bochim*—the former the place of true self-judgment, the latter of “weepers.” Yet there they sacrificed unto the Lord, though they wept without hope; for the angel of the Lord had said to them, “I will not drive them [your enemies] out from before you.” Pupils of Jannes and Jambres may often be detected by their moral condition, savouring rather of Bochim than Gilgal.

The end of the servant of the Lord, and the spirit in which he seeks that end, are given us in 2 Timothy ii. 24–26. His end is that his brother may acknowledge the truth; and well he knows that it is of God alone to give him repentance to this end. He must not strive, but be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. This does not suppose that amiability which agrees to differ, saying, “You may be right, and I may be wrong; let us sink our differences.” “If thine eye be single.” “If any man will [is heartily desirous] do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.”

Pleaders for Baal (Judges vi. 31) tell us we should be more liberal. If they mean with my own things that are at my own disposal I fully admit it, and would seek grace to profit by their counsel. But what if I am but a *steward* of the mysteries of God? “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.) We read in Luke xvi. of an unjust steward who was very liberal at his earthly master's expense, with a view to his own future good, and *his* master approved his worldly *wisdom*.

The minister of Christ dare not practise this suggested

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 283

liberality with the truth of God—that liberality which would make the truth of God popular, and so deny itself, lending its sanction to what is not of God. It was not so with Jeremiah; though his faithfulness in delivering the Lord's message in its purity cost him so much, he had the real good of God's people on his heart. Though the more abundantly he loved them the less he was loved, he could say, "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried captive." Then as his heart turns to the Lord, he says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts. . . . I sat alone . . . for *Thou* hast filled me with indignation." Like another faithful servant he might say, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." And the Lord said to him, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them."

What must it have been as a test of the faith and patience of this servant of God to receive a message from God for the house of Judah calling them to repentance, with a view to their pardon and blessing, and having caused it to be written and read, to learn that the king of Judah cut the roll with a penknife and burnt it? But the Lord caused Jeremiah to write it again. What a comfort to-day to know that "the word of God is not bound."

Is not this holy indignation with which God filled the heart of Jeremiah a blessed contrast to that in-

284 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

dignation of which we read in Matthew xxvi. 8? The remembrance of it must fill every true heart with sorrow and shame; that Mary's devoted act, that gave such joy to the Lord at such a moment, should have been judged as waste, alas! by His disciples—the poor made an excuse. May we be encouraged by the odour of Mary's ointment, and warned by the indignation of the disciples, and take heed to trace the producing cause of each.

The man of God must study to show himself approved unto God, knowing that if he pleased men he should not be the servant of Christ. How easy to get under the eye of man! It is a privilege to *serve the saints*, but this is frustrated by being the *saints' servant*. How touching is Paul's farewell to the elders of Ephesus! (Acts xx. 17.) He reminds them of the manner of his service among them, "serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears, and temptations." He kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, but taught them publicly and from house to house; and now he was going to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there, save the witness of the Holy Ghost in every city that bonds and afflictions waited for him. But none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. He was pure from the blood of all, he had not shunned to declare unto them *all* the counsel of God. Then with sorrow of heart he warns them of the state of things that would follow his departure, and reminds them that for the space of three years he ceased not to warn every

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 285

one of them night and day with tears. But what rest to his heart it must have been to be able in faith to commend them to God, and to the word of His grace! And their legacy is ours. When he had thus spoken he kneeled down and prayed with them all. How well could he write to Timothy, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions," for he knew how likeminded he was, "caring with genuine feeling" how the saints get on (Phil. ii. 20, N.T.), in a day characterized by all seeking their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. The desire for the outward unity of the assembly, naturally so dear to every saint of God, may in the present state of that assembly lead us into associations unworthy of the Lord's name, unless we give heed to the instructions specially provided us in view of these days.

The buddings of the peculiar forms of evil which have so fully developed themselves to-day were allowed to be manifested ere the canon of Scripture was closed, that apostolic instruction, in view of our times, might be given to the man of God, so that he may be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So he passes on his way of faith and love, amidst a form of godliness without its power, and all the host of Jannes and Jambres, kept from "*new carts*" and "*old prophets*" by the word hid within his heart. He listens to the varied proposals which this felt need of unity suggests, from the "Chicago Parliament of Religions"* to the most refined form of the doctrine of

* At Babylon's Fair of 1893, when the names of Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, and Mahommed were represented side by side with the supposed view of *mutual* edification.

286 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

Balaam nearer home. He fails to hear the Good Shepherd's voice in any of them, for he has learned that there is no path between *confederacy* and *faith*. God's word marks the way of one, man's will the other.

The man of God has to "follow righteousness, *faith*, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim. ii. 22.) "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy. . . ." (Isa. viii. 12.) In Hebrews xi. we find the certainty and unmoved steadfastness which *faith* in God's word gave to dying Jacob. His natural eyesight was dim as he blessed the two sons of Joseph, but his *faith* could stand against the wisdom of the man who had such a reputation for knowing the mind of God in other matters. And as the *faith* of Jacob laid his right hand on the younger boy, and his left on the elder one, Joseph's "Not so, my father," was calmly and steadfastly refused. He says, "*I know, my son, I know.*" *Faith*, not obstinacy, gave this immovable certainty and quietness. (Heb. xi. 21.) So, too, does God's Word to-day say *to faith*, "There is one body and one spirit." And that *faith* which God's grace gives the man of God gives diligence to keep that unity in the uniting bond of peace. Practically owning the oneness of that body, *faith* says "Amen," in practice, to the truth that "there is one body and one spirit"; the heart embracing every member of that body in love, while the conscience refuses all that is unworthy of Him who is the only centre of true unity, and who is holy and true. Thus we are kept from every attempt to *form* unities of saints by whatever plausible expediences.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 287

There is but one, and that a perfect and ever-abiding one, though, alas! through our common failure, not outwardly manifested to the natural eye. But the one body is true to faith, and that faithfulness which refuses every substitute, and this not in theory, but in practice. If we are satisfied that the Lord *could*, if it pleased Him, break down to-morrow every barrier which separates His saints outwardly, and present to sight and sense that unity which was once displayed on the earth, and if we know that He will not do so, shall we ourselves appoint a reformer's commission to remodel this unity? This would surely be at our own charges, and the result bitter disappointment and shame. Happy if in my zeal I may not be betrayed, too, into blaming the idleness of one who has "chosen that good part," or even unconsciously to myself blaming Him who attracted her to sit at His feet and hear His word. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*." (Col. iii.) For this I must have His authority, or I cannot flatter myself that I am doing it "*in His name*." If by agreeing to sink one point of God's truth we might reunite outwardly 500 saints who had hitherto been scattered, should we have His authority to count on His presence in our midst? Nay, rather ought we not in truthfulness to write over the door, "Let us do evil that good may come"? and surely we could not invite Him to enter by such a door. Could He not gather together 500 saints and write over the door, "Let every man that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity"? Is it not His presence our hearts crave? Is it less welcome with two or three than 500? Glad as one's heart must ever be to think of the joy

to Him of the many surrounding Him, He is not straitened, and we are not straitened in Him. Are His company and smile enough for our hearts? He will not deny us either, (John xiv. 23; xv. 10.) Esau is called a profane person, because under the pressure of circumstances he despised his *birthright* and sold it for present advantage, saying, I am going to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me? "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

COMING EVENTS.

INTERESTED all must be, who take note of the affairs of men, to observe that the currents of opinion which combine and impel the masses of mankind, hitherto merely aimless, if not selfish or even opposed, are now converging into one great aggregation of self-interest—at least as regards the West, so called. It is, nevertheless, a serious mistake for Christians, who are not of this world as Christ is not, to be occupied with the movements of nations.

