

WORDS OF HELP  
FROM THE  
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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VOL. IV

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LONDON  
ALFRED HOLNESS, 14 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
1915



# INDEX

	PAGE
A Desire (Poetry) - - - - -	56
A Lesson in the Potter's House - - - - -	136
A Retrospect - - - - -	177
A Soldier's Letter - - - - -	145
A Stronghold - - - - -	129
A Word for the Times - - - - -	81
"Be of Good Cheer" - - - - -	97
Be not . . . Shaken in Mind or Troubled - - - - -	2
Christ our Object and our Hope - - - - -	29
Christ our Advocate and Priest - - - - -	76
Christ's Death no Afterthought with God - - - - -	89, 105
Christ's Reign - - - - -	163
Dependence - - - - -	173
"Faint yet Pursuing" (Poetry) - - - - -	79
First Love, Brotherly Love, and the Truth - - - - -	25, 41, 57, 73
Four Things to be Remembered - - - - -	64
Fragments - - - - - 16, 20, 40, 80, 111, 144, 176	
God Working - - - - -	108
"His Appearing" - - - - -	65
Is the "Sermon on the Mount" Practical Christianity? - - - - -	115
Lessons for To-day - - - - -	33
"Live Thou and Thy Children on the Rest" - - - - -	21
Millennial Dawnism - - - - -	140, 154
My Welcome (Poetry) - - - - -	32
Opened Eyes - - - - -	169
Our Responsibility - - - - -	161
Perfect Love - - - - -	31
Peter's Restoration - - - - -	14
"Pray without Ceasing" - - - - -	113
Soul-Winning - - - - -	176

	PAGE
Sower and Reaper - - -	99, 121, 131, 148, 164, 181
Speaking with Tongues - - -	92
Spiritual Forces - - -	130
Texts sometimes Misunderstood - - -	127
“That Blessed Hope” - - -	49
“The Blood of Abel” - - -	17
The Conscience - - -	45, 60
The Heart Won (Poetry) - - -	8
The Lord’s Supper - - -	6
The Love of Christ - - -	99
The Morning Star - - -	51
The New Year - - -	1
The Rapture of the Saints (Poetry) - - -	112
The Red Sea and the Jordon - - -	9, 35, 52
The Roman Empire - - -	109
The Sun of Righteousness - - -	67, 83
Things which Can and which Cannot be Shaken - - -	188
Things to be Remembered - - -	67, 96
Trustworthiness of the New Testament - - -	147
“What is Man?” - - -	186
“What is Truth?” - - -	114
Work amongst Soldiers - - -	160

## The New Year.

**I**T seems as if the year 1914 was about to close, and the year 1915 to open, under the dark shadow of the war-cloud which has burst upon Europe. The train of miseries and evils which result from it will be felt for many a day, even after its close.

Perhaps we are slow to remember that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one"; it is a world going on to judgment. But, thank God, the Christian's best and most cherished hopes are outside this world altogether.

It is refreshing at a time like the present, to turn to the word of God, and to ponder over the words of the apostle, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 3, 4).

There is no question here, no uncertainty; and no matter what may happen in this world, yet so identified are we with Christ, who is our life above, that He cannot be manifested without all His saints being manifested with Him in glory.

Let us, then, seek to enter the new year with a deeper realisation of what Christ is to us as our life, and in us as the hope of glory, and a more earnest desire for His return. And may His parting words to His church, "Surely I come quickly," find a joyous and ready response in our souls, "Yes. Come Lord Jesus!"

But there is another side of the question which we must not forget, that is, our responsibility as well as our privilege to make known the gospel to poor sinners perishing around us. Let us be more in earnest in prayer, that God may revive His work in the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of perishing souls.

We have adopted the suggestion of an esteemed contributor, in devoting four pages of this magazine to gospel articles each month. These will, D.V., be printed separately for distribution; particulars will be found inside the front cover.

There is much need in the villages and country parts of our land, as well as in the towns, and there is certainly an open door, if we have the energy and faith to avail ourselves of it.

The emissaries of the enemy, too, are busy flooding the world with evil doctrines in print; should not the servants of God be still more active in seeking to make known the truth?