The tendency to confederate among the nations of the West for a special purpose is one that will surely survive the disruption and conflict, however destructive, caused by party or political interests or social strife, and will as certainly culminate in a united front antagonistic to the East, so terrific in its overweening bulk.

All this is true and important, for the consummation of God's ways in government are found therein, a government of the world of which the Jews and

Israel are the centre and chief example. We clearly see the great actors in the solemn scene of the crisis slowly developing, looming up out of the haze of European politics in the form plainly announced already in the Word of God. Babylon, the corrupter of His people, holding them in bondage while disowned of God, is assuming shape in a confederated West. The northern power, their oppressor in the land when recognized of God, masking as it does each advance and accession of strength, is with rapid strides covering the whole eastern world with its influence. The Jews, encouraging themselves in national aspirations, to realize which they are ready for any unholy alliance, are striving after the re-peopling of their forsaken land and a renewed nationality.

Together with these there are two other *dramatis personæ*, of inferior importance, it is true, who are, nevertheless, found even now in the relative positions which they occupy at the end. These are the countries now constituting Turkey and Egypt—the King of the North and the King of the South. The first, controlled by Russia, is the fierce persecutor of the Jews when owned of God, and their desolater even as finally he is of Egypt. The latter, alternately the master of God's people and their fleshly stay, is that by which they are deceived. It becomes involved in their judgment when the overflowing scourge passes through the land. Both are warlike powers, but the North seeks also to attain its ends by craft and policy.

It is, however, to be observed that when the demon of idolatry is finally and for ever purged away, then

will these three nations be restored in mutual relations of blessing with Jehovah and with one another of an ever-abiding character such as they have never known before. (Isa. xix. 21-25.) But the idolatrous and Christ-rejecting West will be destroyed together with the presumptuous and overbearing East; the former by the return of Christ from heaven with the angels of His power, the latter by His presence as Jehovah in the midst of His people. (Zech. ix. 13-17.)

These are the ultimate groupings of the nations as fixed of God for the display of His ways in government, and are made known to the saints for warning and to wean them from a passing world. The temporary kaleidoscopic changes in the meanwhile have absolutely no interest for the Church, which is concerned especially with signs of a moral and spiritual import.

Students of Scripture well know that springing from the bosom of Christendom, result of mysterious apostate principles working there from early times, the man of sin shall come, a renegade from Christianity, denying the Father and the Son and, as a false Jew, that Jesus is the Christ. Despising the God of his fathers, or any God, he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that *he* is God. The deification of humanity is thus personified, the accomplishment of that Satanic thought that man should be as God—earliest suggestion to enter the mind of man from an intelligence external and superior to his own, and yet not divine.

It is not a little significant that every department of human energy to-day is devoted to the progress and development and elevation of man. On the one hand the revelation of absolute truth from God is denied,

or the necessary subjection to it of the human mind. On the other, the most advanced scientists of the day admit that "outside scientific knowledge there exists a Force exercised by intelligence differing from the ordinary intelligence common to mortals."* It is not pretended that this is the Divine Being, but merely an intelligence proper to a being that cannot die, which exercises a force outside scientific knowledge. Moreover, it is declared that there is "something like continuity between these unexplained forces and laws already known,"* showing that this "force" or "intelligence" is not in its nature an impossible discovery for the human mind as God would be, but is in continuity with natural laws already understood and explained. It is a creature, therefore not God, nor man, but one with whom man seeks to place himself in communication.

Rejecting revelation as such, it is believed "to be a fundamental law that thoughts and images may be transferred from one mind to another without the agency of the recognized organs of sense, and that knowledge may enter the human mind without being communicated in any hitherto known or recognized ways."*

True as this principle is of a revelation from God and His inspired Word, what does it mean when applied to an unknown and unrecognized "Force" or "intelligence," and in opposition to the "way" for ages known and recognized in the Scriptures? Darkly indeed intimated, there is here nothing less than a spiritual being not capable of death, though part of creation;

* Address of Sir W. Crookes, President of the British Association.—*Standard*, September 8th, 1898.

not the Creator, but wielding mighty powers, and ready to communicate knowledge to the human mind, but apart from the recognized organs of sense. It is no other than the old serpent, called the devil and Satan, using that ancient lure to which man fell a victim at the first—"Ye shall be as gods," suggesting a thing "to be desired to make one wise."

Deceived when innocent, man fell; now that he is guilty and unholy he will exalt himself above everything that is called God or is an object of worship, and summoning to his aid every power he can control, he will organize a world-wide resistance to the returning Christ.

Solemn indeed are the signs of the times; but these culminating acts of human wickedness, energized of Satan, are revealed, not as signs of the Lord's return, but that we may avoid the false principles already established in the Church, the mystery of iniquity that "doth already work."

LETTERS TO AN ANGLICAN.

No. 2 (*continued*).

As to councils œcumenical, they have no authority, as already shown, that cited by you from Acts xv. not being one according to your own definition. On this subject you commence with an unfounded assumption, an error, and a misstatement, viz., "that our blessed Lord during the forty days after the Resurrection submitted to His apostles the general economy and all the doctrines of the faith, leaving it to the Church to define that belief and those doctrines by councils of the whole Church, which He promised should be guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit." Now, it is far from the truth that the blessed Lord during the forty days submitted to His apostles the general economy and all the doctrines of the faith. From Acts i. we learn that He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God, and they were still under the impression that the Lord might at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. But it was quite a mistake to think so, and they were told to await the coming of the Spirit. Now, the Lord had previously told them (John xvi.) that though they could not then bear the many things He had to say to them, yet when the Spirit of truth was come He would guide them into all truth, speak to them what He should hear, and announce what was coming. In this way it was that the doctrines of the faith were to be communicated to them. But the Spirit did not come

until after the forty days, and consequently it is mere assumption and error to say that the Christian economy and faith were submitted to the apostles prior to the coming of the Spirit. Again, it was never left to the Church to define the faith and doctrines. On the contrary, she is bound to receive and obey the teachings of the Spirit of God by His servants gifted for that purpose (1 Cor. xii. 28, xiv. 29-31; Eph. iv. 11, 12, v. 1; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13, 20, 21), though of course there is the responsibility to prove all things and to hold fast the right. You are therefore in error as to this.

Moreover, you say that the Lord promised to guide "the councils" into all truth by the Holy Spirit. This is a misstatement, for in the scripture to which you refer the Lord expressly intends only those who had been with Him "from the beginning," as He says, speaking of the Spirit of truth, "He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." (John xv. 27.) Again, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 12, 13.) Clearly those were to be guided into all truth to whom He was then speaking, but who, until they received the Spirit, were unable to bear the communications He wished to make.

In a very limited and secondary sense the individual believer may be guided into truth by the Holy Spirit now, but he is not an infallible exponent of it, and there can be no reference to, or any thought of, councils in the scripture you quote.

If by "œcumenical councils" you mean a gathering of representatives from all the assemblies, then that mentioned in Acts xv. was not one, for there it was a question between the brethren at Antioch (v. 20) and the assembly at Jerusalem. Certain men had gone out from the latter teaching the necessity of circumcision for salvation, just as you do, indeed, of baptism. It was a question important to be clear about for the whole Church, and as these men had gone out from the assembly at Jerusalem, it was incumbent upon that Church to disown such a perversion of the truth.

Paul was not infallible, but what he wrote and taught in the name of the Lord was inspired of God. In this particular matter neither Paul nor Barnabas had a moment's hesitation as to the mind of the Lord, for they immediately disputed against those who brought such teaching. Yet they went up as from the assembly at Antioch (v. 3) to the Jerusalem assembly as owning the fellowship of the whole Church in the denial of false doctrine and in the establishment of the truth, but especially because the evil had come from Jerusalem, where the Church had been formed at the first.

It is evident that the Holy Spirit looked not to councils, nor even to the Church, as a rule of faith or authority for the truth. Where grievous wolves are spoken of, not sparing the flock, and men rising up from among themselves speaking perverted things, the resource provided for the faithful is not councils, creeds, or Churches, but the "word of God's grace," which Paul had preached to them. This is the only resource to-day. When the saints are warned of

deception and apostasy (2 Thess. ii. 3, etc., and again in 1 Tim. i. 4, 5, iv., where apostasy is in view) and teachers of other doctrines than what was in faith and unfeigned love, it is the faithful word and teaching of Paul himself which is set before the believer as his only authoritative resource and rule of faith. In 2 Tim. ii. 15 the word of truth contained in the scripture (v. 19) is insisted on as the foundation for faith, not to quote Peter (1 Peter i. 22-25, ii. 2; 2 Peter i. 15, 19, ii. 1, 2) and other scriptures.

You allow that the so-called local councils contradict one another, but rest upon the first eight "œcumenical." You do not, of course, include among these the "Council of Trent" or the last at Rome? * Both contradict what had been previously held as true. In fact, it was at the former that your own doctrine of the insufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith was first declared, in opposition to all that had been hitherto held among Christians even in the Church of Rome! Almost all the Fathers and subsequent theologians taught as to this the contrary of the Council of Trent. If an epitome were compiled of the thoughts of the Fathers, together with the dogmas laid down by the councils, and your tests of universality were applied, the result could only be utter failure. One would plainly see the unreliability of such a rule of faith. The Fathers quarrelled, contradicting each other and themselves; and in many cases they are erroneous in doctrine. As to that which professed to be the Church, the older part separated, and still remains so, from that which now

* A.D. 1870, the twentieth œcumenical, which declared the infallibility of the Pope.

claims the exclusive title; and the one entirely denies the dogmas of councils esteemed by the other as œcumenical. Your premises and consequent arguments completely fail.

Indeed, your principle as to this is false. The Church is not the exponent or teacher of truth, but, on the contrary, is taught and built up by it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit by individual teachers. The Church is not inspired, as you assume, nor is it the interpreter of Scripture. Inspiration ceased with the apostles; but the body is edified by means of its members, the gifts given from an ascended Christ, which God has set in the assembly. (1 Cor. xii. 7, 10, 28, xiv. 26, 31; Ephes. iv. 11, 13.)

You conclude by commending me to Moses and the prophets. May I add also the evangelists and apostles—that is, the New Testament as well—rejecting utterly at the same time Fathers, councils, Churches, creeds, and dogmas as any rule of faith?

Allow me, finally, to beseech you not to trust in any good works as meriting or helping to merit the heavenly feast. It is the precious work of Christ which gives every believing soul a perfect, inalienable right to share eternal blessing with Christ. To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

One thing more may be mentioned. In your first letter you told me I was a member of the Church. Now you say I am not. But what you mean by the Church, or where it is, or how to be reconciled to it (as you speak), you do not say. Had I not been

already clear and settled on these points, knowing too that my sins are washed away in the blood of Christ, that I have eternal life, and am made a child of God and a member of the body of Christ, and have received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption—had not all this been already a settled thing with me, your letters would have afforded no instruction, nor help, nor comfort. Had you known these things for yourself, surely you would have been able to guide others, and would not have sought to lead the mind away from the Scriptures as the alone rule of faith, from the work of our blessed Lord as the only ground of salvation, and from faith in God and His dear Son as the one means of receiving blessing. May God deliver you and bless you.

CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE.

No. 5.

DELIVERANCE.

WHAT, then, is deliverance?

† Perhaps *you* can tell *me* what it is.

There is some vagueness in my mind about it, but the sheet-anchor of my soul is the precious blood of Christ. While thinking of its efficacy there is a sweet sense of security, in spite of all the solemn threatenings of judgment. My sins are blotted out by it as a thick cloud; it cannot but be so, God can no longer deal with me in judgment. This makes me happy when I think of it.

† But you are not satisfied with yourself, so that unhappy thoughts intrude when you think of God. Is it not so?

Yes, indeed; and, despite every effort to get clear of this distress, deeper occasion only is discovered for it.

† Is there nothing else that troubles you?

All seems dark at times; even the Bible itself frowns upon me, and is full of rebukes, and when I occupy myself with good works the result is miserably disappointing. The world is not bettered, or the Church either; man is not improved; the tendency of the best arrangements for good is to exclude Christ; and altogether I sometimes feel tired and sick of it all.

† If you could consistently give the whole thing up, would it not be a relief?

Yes; but how, then, should I do my duty as a Christian and be like Christ?

† That is the point where deliverance comes in. You are entitled first to leave *yourself* alone as a thing incorrigible and not to be bettered, which has been altogether condemned in the cross, and set aside by the death of Christ. The power for Christian life and walk resides in quite another person than self, even in Christ. He has become by redemption the Head of a new family in substitution of Adam, with whom we were associated by nature; and now through grace we livingly derive from Christ, and share in all the position and blessedness in which He is before God.

But are we not still in the flesh?

† Not as an evil condition; if so, sin would be a part of our nature as Christians, and thus remain undetected, and its activities excused. But you have detected it, and the Word that condemns it you love. This proves, even for your own conscience,

that though indeed the flesh is in you, it is not that with which you are morally identified. Moreover, it is through the death and resurrection of Christ that we are associated with Him in sovereign grace, and therefore are called upon to reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin and alive to God as He is.

Then death has dissociated us from Adam?

† Yes, and death and burial with Christ is the moral starting-point of every question as to self or sin, and leaves us free to live to God as Christ does.

To think always of Him and never of oneself at all in His presence, what a relief! But what if I fail in this?

† It is already a sin, and to be judged as such, but in no wise alters the reckoning of faith. The only object of life is God ever and self never, either to better a bad self or boast in a good one.

There is confession of sin; that surely occupies one with oneself?

† Never to remedy that which is ineradicably bad, but, on the contrary, the heart and conscience go back to the moment when first "self" intruded, perhaps in an amiable or a religious way, and judges the failure in the root of it as one restored to communion with God.

Peter is an example of that. The Lord did not question him about his threefold denial, with all its terrible accompaniment, but merely said, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" He evidently referred to that natural and touching outburst of Peter's heart—"Though all forsake Thee, yet will not I." How wonderful it is.

† Clearly Peter was a true-hearted saint; grace

CONVERSATIONS ON SCRIPTURE.

301

had wrought in him divine affections which clung to his loved Master with all the devotedness of an ardent nature. But he was conscious of this, and it enhanced him in his own eyes. His boldness and zeal, then, became a snare to lead him deeper into the enemy's trap; but the root of the failure was not the cursing and swearing, but Peter's opinion of himself.

But ought we not to feel happy, and that God is pleased with us?

† Honestly now, do you not *feel* that when you would do good evil is always present with you?

Well, that is my grief.

† How, then, can you expect God to be pleased with a state that does not please yourself? And if you could attain to being satisfied with yourself, would you be approved of God? No, indeed. He dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. What you need is not to be pleased with self, but to be delivered from self as an object altogether—good or bad—and to be pleased alone with Christ, or rather to know that He alone is the man of God's good pleasure, and that grace has set you for good and all in Him.

Oh, how I long to say I am delivered!

† If you did there would be room for serious doubts. Delivered self would be as bad as undelivered self, with more assumption into the bargain. A really delivered man does not say, "I am delivered; how happy I am!" but says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ." He is simply occupied with and praising another.

Must *I*, then, be excluded altogether from my thoughts?