May we suggest to some of our readers who have the time and opportunity, to interest themselves in distributing the tracts and pamphlets. There are many people to whom one of the latter might be sent by post or given each quarter, and the cost would not be much.

## **Be Not . . . Shaken in Mind or Troubled.**

*2 Thess. ii. 2.*

**O**NE of the dangers of the present time in dealing with prophecy, arises from not seeing that the first event to be looked for is the removal of the Church of God to heaven. Christians make themselves unhappy by misapplying to the events happening now, prophecies which refer to this earth *after* the saints have been caught up to be with the Lord. When the Body of Christ has been completed, when that one new man which Christ is making in Himself from Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 15) is perfectly formed, there will be no further hindrance to the full manifestation of evil and of the lawless one; but until that time the Hinderer is here. "He who now hin-

dereth will hinder until He be taken out of the way" (2 Thess. ii. 7). The Hinderer is the Holy Ghost. He is still here to glorify Christ, dwelling in the church, and in the body of the individual believer.

Thus the highways and the water-ways of the world are still kept open to the preachers of the gospel, and righteous men have still liberty to express indignation against cruelty and oppression. "The powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). The civil power is the minister of God for good, and, though at times nation may fight against nation, God uses the governments of the world to prevent the full development of "the mystery of lawlessness." Though these governments are not perfect, though the results of their operations are not by any means what the government of Christ will be when the kingdoms of this world openly belong to Him, yet they are God's own provision for order in the world at the present time. We ought to be thankful to God for them, and constantly to pray for them (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). The sum total of righteous life, of godly living, has its effect. Men and women living Christian lives in the world, living in the fear of God, are by their gentleness, their prayers, their faith, their christian teaching, their general influence on society, a great restraining force against the powers of darkness. While the Holy Ghost and the Church remain in the world, and while God is acting through governments, and through the individual lives of good men, the forces for good in this world are stronger than the forces of evil. This need not mean that the numbers of the saved outnumber those that are not. It means that Christ is stronger than the Devil, and that He that is for us is stronger than all that can be against us.

It is well to remember, sometimes, the prayer of the

prophet Elisha for his servant (2 Kings vi. 17). Like some at the present time, that young man was full of anxious forebodings because of threatening dangers around him and his master. He timidly asks the question, "Alas, master, what shall we do?"

Elisha prayed and said, "Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see." What need was there for this young man to be shaken in his mind, or troubled? He was allowed to see that "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." In times of danger, instead of leaving His children to themselves, God draws specially near to them. But they need to have their eyes opened, their minds instructed, and their faith in exercise to perceive this. They need to estimate the divine power engaged on their side, instead of being scared by imaginary things which Satan uses to trouble them.

Now, it is well known that 2 Thessalonians ii. 2 is not correctly translated in the Authorised Version. Instead of the words "The day of Christ is at hand," the words, should be, "The day of the Lord is now present." Unless this is seen, it is impossible to understand the meaning of this Scripture. The Thessalonian saints had really been misled to suppose, more or less, that the day of the Lord had already come. The word had been spoken among them orally to that effect; also, someone had forged a letter, using the apostle's name, to create this impression, and, behind all, an evil spirit was working to terrorise these believers. They knew that the day of the Lord would be a terrible time when it came, and nothing could be more calculated to fill them with fears than to suppose the troublous and persecuting times through which they were passing were so many tokens that the day of the Lord had come. Besides these persecutions, at that



time the Roman world was continually in a state of unrest and war, and it was easy to imagine that the day of the Lord and His judgments were falling upon the world.

Against these groundless fears the apostle is led to oppose divine teaching, perfectly adapted to allay their fears, and to calm their hearts. For it is not the will of God that His saints should be troubled in their minds. He would have them live in the comfort of the Lord's coming, and of their soon being with Him, before the day of the Lord, and its attendant calamities, can break upon the world.

At the same time, the hope of the Lord's coming, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, rather than immunity from outward troubles, are the sources of the Christian's consolation. Alas for those who can find no comfort in Christ in the midst of all their sorrows !