† Yes, by the death of Christ. Nothing can be so exclusive; and then by Him risen from among the dead you have a new object that absolutely fills the scene—for God on your account, as in Him, so that His perfect delight is upon you; and for you, as regards God, so that you know Him now as a Deliverer.

I see, no longer merely a Judge whose judgment against my sins has been met, but a mighty Saviour and Friend, who has delivered me from all my enemies—and sin in the flesh is not the least, as I well know. This is quite a fresh thought. Shelter from the Judge I knew before; now I see deliverance from the flesh and sin.

† Perhaps we may on some other opportunity speak together again about further important points connected with this subject; but for the present remember that deliverance consists in having Christ instead of self before God and before our hearts, and the being in Him by the new life and the Spirit, in virtue of His death and resurrection, with which faith identifies itself, so that you reckon yourself as Christ is—dead to sin in its very principle, and alive to God only.

One word more. I feel that I am not dead to sin.

† That is just the reason why you are to reckon yourself so. Only thus are sin's activities forestalled and the new life toward God set free. Prayer and watchfulness are needed to avoid failure, but the reckoning with God once submitted to is never changed.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

No. 4.

RESURRECTION OF LIFE AND OF JUDGMENT.

THERE is a word uttered by the Lord which we do well to remember, "Take heed what ye hear," and "Take heed how ye hear." The Corinthians had been listening to some who said, "There is no resurrection of the dead." The apostle gives seven reasons for the faith of it. (1 Cor. xv. 13-19.)

It is only the blood of Christ that can enable us to stand before God. He "was raised again for our justification," not *because* we were justified.

Many learned men and scientists cast doubts upon the Bible to-day; but there are three letters which for me answer all the questions of scientists—they are, G O D. This book, I grant, is full of improbabilities and impossibilities *to man*, but not to God. These men say, "How can dust be raised? The bodies of martyrs have been burned in the fires and scattered to the winds, or gone to corruption. Their dust has passed through ever so many changes; it has become blades of grass, and passed into the bodies of animals." Only last week I was thinking of the world as a vast casket which contains precious dust belonging to God.

When a number of men talk together you will find that they soon begin to speak of their prospects. What are *our* prospects, fellow-believer? *Christ is coming* into the air. This is our peculiar hope—not His coming to the earth. When He comes for us all the thousands and millions of saints from Adam and Abel downwards

will be raised, and, their souls reunited to their bodies, they will stand one brief moment upon this earth; then you and I will be changed, and we shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. That precious dust, beloved, of the saints, of your loved ones and mine, will be raised. We shall *see Him*, be *with Him*, and be *like Him*. Death *may* come, but the Lord *will* come.

In the little village where I live souls whom I have spoken to, warned and pleaded with, are dying constantly, *passing out of time into eternity*, and, as far as one knows, out of Christ and unsaved. It brings very solemn thoughts to one's mind—"Have I been faithful? Have I pleaded with them with all the ability God has given me?" It stirs one up, for the little time that remains, to be more earnest in pleading with souls.

Satan will come down to this world having great wrath. He walks to and fro in the earth, but he also appears in heaven, as we see in the Book of Job. It is a solemn thing that when the Church is gone and the Holy Ghost no longer hinders, God, in the place of truth, will send strong delusion that men may believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth. People say, "Oh, don't speak to us about hell; we don't believe that now." Conscience, is it? the worm that dieth not? Well, granted conscience; but what about the fire that never shall be quenched?

In Revelation xix. the Lord comes with His many titles, riding upon the white horse. Not only do Christians belong to Christ, but everyone, whether they believe or not. Christ is coming to judge His people the Jews because they belong to Him, to judge the

Gentiles because they belong to Him; to judge the living because they belong to Him, to judge the dead because they belong to Him. "He is Head," you say; yes, Head of His body the Church, but He is Lord of the individual.*

The beast and the false prophet bring up their armies against the Lamb, and these two men, heads or representatives of two systems—the infidel man and the religious man—are cast into the lake of fire. Satan is bound for the millennium. There are thrones, and there is the great white throne. Christ does not then come, but He sits alone on it. Heaven and earth flee away from the awful brightness of His face beaming with glory; and, in naked space, stand the dead to be judged—no mountain to cover them, no caves to hide them, no dens to creep into. *What will His face be like?* I know only one thought that helps me to know what it will be like, the thought of Him as He was down here—gentleness, goodness, grace, and meekness stamped upon His face. But what will it be like then? Just the opposite of that—the wrath of the Lamb.

One word to those who are Christians. Remember the word the Lord spoke, "Remember Lot's wife." She was saved out of Sodom, but she turned back to look at it, and there she stands a warning to us. If you do not find your delight every day in reading a portion in this Book, and if you read novels and newspapers, you will lose all relish for the precious Word of God, and you will become so identified with the world around you that it will be difficult to tell the difference. The Lord keep us watching and waiting and looking for Him.—*June 24th, 1894.*

* And Head of every man.—Ed.

RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY.

CHRIST IN HUMILIATION AND GLORY.

“BEHOLD, My Servant shall deal prudently”—shall prosper; the cross was the way of prosperity—“He shall be exalted and extolled.” When I hear the saints exalting and extolling Him, I think, What a blessed place they are in, fulfilling God’s thoughts! “His visage was so marred more than any man.” He went down below man, below His creatures. When God delivers there is no looking to the right hand or to the left, either to the Egyptians or the Assyrians. (Isa. lii. 12.) He goes before us, and He watches over our steps behind. There is no haste or flight, as men flee from an enemy. And who can tell to another the untellable blessedness of having waited for Him?

Isaiah liii. brings before us the meditation of the remnant. “A root out of a dry ground” is not a very pleasant thing to look at. “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.” Jehovah speaks here. He marks that He was silent—silent as the grave into which He was going—except that He witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate and before the high priest—on the one hand that He was the Christ, and on the other that He was the Son of God. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” In this the heavenly kingdom and the earthly and all creation have their part. “By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant

RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH EVANS' MINISTRY. 307

instruct many" in righteousness, that is, in practical righteousness as well as in divine righteousness—that was His life-work; "for He shall bear their iniquities"—that was His death-work.

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." This is a military metaphor: "I will give Him the spoils of victory."

"His visage was so marred more than any man." In Psalms xlv. we read: "Thou art fairer than the children of men." The Person is identical. "Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever." "And in Thy majesty ride prosperously"; "My Servant shall prosper." "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity." It is a sign of power for a man to avoid evil; but to hate evil is a sign of great power in a soul. "Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." We get God's thoughts about Christ in these "therefores." It is a great thing to have the mind of God; but what I should like is to have the *affections* of God. We are partakers of the divine nature, and can delight in what He delights in. It is well to read and speak of these things, but oh! beloved brethren, to get into the reality of these things in our own chambers is a much greater thing.

"All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." We are often very cruel, expecting souls to take a great place spiritually when they have never learnt what Christ is, have not smelt the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia—the fragrance of Christ. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider; forget also thine own people and thy father's house." This is the earthly bride,

but it applies to the Church. We forget everything; not that God is against nature, but He hates sin. In Phil. ii. He was "in the form of God"—that is, in the place of Godhead—and He became man. The death of the cross is far more than death. A man might die a glorious and honourable death on the field of battle, but the death of the cross was a death of shame. Wherefore God has given Him a name above every name—the name of Jesus, the despised name. But it means "Jehovah the Saviour," and God knows its meaning. I see more than ever, in reading the Word, that the Spirit rests on Jesus. He is God's great resource all through this book of Isaiah. After each sorrow and trial He is brought in, in various forms of glory.—*January 29th, 1882.*

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 9.

"AT the judgment-seat of Christ the Lord will have to say to *each one* of us; but it is our blessed privilege now, before that manifestation takes place, to be living in view of it, to judge *self* in His holy presence, and to condemn and separate from that which is unsuitable to Him. Well, we have a God of all grace to do with. He watches over us in tenderest affection, removing stumbling-blocks from our path, and bringing His blessed Word before our hearts to rebuke, cleanse, warn, comfort, and edify us. May we submit ourselves more to His blessed ministrations, and thus be able to see 'the end of the Lord.'" (James v. 11.)

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

BY J. BARTON.

No. 6.

IN Revelation i. 9 to ii. 11 we have Christ before us in a new character altogether; even John had never known Him thus, and "fell at His feet as dead." He is seen here as a judge toward the Church as well as toward the world. The Spirit of God, too, is seen in a new way, as "the seven Spirits which are before His throne"; not now in quickening, sealing, anointing each saint of God, and being the earnest in our hearts of our hope; nor yet baptizing into one body and uniting to our glorified Head; nor dwelling in the house of God on the earth; nor the Spirit of truth guiding into all truth. But here rather it is the expression of the perfection of power and intelligence connected with the earth's government by the "Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Chap. v. 6.)

And if Christ and the Spirit are before us in these new characters, we may expect to find the Church in a relationship to Them in which it has not appeared before. That the Lord's communications should be addressed to "*the angel*" of each of these assemblies, rather than to "the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus," or as at Thessalonica, "to the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ"; or as one of the other assemblies similarly addressed by the apostle Paul — is very

M

310 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

significant of the attitude which the Lord assumes towards these assemblies and their state which called for such distance from Him. In the several characters in which the Lord is presented as walking among the candlesticks, we find first that which has a general voice, and again those varied attitudes which the condition of each assembly called forth, whether in warning or encouragement. These seven assemblies, selected as characterised each by one of these seven conditions, actually existed at this time; so that while it is quite true that they are prophetic and progressive in declension, yet they did not *then*, and do not now, present any conditions which needed to be fulfilled before the close of the *time history* of the assembly. John was directed to write the things which he had seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these. With the second of these we have to do at present, "*the things which are*," the time history of the Church as set up upon the earth as a light-bearer and witness for Christ—His epistle—responsibly so. We are not occupied with Christ as the source of all grace, flowing down from Him as Head of His body to the members on earth, nor as living in the presence of God to make intercession, supporting His saints in their weakness and trials in passing through the wilderness, nor yet as their advocate with the Father, girded for service with basin and towel to remove that which would prevent their *having part* with Him. But "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" John sees "one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." (i. 13-18.) He is about to express His judgment of the *conduct* of

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 311

each of these seven companies in their several conditions—what He approved and what He disapproved. Two standards of judgment are here—the grace in which the Church had been set up as Christ’s responsible witness on the earth, and the purpose of the Lord concerning that witness. No directions for their *conduct* are given but to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Other scriptures fully instruct the conduct of those who are exercised by hearing what the Spirit saith unto the churches; for here the Lord, after noticing what is displeasing to Him, does not add instructions for the overcomer to quit the assembly where that evil is pointed out. Pleaders for Baal would use the absence of such instruction to excuse evil associations and weaken the force of 2 Tim. ii. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 17, and many scriptures of like import. Besides, the assembly is contemplated in these scriptures before us as the professing, responsible witness on the earth, and we could not expect the Lord to call on saints to leave that. This would mean to give up the outward profession of Christianity. Such thoughts show us that we cannot neglect with impunity any truth God has given us. If we do not go on to know Christ and our various relations to Him and thus to the world, we are defective in our estimate of good and evil. (Heb. v. 14.) In Malachi, which is a call to *reality*, when there was “a form of godliness without the power,” the answer to this call to “return” would be marked by “discerning between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.” (iii. 18.) The increase of this spirit was the desire of Paul for the Philippians (i. 9), “that your love may abound yet more *in knowledge*

312 SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH.

and in all *judgment* [in full knowledge and all intelligence, N.T.]; that ye may approve things that are excellent; . . . " in the midst of the pretension and imitation around. Have we an ear and an eye circumcised and anointed to discern what is suited to Christ in a day of imitation, and a tender heart that is rightly affected by understanding, in the light of the sanctuary, the state of that which bears His name on the earth, seeing there what is *of man* and what is *of God*?

How sad to see that the beginning of the history of the professing Church on earth is failure, and that in the spring of her testimony she had left her first love. There was to the eye of man much to be approved; the outward form of godliness was correct. What should we think to-day of a company of saints of whose outward conduct things could be said such as the Lord spoke of Ephesus? There were works, and labour, and patience; there was an abhorrence of evil, and a testing of pretended apostles; but, alas! she had "left her first love." Their works were not as at Thessalonica, of faith; nor their labour one of love; and their patience was after the world's sort (which says, "What can't be cured must be endured") rather than "patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ."

The progressive declension in the history of the Church on the earth in her responsibility is very distinctly marked by the way in which these seven assemblies are divided into two groups of three and four respectively. In the first three the address seems to be to the assembly generally, and supposes the possibility of an ear to hear in all; and so overcoming is spoken of after the ear to hear. Whereas, in the last

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON THE CHURCH. 313

four a remnant is marked, and only the overcomers are counted on as having an ear to hear. The coming of Christ is not spoken of as the hope of the remnant till Thyatira is addressed.

Sorrowful as it is to notice that Christ has to charge the Church with having "left her first love," yet how it cheers one's heart to find therein how His love never changes, nor becomes indifferent, whether or not it meets the response it looks for from our hearts. It is the jealousy of His love; "for love is strong as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave." "Repent, and do the *first* works," that is, works that sprang from love to Christ, fruit of His love to them.

In looking at 2 Timothy ii. we saw that the greatest blessing proposed to the "man of God" is to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared and furnished by the Word of God unto every good work. *This is to be an overcomer.* Among God's earthly people there were individual witnesses who stood for Him as overcomers in the varied forms of evil by which they were assailed. Hebrews xi. gives us some of these worthy cloud of witnesses of the power of faith. Here the overcomer listens and lays to heart what the Lord approves, and seeks it.

If we love anyone much, we do not need to be *told* to do what pleases them. We but study to know the wish of their heart. Their desire known to us commands our devotion, as those three in 1 Chronicles xi. 17, who caught the sigh of David's heart as he "longed and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem." They broke through the host of the Philistines that surrounded that

well, and drew water from it and presented it to David, whose appreciation of their devotedness was so real that he poured it out *unto the Lord*, saying: "Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?" It was too good for any but the Lord. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." A *look* is a command from one we love, and the habitual communion of heart with Him for His own sake is where we are instructed in His mind when the occasion arrives for action.

EGYPT.

EXCEPT the Jews themselves, few nations occupy a more important place in the divine records than Egypt. In her the mind of God has seen the display of all those powers in which the natural man as such can boast. Political supremacy finds its chief example in Rome and, coupled with religious corruption, in Babylon; mere devastating warlike energy in the northern power, and its great supporter, Russia, the mistress of the east. But Egypt was the cradle of all that gives man importance socially—the arts and sciences, commerce and agriculture, manufactures and crafts, the throne and the priesthood, with the many artificial relationships among men to which these give rise. Its character before God is strongly marked, and its destiny recorded.

Assumption and self-reliance, coupled with ignorance of Jehovah and rejection of His claims, together with an ever-increasing hardening of conscience in spite of His dealings, are the salient points in an Egypt and a Pharaoh that knew not Joseph. To complete

the moral picture, we must add idolatry and the craving after supernatural powers centred in a scientist class—the scribes or magicians of Egypt, who resorted to sorceries and enchantments in support of an oppressive and imperious exercise of human authority.