These considerations are not without application to the present day. Nearly the whole world is in a state of sanguinary war beyond anything to be read of in the history of the past. Now that Turkey has entered the conflict, the land of Palestine is included in the area of the strife. But until the "Times of the Gentiles" be fulfilled, Jerusalem must still be trodden under foot of the Gentiles (Luke xxi. 24), and prophecy, properly speaking, cannot be applied to the present hour. On the one hand, prophecy has to do with the world, it has reference to Israel, and to Christ as Israel's Messiah. On the other hand, christian hope has to do with heaven, and has reference to Christ coming for us who believe, to take us, with our bodies changed, and if dead, to raise us up, to be for ever with Himself. But His coming for us is outside all prophetic events that have to happen in the world. Scripture

distinguishes between these two things. Let us remember the distinction.

We may very profitably study prophecy, but we are unwise if we make its atmosphere our home. May we keep by faith our own place as partakers of the heavenly calling, and live up to our privileges until the Lord shall come.

T. H.

## The Lord's Supper.

1 Cor. xi., 23-24.

WE learn here four things respecting the Lord's Supper. It is, in the first place, a memorial of the *person* of the Lord. He said twice to His disciples, when taking the bread and the cup: "Do this in remembrance of *Me*." If we take part at this feast with a heart which is not filled with Himself, we answer but poorly to His desire.

In the second place, this feast is a memorial of His *work*: "This cup," said He, "is the new covenant in My blood." We know that, in a future day, a new covenant will be made with the people of Israel, and not with us; for there was never an old covenant made with the Church. But the Christian enjoys now all the blessings that, in that future day, will be brought to Israel on the ground of this new covenant (see Heb. viii. 10; Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

In the third place, we find here, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye announce the Lord's death." The Supper is, then, a *proclamation*, in this world, of the Lord's death. There is, at this present moment, such a thing as the assembly of God, gathered together to announce this great fact and to make it known. It does not need to speak with an audible voice; the fact itself that Christians partake together

of the Supper announces to the world (whether they take notice of it or not) the infinite value of the cross of Christ.

We find, in the fourth place, in the Supper, that which we must never separate from it; namely, that it is "Till He come." We are waiting for His coming. The proclamation of His death will last during the whole period of His absence, and will cease when He comes. Then the world, left to itself, will be deprived for ever of what it has despised. But then also, those who have announced the Lord's death, be it ever so feebly, will celebrate it together in heavenly glory, with unhindered and infinite praises, around the slain Lamb.

As regards the Lord's Supper at Corinth, the state of things was indeed serious. Many partook of it unworthily. We must understand the seriousness of the act, and if we have part with a Christ who has died for our sins, we must not fail to "discern the Lord's body." Otherwise we "eat and drink judgment to ourselves." How serious this is!

This unworthy manner of partaking of the supper, which did not distinguish it from an ordinary meal, was destined to lead to judgment on the children of God at Corinth. It was a judgment which awaited them in this world, although they were not exposed to eternal judgment.

For this reason, that is, because they were partaking unworthily, there were found amongst them many who were weakly and sick, and a considerable number had already been cut off by death. This sin was, in the case of many, "a sin unto death," for which one cannot pray. It is, for us also, a solemn matter, to which we do well to take heed. We must, therefore, never forget to judge ourselves when we partake of the Lord's Supper, or, to be more exact, perhaps I should say,

before we come to it. If we do so, the Lord will not be compelled to judge us for our lack of godliness and seriousness when we come to this feast, so full of symbolic meaning and so touching to our souls, which He has privileged us to partake of.

*From the French.*

### THE HEART WON.

I heard a voice—a still, small voice,  
And yet all powerful too,  
That made my inmost soul rejoice,  
As, drawn by love, I fixed my choice  
Its counsels to pursue.

“Oh, weary one, to Me draw nigh,  
I’ve rest and peace to give ;  
Thou poor one, without money buy  
Love’s wine and milk in rich supply ;  
Only believe, and live !

“I am the Lamb for sinners slain,  
My blood shall purge thy sin ;  
My hands unloose each galling chain ;  
My life shall make thee live again,  
The life of God within.”

I turned, I saw that glorious sight,  
The Father’s only Son—  
The Son of man, all heaven’s delight,  
Fountain of grace, and life, and light ;  
And then my heart was won.

I want not riches ; rich I am,  
Lord, in possessing Thee ;  
All other glory looks like shame,  
Now I am callèd by Thy name ;  
Thy name’s enough for me !