Here Israel was in bondage ere called out into national relations with Jehovah, and thither were they forbidden to return. It was an iron furnace (Jer. xi. 4-7). and their sceptre was one of absolute rule, from under which Jehovah alone could and did deliver His people. Out of Egypt did He call His Son. (Hosea xi. 1, xii. 9, 13, xiii. 4; Amos ii. 10, ix. 7; Haggai ii. 5.) It was a chief mark of apostasy and ever the tendency of His people to turn back in their hearts to Egypt, which therefore, in the ways of God in government, should be the first instrument used for their judgment. (Jer. ii. 16.) Vain would be the help it should afford to the rebellious mass of Israel, in spite of its multitude of horses and chariots and arrogant assumption of power. (Isaiah xxx. 4-7.) It was but a broken reed piercing the hand that leaned upon it. (Isaiah xxxvi. 6; Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.) Thus Israel would be, and already has been, brought to shame by Egypt (Jer. ii. 36; xxxvii. 5-7), which, in consequence, was to be desolated forty years throughout its whole extent from Migdol, on the extreme north, to Syene or Essouan, on its southernmost border. This was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xliii. 8-13); but the Word of God in the plainest manner asserts that throughout its subsequent history, not only should it be a base kingdom, but the “basest of the kingdoms.” (Ezek. xxix. 15.) Never should its head be lifted again in the pride of independence; and vain will be the effort of any western power to restore to it self-rule.

For a brief moment in this world's crisis it pretends to empire and autocratic power, only to be cast down more abjectly prostrate than ever, and to be trampled upon and despoiled by the northern king in league with Russia, the mighty despot of the east. (Dan. xi. 40-43; *cf.* viii. 23, 24; Joel iii. 19; Isaiah xx.)

Its subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar, already spoken of, is undoubtedly a type, historically, of this. (Jer. xliii. 8-13.) The prize of this world's empire was then at stake, and she bid high—her all—for it, and lost. The throne of sovereignty arose at Babylon instead. When, once more in the coming day, she seeks to renew the contest, bringing the whole of northern Africa, east and west, to her aid, she is again put to shame. Cush and Phut and Lud shall fall by the sword, and with them “all the mingled people” (perhaps the Greeks or Jews dwelling in Egypt), as well as the children of the land that is in league. (Ezek. xxx. 1-4.) Here are mentioned four distinct classes of people who will be overwhelmed in the judgment of Egypt at that future day (*v.* 3), namely, the nations of northern Africa, including Egypt, “the mingled people,” those who are in league—her helpers (*v.* 8), and, lastly, Chub, a nation difficult to identify. (*v.* 5.) Moreover the Lord distinctly declares that in that day ships shall go up the Nile or Red Sea to Ethiopia (*v.* 9), and shall bring anguish upon them. These ships certainly proceed from the northern power so often mentioned, whose place was filled at the time of the prophecy by Nebuchadnezzar. (*Cf.* Nahum ii. 8-10.)

In addition to these judgments from without, Egypt will also become the scene of civil discord and confusion; and they will seek again, as of yore, unto their

EGYPT.

317

idols and conjurers, their necromancers and sooth-sayers. (Isaiah xix. 2-4.) A cruel lord and fierce king shall rule over them; their spirit shall fail, and their counsel be destroyed. But what is, perhaps, a still more striking manifestation of God's hand is the failure of the sources of the Nile (from whatever cause), so that the river shall be wasted and dried up, the rivers shall stink, and the streams be diminished. (Isaiah xix. 5-10; Ezek. xxx. 12; Isaiah xi. 15; Zech. x. 11.) Thus all the manufactures and prosperity of the country from north to south shall be brought to naught.

Egypt is peculiarly the scene of Jehovah's signs and wonders. (Jer. xxxii. 20.) It has been the place of Israel's sojourning and bondage (Isaiah xi. 11; lii. 4), and will be again in a special way the place of Israel's outcasts (Isaiah xxvii. 13), being brought thither again in ships. (Deut. xxviii. 68.) Moreover, it is there that her rebels are judged (Hos. vii. 16; viii. 13; ix. 3); and it is with judgment that He brings His people out of her. Verified in the past, this will be still more gloriously shown when He sets His hand to recover His people a second time. (Zech. x. 10; Isaiah xi. 11.) Then will He destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, for He will turn the captivity of the land as at the beginning. (Jer. xxxiii. 11.)

Judah must first be delivered, and shall be as though Jehovah had not cast them off, and be brought back again from the land of Egypt. But for this Egypt must be smitten and its sceptre taken away (Zech. x. 10-11), and Judah shall be a dismay to it. Yet shall Egypt then be restored to blessing. (Jer. xlvi. 26.) Its wealth shall be to Israel from the Soudan northwards (Ethiopia and Seba), not for the greed of Gog; and they

shall confess that "El" is in her and there is "no other Elohim." (Isaiah xlv. 14.)

But more, the Word of God is definite as to Egypt's share in the mercy and power of Christ's millennial kingdom. Its river shall be but a highway for men to go over dry-shod, when the Lord shall acquire the remnant of His people a second time from Egypt as far as Ethiopia, and from Assyria, Persia, and Babylon. (Isaiah xi. 11-16.) Moreover, there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan and swearing by Jehovah of hosts; an altar to Jehovah shall be in the midst of the land, and a pillar at its border for a sign and a witness to Him. He will send them a deliverer, such is His mercy, in answer to their cry; and thus, glorious in His grace, shall Jehovah be known to the Egyptians, who shall serve Him with a sacrifice, and vow a vow and perform it. Healed in millennial mercy and power, in that day Egypt will be blessed as the people of God; and with it and Assyria, Israel, His inheritance, shall be a third. No longer oppressed by the one or ensnared and enslaved by the other, Israel shall be benefited in peace by the mutual intercourse and traffic between its once so dangerous and powerful neighbours. (Isaiah xix. 16-25.)

To close Egypt's history, brought as it will be into the full blaze and blessing of the Sun of Righteousness, so unlike the fate of its proud western possessors, there remains yet one more fact that may be mentioned. Whatever its blessing it must always be a dependent nation, but then subject to the rule of the King of kings. Should there arise any ebullition of that unruly spirit natural to man, so that they refuse to render the homage due to the King of all the earth, and go not

up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of tabernacles, then upon them shall be the plague wherewith Jehovah will smite such nations as are insubordinate. It is possible Egypt is especially distinguished on account of the peculiar mercy and place bestowed upon her in the day of Jehovah's power (Zech. xiv. 18-20), a place and mercy perhaps attributable to her having been an asylum for His people in the day of their distress.

In conclusion it is to be noted that her limits and associated countries are precisely stated in Scripture. Pathros, where not used for the whole country (Ezekiel xxix. 14), is most probably Upper Egypt. Cush or Ethiopia, in Africa, lay to the south about the confluence of the Blue Nile with the main stream (Isaiah xi. 11; Ezekiel xxx. 4), and the Ludim perhaps near the same tract of country; Seba further north to the Atbara. Libya probably comprised the whole of northern Africa, as then known, on the west of Egypt. All this vast range of country is viewed as connected with Egypt. Migdol was a town at the extreme north. Tahpanhes stood far north on the eastern branch of the Delta, where also Pibeseth and Pelusium, or Sin, were situated. Midway between the two eastern branches of the river stood Tanis or Zoan, where Moses performed his miracles before Pharaoh. Noph is Memphis, the ruins of which are near Cairo, but to the west of the Nile, and at the same point on the east was On, also called Aven and Bethshemesh. (Ezekiel xxx. 17; Jer. xliii. 13.) The ruins of No or Thebes are still seen opposite Karnak, though it originally extended along both banks of the Nile. It was in Upper Egypt. Syene, now Assouan, was at the first cataract, then the southern boundary of Egypt towards Ethiopia. (Ezekiel xxix. 10; xxx.)

“PUT TO DEATH YOUR MEMBERS.”