J. G. D.

## The Red Sea and the Jordan.

**T**HERE are few of the historic types of Scripture, if indeed any, more constantly referred to than these two remarkable instances of God's intervention on behalf of His chosen people. They form the key-note of the great Hallel, or song of praise, sung by the Jews at their great feasts, and more particularly at the Passover, comprising the five Psalms, cxiv. to cxviii. We recognise the end of the latter Psalm in the hearts and cries of the multitude, as Jesus was riding for the first time into Jerusalem. They thought that He was about to take possession of the Kingdom there and then; their Hosannas implied it, for all their desires were fixed upon the attainment of the earthly glory and blessing, first promised to their father Abraham, and continually set forth by the Prophets (see Luke i. 67-75).

This is a day of much vaunted knowledge, but some of the simplest things in the word of God are, through traditional habits, and even hymns, scarcely known and little thought of. One of these is the meaning of the word "Hosanna." It is just the Hebrew word translated, "Save, I beseech thee," in Psalm cxviii. 25. On the memorable occasion referred to, the people went on to quote the first part of the following verse, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." But they little thought of verse 27, which no one at that time, not even the disciples, understood; "God is the LORD (Jehovah) who hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." The King of Israel was, indeed, then among them, the true "Light, come into the world, that whosoever believed on Him should not abide in darkness"; but no one could have any part in Him, or share His glory, unless He became the "corn of wheat," which had to go

through death in order to bring forth the "fruit" which alone could satisfy His heart's desires, and be the accomplishment of His Father's will. The cords that bound His soul to the altar, from which there was no escape, called forth that cry of anguish, "Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour: Father, glorify Thy name." Then came there a voice from Heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." And the blessed Lord's interpretation of that word was, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The divine comment is, "This He said, signifying *what* death He should die." No death, but that of the **cross**, which carried the curse with it, could satisfy the demands of divine righteousness, as the apostle shows in Galatians iii.; and Jesus had the cross before Him.

All these truths, foreshadowed in type, and fore-announced by the prophets of Israel, are gathered together by the Spirit of God in the marvellous chapter xii., which closes the Lord's public ministry, as given in John's gospel from whence our quotations have been taken. The Scripture had to be fulfilled in every particular, and Jesus was careful to make that prominent, all through His ministry of grace. Those who believed not the writings of Moses could not be expected to believe the Lord's words, as He said to the Jews (John v. 46-47). And if they did not, they must die in their sins (John viii. 24).

Now it is precisely to the death of Christ that these two types, the Red Sea and the Jordan, refer, though in very different ways. They are both brought together in one short verse of Psalm cxiv., as the expression of God's mighty power, even the same which watched over His people in their wilderness journey, turning "the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of

waters." All were proofs of His presence as the God of Jacob, and it is with Him we also have to do. He it was who caused the sea "to flee," and Jordan to be driven back.

In the former case, the power of the enemy which had kept the people in captivity was felt as never before, but only to be broken once for all. In the latter case there was no enemy to be encountered and crushed, but the conditions under which the people entered the promised land had to be plainly set forth, in view of the coming contest for the possession of their inheritance. The two manifestations of Jehovah's power were brought together by Joshua, when he set up in Gilgal the memorial stones, which were to remind future generations of their crossing, saying, "Israel came over this Jordan on dry land; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever" (Joshua iv. 20-24).

Both of these manifestations of God's power set forth in the clearest way, that salvation was only and wholly of Him. Israel, His people, had simply to walk on in the path already prepared for them. Nothing had ever been seen like it before; this was true in both cases, but the experience of the first gave no help as to the possibility or probability of the second. They are, so to speak, the two steps in God's salvation; the first showing the basis of relationship with Himself, and the other the principles and resources of the heavenly calling. Faith sees God's hand and owns it; and then strength is given to follow on in the path which He

has opened. The Christian rejoices to know that "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new"; all are of God (2 Cor. v. 17, 18).

When we consider the passage of the Red Sea, we notice that all the power that had for so long held them in captivity was pursuing them in order to destroy them. The Egyptians were quite certain of accomplishing their purpose, because the Red Sea prevented any possibility of escape. But it was precisely that Red Sea which was the means of salvation for the people when God had made the way through it. He was in the cloud just above them, light to His people and darkness to the Egyptians, "so that the one came not near the other all the night" (Exodus xiv. 20). One word from Moses, setting before them God's salvation, settled the whole matter beforehand, "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

The cloud made a definite separation, an impassable barrier, between the two hosts. On the side of the enemy—figure of Satan who is the prince of this world—was darkness, judgment, death; but on the side of God's redeemed people was light, salvation, and life. The enemy rushed on to his own destruction, and the power that had held Israel in captivity existed no more. No wonder they could sing, "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy; and in the greatness of Thine excellency, Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee: Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble."

What a remarkable figure is this of God's salvation! The believer, simply accepting it, is able to say, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." From that moment on, God was



definitely shown to be the God of Israel, and His people were free. He was thus able to send them by Moses the first message from Mount Sinai, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles' wings, and brought you *unto Myself*" (Ex. xiv. 4).

Now for us this salvation is realised in the cross of Christ, where, as we often sing, Christ fought the fight alone. It is there that the prince of this world was cast out, and by it all for whom He died are made free. Baptism is the sign of this, as we learn in Romans vi.; and the figure is again referred to in 1 Corinthians x. 2. We have come, as it were, out of the darkness into God's light, out of death into life, away from judgment to God's salvation—snatched from Satan's power, and brought to God. This is our first great lesson. For the believer, the judgment he deserves is already past, ever since Christ bore it.

The second, we may say, is at the Jordan, where we learn, in the figure of the ark, a great deal more of what Christ went through, when the overwhelming waters were kept back from the people, and all they had to do was to cross the river-bed run dry. The mountain of waters was retained, where the feet of the priests who were bearing the ark of God stood firm. Once the people were over, the waters of Jordan resumed their usual course, overflowing all its banks, as was the case in harvest time. And God chose the moment when the waters were highest, to show His power in staying the mighty torrent, when He brought His people through. We find that lesson in Colossians ii., where association spiritually with Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection, is followed by the circumcision, or setting apart to God, which Israel had to go through at Gilgal. May we learn also what it is to go forward

in the power of this truth, "taking the whole armour of God" for the practical conflict lying before us "in the heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 10-20).

W. J. L.

### Peter's Restoration.

THERE is much practical instruction in the touching account of Peter's restoration given us in John xxi. Three times he had denied his Lord with oaths and curses; but soon after one "look" from Jesus had touched Peter's heart, so that he went out and wept bitterly.

But the *root* which produced the failure had not yet been reached. That root was *self-confidence*. Peter had said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," and again, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." No doubt he honestly meant it; but how little he knew his own heart!

It is just so with ourselves. If we *think* we are strong, it is then we are sure to go down. True strength, for the Christian, is to be found in a consciousness of his own utter weakness, and complete dependence on the Lord. "When I am weak, then am I strong," may seem a paradox to the man of the world, but the Christian who is going on in communion with God, knows well what it means.

And mark the grace of the Saviour; He does not say one word of reproach to Peter. True, He reaches his conscience and probes it to the bottom; but this was in grace, so that Peter might be thoroughly restored. True self-judgment and true restoration always go together.

The change of words used in the questions and answers, which is not seen in the Authorised Version, but which has been pointed out by many scholars, is instructive to notice. It is as follows:—

### THE QUESTIONS.

1. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?
2. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?
3. Simon, son of Jonas, dearly lovest thou Me?

### THE ANSWERS.

1. Yea, Lord ; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee.
2. Yea, Lord ; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee.
3. Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I dearly love thee.

### THE COMMISSION.

1. Feed My lambs.
2. Tend [or shepherd] My sheep.
3. Feed My sheep.

The Lord addresses Peter three times. First He says, in effect, "Simon, do you really love me more than do these other disciples?" The second time Jesus does not bring in the comparison with the others. The third time he takes up Peter's own stronger word and says, "Dearly lovest thou Me?" In his reply Peter falls back on the Lord's divine knowledge, that he did indeed dearly love Him.