A WORD ON COLOSSIANS iii. 5-15.

“PUT to death” is in our responsibility, and we are exhorted to have it done,* and not to be always doing it. So also “put off” (v. 8) and “put on.” (v. 12.) It is a thing to have done. The old character has to be done with, and I am to go on now with the new. There is ever need of prayer and watchfulness to maintain the power of it in the soul, but unless the old things are really put off and the new put on there is not the same power nor the same standard practically in the walk. Many true souls are defective because not definite as to this. Though we may have many prior experiences of the profitlessness of flesh, it is not a matter of experience, but of recognizing by faith the true result of the place in which grace sets us in Christ. The old character is to be put off for good and all, because the old man has been put off;* the new character has to be put on once and for ever, because the new man has been put on.

The having put off the old man and put on the new is absolute and done, and is no part of our responsibility to do; but the putting to death our members and putting off the old things, as well as the putting on of the new character, is not absolute, but is our responsibility, and therefore is the subject of exhortation.

* See Note in New Translation by J. N. D. (Col. iii. 5.)

"PUT TO DEATH YOUR MEMBERS."

321

If I have recognized that henceforth my conduct must be according to the new man, because I have put on Him and His character and put off the old, then I know distinctly the manner of life that becomes me. It is necessary for proper Christian walk to put on definitely the character of the new man. So far from its being pride and presumption to take the ground of having done so, it alone gives stability to the soul, a true measure for conduct, and a real sense of the necessity of dependence upon God and obedience. Preliminary to my walk, the standard thereby set up is high and glorious, but faith sees that it is the only possible answer in grace to the grace that has set me in Christ—the old man put off and the new put on. Therefore before beginning I own that the grace that set me in Christ is the only thing that can keep me in His path. But that I am in it for good and all should not be a matter of the slightest shadow of a doubt at any time. Souls must leave distinctly the old path and start on the new one, and this is their responsibility. It induces sobriety, definiteness of purpose, occupation with Christ, obedience to the Word, tenderness of conscience, a true sense of grace and need of communion with God, as well as self-judgment and lowliness. A merely moral or religious man may live up to a standard of his own, and be well satisfied. But a person who is not only in Christ, but has put on His character according to the exhortation of the apostle (Col. iii. 12-14), must be always deeply convinced of how short he comes of so glorious a standard. For Christ, whose walk on earth is our example, is now in heaven. It is a Christ in glory whose character we put on and in whom we are.

As a figure, "put to death" is found no doubt in the circumcision of Israel at Gilgal. Circumcised *there* and *only once*—a thing done once for all and never to be repeated—they constantly returned thither after their conflicts and victories, not to be re-circumcised, but to renew, in the place of circumcision, their communion with God and their strength for His warfare.

This is what we have to do now in spirit, not having to do constantly with these evil things of the old man (Col. iii. 5, 6), but as having altogether done with them, since we have put on the new man and his character. Prayer and watchfulness are needed, but *this is the reverse of living in these evil things.* (v. 7.)

It is also true that we are not out of the reach of failure, but in such a case this is judged by what the new man is, and as utterly foreign to that which is our life. Not only is the new man put on, but we are exhorted to have His character put on, and having done so the failure is judged according to this measure. The members "put to death" are no part of the Christian life, and are dealt with accordingly. "Put to death" is in the living power of what is good, and is different from reckoning yourselves "dead to sin," which supposes evil in that which dies. The believer does not seek to acquire a good character by walking well, but he puts on the things of the new man, the character of Christ, and seeks to walk in accordance therewith.

LETTERS TO AN ANGLICAN.

No. 3.

I AM glad that you confine my reply to one point, namely, How I dare consider myself sure of salvation. As for the charge of pride, I am not concerned to defend myself from it, seeing that it does not touch the question, which simply is, How I or any other sinner by nature may be justified and reconciled, become a child of God, and have eternal life, and know it: or, as you express it in one word, be sure of salvation. My reply is, By believing God, and by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In proof, Peter declares (Acts x. 43) that everyone that believes on Jesus shall receive, through His name, remission of sins. Paul says not only that sins are forgiven, but that in Him everyone that believes is justified from all things. (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) He tells the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31), and teaches that righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is upon all them that believe. (Rom. iii. 22-24.) Again he says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and in verse 28, "A man is justified by faith." Again, "He who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.)

In fact, to transcribe the whole of the Epistle to the Romans to the end of chapter viii., would be a simple and direct answer to your challenge, how one dare be

"sure of salvation." In one word, it is because of what God says.

As regards the means, the Scriptures are equally express. God has been pleased not by sacraments or ordinances, but "by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.) So absolutely certain is this salvation, that those who believe are of God "in Christ Jesus, who has been made" to them "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (v. 30.) In His (Christ's) name they have been washed, sanctified, justified. The effectual work for this was done when He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Being justified by faith in Christ Jesus, it is also in this way only that a man can receive the promise of the Spirit—not by baptism, nor aught else. For being sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

Thus, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and having believed it, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and already have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. We yet await the redemption of the acquired possession. (Eph. i. 13, 14, 18.)

We are saved by grace through faith, as the gift of God—not of ourselves or of works.

We have peace with God, stand in His favour, and boast in hope of the glory—yea, can even boast in present tribulation, and above all in God Himself; once enemies indeed, we are now reconciled by the death of His Son. (Col. i. 14, 19, 20, 21.) Thus we have the knowledge and the certainty of salvation.

Moreover we are born of God already, not by baptism, but by the Word of truth (James i. 18), the implanted Word—by the Word which is preached to us in the gospel, the living and abiding Word of God, the Word of the Lord which abides for ever.

The divine reason for all these wondrous blessings, which become ours through simple faith, and are thus assuredly known, is that Jesus suffered for us—the just for the unjust. He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and we have been healed by His stripes. The present full result is that we are called into the fellowship of God's Son and walk in the light as He is in it, cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. He, the Righteous One, is our advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins. (1 John i. 3, 7, 9; ii. 1.) Our sins are forgiven for His name's sake. We are now children of God, and shall be like Christ when He comes. (iii. 2.) We have the witness in us that God has given to us eternal life, and believing on the Son of God we KNOW that we have eternal life. (v. 11, 13, 10.)

This is my answer, I trust with meekness and fear, to your question respecting the hope that is in me, having a good conscience toward God, surely founded upon the Word of God alone, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

In conclusion, may I express the hope that you likewise may be soon found resting upon the same foundation which is alone valid for eternity?

By way of postscript I would notice your quotation from 1 Cor. ix. 27. According to that passage Paul was contending not for the pardon of his sins, that he had; nor for life, that was already his; nor for glory,

it was secured to him in Christ; but for an incorruptible crown. Paul was no mere preacher, he was a true believer; not the slave of his body, but its master. Therefore he brought it into subjection as one who was not a rejected man. Grace was the source of his life, not only the subject of his preaching. We yet await the salvation and redemption of the body. This is a question of power, and we wait the return of our Lord Jesus Christ for it. But as regards the day of judgment, we have boldness for it already, because as He is so are we in this world. There is besides a practical salvation or daily deliverance from the wiles of the enemy of our souls. This salvation we ourselves work out, since it is God that works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We have God with us still, though Paul is no longer here to withstand the foe.

It is true we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect, for this perfection is nothing less than being like Christ and with Him in glory. Therefore we pursue to lay hold of that for which we have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii. 8, 15.) Nor shall we be perfect in this sense until Christ comes for us and calls us to meet Him in the air.

But it is altogether a mistake on your part to suppose that if we are saved by grace through faith, then salvation consists in merely believing an historical fact. Faith through which we are saved by grace is the gift of God. It is believing God from the heart, receiving the truth in the love of it, and is no product of the mind, or of nature, or the flesh. What you say about repentance being necessary for salvation is quite correct, but not as a preliminary to believing, nor as separated from it. It is a true turning of heart to

THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT KENT.