Now that the work of restoration was complete, the Lord could entrust to Peter that which was most precious to Him. "Feed my lambs," He says. These little ones of the flock who need special care are the first He commits to Peter. Then, "Tend [or rule] My sheep." And, lastly, "Feed My sheep." Peter himself, in his epistle, takes up the second word here used, "Tend the flock of God which is among you," he says to the elders.

It is remarkable that the Lord should use the word "feed" twice, and "tend" or "rule" only once. Does not church history show clearly that people were

always much more disposed to *rule* the flock than to *feed* them? It is pleasing to man's pride to lord it over the heritage, but how few like to devote the patient and self-sacrificing care required to guard and lead the sheep in the good pastures which they so much need. Yet what a privilege to be allowed in any measure to minister to those so dear to Christ!

For this blessed service Peter was fitted, now that He was restored and in the happy enjoyment of communion with the Lord. We too may know a little of it if we are walking in communion with Him. F. G. B.

*Fragment.*—While it is divinely true that nothing can come out before the judgment-seat of Christ to disturb, in any way, the standing or relationship of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ, or of any member of the family of God, yet is the thought of that judgment most solemn and weighty. Yes, truly, and none will more feel its weight and solemnity than those who can look forward to it with perfect calmness. And be it well remembered that there are two things indispensably needful in order to enjoy this calmness of spirit. First, we must have a title without a blot; and, secondly, our moral and practical state must be sound. No amount of evangelical clearness as to our title will avail unless we are walking in moral integrity before God. It will not do for a man to *say* that he is not afraid of the judgment-seat of Christ, because Christ died for Him, while, at the same time, he is walking in a loose, careless, self-indulgent way. . . . But the grace that has delivered us from judgment should exert a more powerful influence upon our ways than the fear of that judgment. C. H. M.

## The Blood of Abel and the Blood of Christ.

THE Apostle assures the Hebrew saints that they have arrived at, among other good things, "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than [the blood of] Abel" (Heb. xii. 24). By the blood of sprinkling he, no doubt, means the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins.

Thus, by means of the blood of Christ, Christians are invited to draw nigh to God, having their hearts *sprinkled* from an evil conscience. And the Christian strangers—Jews scattered among the Gentiles—are "elect. . . unto obedience and *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 2).

The apostle institutes a comparison between this blood of sprinkling, and the blood of Abel, and claims for the blood of sprinkling that it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel has reference to that which was shed by Cain, his brother, and this reference carries us back to the beginning of man's history, and sorrow through sin. If we examine this comparison between the blood of Abel, and the blood of Christ, we shall see the force of the instruction which the writer suggests.

Take, for instance, the question of sin. What has the blood of Abel to say in regard to it? The blood of Abel calls for punishment. Therefore, in calling Cain to account, God says to him, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground" (Gen. iv. 10). Here was Abel's blood crying for vengeance. Crying in such terrific force as to bring into action the judgment of Almighty God. Thus He pronounces these words, "Now thou art cursed from the earth. When thou tillest the ground it shall not

yield unto thee her strength ; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

Thus we find the blood of Abel speaking God's judgment on the sinner because of his sin. But the blood of sprinkling speaketh "better things." It tells us that we have redemption through Christ's blood ; not judgment, but forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

Again, take the question of conscience. How do we find the conscience exercised as a result of Abel's blood being shed? Once more we turn to the experience of Cain. Hear what he says, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He was consciously a vagabond, a wanderer, a fugitive in the earth. He could not escape the remorse which he felt with the consciousness of his crime. By day and by night he was a fugitive from God, from man, and from himself. All that he got from shedding the blood of his brother was a conscience of sin which made him deplorably unhappy.

But the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things. The blood of Christ secures for the Christian a perfect conscience. The worshipper, once purged by Christ's blood, should have no more conscience of sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanseth us from all sin." It is a question of the efficacy of Christ's atoning work. If we appreciate that work in its full divine force, the conscience, most certainly, no more condemns. The blood of Christ purges the conscience from all defilement, and enables the believer to feel at home in the presence of God.

Once more, take the question of communion. The effect of Cain's crime was such that he could not abide in God's presence. It is written, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." But it is precisely

the reverse of this which results from faith in the blood of sprinkling. Cain went out, but the word to us is, "Let us draw near." In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

Take the question of brotherly love. Abel's blood speaks to us of fratricide, of murder. It reveals the wickedness of his brother's heart. When called to account by God, Cain raises the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" All love and sense of responsibility for the well-being of Abel, his brother, was gone. He avows indifference to the whereabouts of Abel. But the Christian, through the blood of Christ, is awakened, renewed, cleansed and introduced to better things.

When his conscience has been purged he is free to care for his brother. This is one of the better things of which the blood of Christ speaks. Hence we read, "Hereby we perceive the love of God because He laid down His life for us, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*" (1 John iii. 16). It is always worth while to turn from John iii. 16 of the Gospel, to the John iii. 16, of the first epistle.

Responsibility for the whereabouts of our brother, and the deepest concern for his well-being, follows swiftly upon the assurance of our own individual salvation.

Let us think, too, of the desolation Cain's crime brought into the family life. What must have been the sorrow of the parents in that primeval family? They were not lost to all natural affection. Scripture is silent as to this, but it is possible to read, and picture unhappiness, between the lines of the record.

When Seth was born later on, Eve did not forget that this son was instead of Abel whom Cain slew. But if Cain's crime brought sorrow into the family, the

blood of sprinkling brings joy. Wayward sons and daughters hear the gospel, believe and live. The foolish son, who was once the heaviness of his mother, afterwards makes his father glad. And the family of God is made merry because the lost prodigal has returned.

The blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than [the blood of] Abel in the matter of human character. Cain's character was bad. We read that, "His works were evil." Everything in his life was repulsive. "He was of that wicked one." The shedding of the blood of righteous Abel brings this out.

But the results of Christ's death are seen in the better things. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb. xiii. 20, 21).

Rightly understanding the "better things" of the blood of sprinkling, is the realisation of character. On the ground of Christ's death there is a new creation, God working in the Christian, and the Christian practising, in his daily life, those things which are well-pleasing to God. May we thus follow on to know the Lord.

T. H.

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THE blood of Christ has been shed on earth, as that of Abel by Cain; but, instead of crying from the earth for vengeance, so that Cain became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth . . . it is grace that speaks; and the shed blood cries to obtain pardon and peace for those who shed it.

J. N. D.



## “Live Thou and Thy Children of the Rest.”

2 Kings iv. 7.

WHO has not read the deeply interesting story of the widow's pot of oil in the fourth chapter of second Kings, and the gracious intervention of God by His servant Elisha, to save the widow's sons from being taken as slaves in payment of her debts? Many a time, too, the miraculous multiplication of the pot of oil, and its sale to pay the widow's debts, has been used as an illustration of the grace of God in pardoning those who cast themselves on God's mercy, confessing they have nothing wherewith to pay their obligations to Him.

It recalls at once the words of the Lord Jesus in the house of the Pharisee (Luke vii. 40-43), when He sought to reach that poor proud heart by the simple story of the two debtors—the one owing five hundred pence and the other fifty—but when they had nothing to pay, the creditor frankly forgave them both.

We, who have, through grace, found the deepest blessing in taking our place amongst the bankrupt debtors, rejoice in free, full forgiveness of our sins. But there is more than this typified in the story of the widow's pot of oil, and, we think some of the many blessings peculiar to Christianity are beautifully illustrated in the words of the prophet, “Live thou and thy children of the rest.” It tells us that in the gospel of the grace of God there is not only made known the forgiveness of sins, and justification “from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses,” but that there is something provided to live upon, a gracious provision for the believer to meet his need all the journey through.

Let us take a simple illustration. When a prisoner has served the term of his sentence, and is discharged from prison, he is often more in need of help than at any moment of his life. It is true the law has no further claim upon him, he is free of its sentence, but it offers no help, nor makes any provision for his future, although he might have lost his situation, and estranged his friends by the crime that brought him under its power. So again with a debtor, a generous friend may pay all his debts, and leave him without a fear of any creditor's demands, but does he not need something to provide against getting into debt again? He wants, like the widow and her sons, some provision to live upon, and this is just the special feature of the fulness of the gospel, which we wish to point out.

It has been said, that "It is easier to *die* a martyr, than to *live* a Christian," and we can understand the point of view from which such a remark was made. Not many days ago, a poor widow said to the writer, "The hardest thing in this world is to live a Christian"; but she knew nothing of the more blessed side of the gospel, or the joy of a living, loving Saviour in heaven, at all times ready and willing to help His tried and troubled people.