327

God in self-judgment, owning the truth of His testimony against oneself. Often, as you say, it is accompanied by fasting, alms-giving, weeping, and mourning. These are the evidences of repentance; but in itself it is as purely the gift of God and the work of His Spirit as faith, or life, or any other sovereign act of His grace. (See Acts v. 31.) Neither does it proceed from the flesh, but from the Spirit, and is, moreover, a continuous and ever deepening work in the soul. It is God who has granted to the Gentiles "repentance to life," as well as opened to them a door of faith. (Acts xi. 18; xiv. 27.)

 RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF
ROBERT KENT.

No. 5.

PEACE AND JOY.

Luke xxiii. 50-56; xxiv.

THERE are two little words in this chapter which you may not have noticed: they are "peace" and "joy." Peace is an experience of the soul. There are many souls who are saved, but have not peace with God. There were two men who buried the Lord; one, Joseph, is mentioned at the end of Luke xxiii., and the other, Nicodemus, in John. Of the latter it is said two or three times that he came to Jesus by night. Oh! will he not be glad throughout eternity that he came to Jesus! Joseph was afraid to identify himself with Jesus of Nazareth. They were timid souls afraid to confess the Lord. There are many such now. Joseph was a councillor, a man of position, and was afraid of losing

his influence. Nicodemus was a religious man, and was afraid of losing his character. What forces them out at this moment is the wickedness of man. The disciples—poor timid things—had all run away; but Joseph goes in boldly to Pilate. Pilate grants him the body: he does not know all that is involved in it. Man would not have given the Lord a respectable burial; but God had provided for it in Isaiah liii., and this had to be fulfilled. Have you ever noticed how much there is about burials in the Old Testament? It went with the order of things in that dispensation. God says of one king that he should not be buried with the kings of Israel who had wrought righteousness. Of Moses we read that God buried him, and, no doubt, angels were there. Isaiah says of Christ, that man “appointed His grave with the wicked”; but by God’s appointment He was with the rich in His death. The soldier had come and thrust his spear into His unresisting side; it was man’s last insult to the Son of God. Men thought they had done away with Him, and went away heedlessly, though in some there was the working of natural conscience, they returned smiting their breasts. The soldiers had broken the legs of one of the thieves and sent him, if still unrepentant, to eternal misery. The legs also of the other had been broken, but he went to be with his Saviour in paradise.

The body of Jesus is taken down with loving hands and laid in a new tomb. Ah! it must be new; but why? Because He must be laid in a place where justice had no claim and death no power to hold Him who was there. He had done with sin. God had made Him, the sinless One, to be sin for us. Was

there ever such a sabbath day as that, when Christ was in the tomb? The women keep it—pious souls. The angels are there, and it is in connection with the Son of man that angels are found. They appear at His birth to the shepherds, in the wilderness too, and after the temptation. In the garden of Gethsemane an angel ministered unto Him, and they are at His tomb. Moreover, when He ascended two men who were angels stood by the disciples; and when He comes again it will be in His glory, and in that of the Father, and of the holy angels.

The women go and tell the disciples, and Peter, the man of energy, goes to the tomb and goes away again. Two of them go to Emmaus the same evening—a sabbath day's journey, about two miles. A stranger joins them; but their eyes are holden that they should not know Him—divinely holden. Why was this? Ah, they are not to recognize Him, for they must know Him now in another way. They had known Him as the Messiah. "We thought," said they, "that it should have been He which should have redeemed Israel." The beginning of this chapter is full of perplexity and sorrow—the sorrow of His disciples, because they had lost Him. Now they ask Him to come in, but they have to constrain Him. This was unusual. Did you ever know of Christ having to be constrained by a poor soul? Ah, they were in the wrong path; the Lord Jesus, as the Shepherd, was seeking two wandering sheep at Emmaus. They should not have left Jerusalem; they ought to have waited at His grave to see what would be done next. But He goes in with them, and is made known to them in the breaking of bread. This is not the Lord's Supper; it is not

eucharistic, but the Lord takes the place of the father of the family, and breaks the bread to them; then they recognize Him. I call Emmaus the place of recognition.

They return to Jerusalem and say, "We have seen Him." He walked with us, He talked with us, He broke the bread with us, and then He vanished. They hear that the Lord has appeared to *Peter*—Peter, the one who denied Him, and I believe that He appeared to him first of all the disciples. Peter could say, Yes, I cursed and swore that I knew Him not, and as I did it He looked at me—my blessed, suffering Lord! and it broke my heart. Then the Lord stands in their midst and says, "Peace be unto you." He shows them His hands and His feet where the cruel nails had been—those marks which He will bear throughout eternity. He says, "It is I Myself"—not a myth, not a spirit—"a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Is that not proof enough? Well, "Have you anything to eat?" He takes the food and graciously eats before them, to take away any lingering doubt from their minds. Then He opens their understandings. There are three things—He opened their eyes; He opened the Scriptures; and He opened their understandings. "Ye are witnesses of these things." We are witnesses too, and should bear testimony in our lives, with our lips, and even in our faces.

There are three places in this chapter—Emmaus, the place of recognition; Jerusalem, the place of the Lord's death; and Bethany, the place of His ascension. I have peace when I know the work of Christ for me; joy when I see my risen Lord; and great joy when I know the ascended glorified Man at the Father's right hand. (*vv. 36, 41, 52.*)—*June 3rd, 1894.*

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT LETTERS.

No. 10.

"GOD is now a seeker and saver of the lost—'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' This magnifies His grace: 'He leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goes after that which is *lost*.' His love has ever been, and *is*, in exercise for the one who has gone astray.

"How different to the thoughts of *man*! *We* love that which is attractive and lovely; *but what has God ever seen in you and me to love?* Absolutely nothing! By nature *lost*, by practice *defiled*, and yet He *so* loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son! Never has there been the exhibition of such love before.

"In the cross we see two things—(1) The awful evil of man's nature, his rebellion against God and hatred to Christ; (2) God's perfect love to the sinner."

No. 11.

"CHRIST and His unsearchable riches are set before us, and the Holy Ghost delights to report or announce to us these things. I was thinking while writing this word of Eph. iii. 8-12 and John xvi. 13-16—one the administration of eternal counsels concerning Christ, the other the Holy Ghost's mission as reporting the glories of the heavenly Christ; things saints could not enter into *then* are *now* the portion of our hearts. I suppose we get in measure the two ministries of the two blest apostles thus.

"The ways of our God with us are very wonderful: the things He permits to come upon us at times doubtless are not only designed for the blessing of the suffering one, but for us each and all, and it is right our souls should be exercised before the Lord in all these things; beside, we are members one of the other (Rom. xii. 5)."

No. 12.

"IN simple, childlike faith we accept these dispensations of suffering and sorrow, seasons of heaviness through the manifold temptations; but knowing and seeing the end, His ever blessed end for us, sickness of various sorts, weakness and trial seems in these days the especial portion of the beloved of the Lord, and if in all these things is the life of our spirits, and by them we live, are we not the richest gainers?—the flesh put down and withered up, the true character of things here more clearly seen and estimated at their true value, the Father's love, the sympathy of Christ our Lord, our High Priest, realized, His strength made perfect in our weakness, heaven and the things that are there where He sits entered into a little more in spirit, in heart and affections more at home with Him, I say it must be well, and how great our gain!

"Let us pray for the supply of the Spirit of Christ, a joyful consent of heart to the Father's will, a living in spirit with Him our Head, and the *ever* present expectation of His return. . . . His blest ways are beyond our ken or praises."

R. KENT.