It has become a hackneyed phrase to speak of our three great enemies, "The world, the flesh, and the devil;" but it is none the less true that we have these three enemies, and if we measure our own strength against them, we may well be dismayed. And we shall be worsted in the combat too. But let us look briefly at the provision for the way—What is it that answers to the words, "Live thou and thy children on the rest?"

Let us glance at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Romans, for example, and we find that we are started with "peace with God" as the result of being justified

on the principle of faith; and then in equally precise terms we are told that, by the same blessed Person (Christ), "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Who can adequately describe the value of such a privilege as this for our every-day needs? There is never a time or circumstance, difficulty or trial, that can alter or affect this wondrous access, or close that door against us. We do not, like Queen Esther, wait at a distant part of the audience chamber to see if the royal sceptre is extended toward us, ere we approach to make our requests known, or seek the needed strength for conflict. No: the One who gave Himself for us, Who died to bring us to God, is there in His presence, our High Priest and Advocate, and we are thus emboldened to approach, whatever our felt weakness may be. Neither is joy lacking, for the same finished work has secured for us a share in the glory of God, and we rejoice in the hope of it, while on the way to it.

But mark the words, "*Not only so,*" "*Much more then*"; how often they occur in this wonderful chapter. We have space only to call the briefest attention to them. Tribulations there are sure to be in our path, but we need not get under them, but rather glory in them. Then look also at the ninth verse, and ponder what is meant by being "saved from wrath through Him."

And again, the tenth, "for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Preserved, helped, sustained, and shielded, by the living Saviour, who on high as a watchful and unwearied Shepherd *lives* for us. Is this not something more than being cleared from all charges, and knowing that God has now nothing against us? It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that "saved by His

life," in this tenth verse, has no reference to the life of the Lord Jesus on the earth before the cross. In that sense, as we all know, our salvation is by His death, the atoning death of the cross; by His blood-shedding. But it is the life of Christ where He *now is* that this passage refers to; and what a precious thought it is for the tried and troubled Christian.

The eleventh verse touches a higher note still, and declares that "not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So that there is not only provision for the way, and encouragement in tribulation and trials, but joy of the highest and deepest character, joy in God Himself.

We were started on the journey with "*a clean slate*," as the world speaks; "Every charge my God refuses, Christ has answered with His blood." But not only so, we are amply provided for, whether the journey be longer or shorter; we are of those "which receive abundance of grace," and "shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." So in a very special and blessed way, the prophet's words apply, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." Let us not be discouraged, dear fellow-believer, whatever the strength of the forces arrayed against us may appear to be. Has not the Lord Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also," and as to the world, "Be of good cheer I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

There is much more even than this, for we are started with a new life, eternal life, and a new power, the Holy Spirit, and a new object and hope, Christ in glory. But the consideration of these would take up beyond our present thought of showing how the riches of God's grace in Christ has furnished the Christian "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or or think" (Eph. iii. 20).

T. R.

## First Love, Brotherly Love and the Truth.

### I. GOSPEL TESTIMONY.

**T**HOSE who have at heart the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, recognise with joy and thankfulness the great energy displayed during recent years in the propagation of the Gospel.

This movement, as regards its most characteristic features, only began some eighty-five years ago; and there are, at the present time, a very large number of evangelists who recognise the unfettered action of the Spirit of God outside all those clerical pretensions which had previously hampered this work.

Since those early days, when this liberty of the Spirit was only acknowledged, proclaimed, and practised by a few, it has spread far and wide, and in Protestant countries is no longer resisted or generally objected to. But to a great extent the clerical system, with some modifications, still dominates the Protestant missions in heathen lands.

It does not, however, require much time for a careful student of the Scriptures, engaged in the blessed work of the gospel, to realise that the Lord's work is not confined to saving souls in the limited sense of delivering them from fear of judgment to come. For those recently converted are as defenceless as new-born babes against the wiles of the enemy: the world will always do its utmost to assert its power over them after the Lord has shown them in their conversion that they are no longer of it. Moreover, many of the religious sects in which they may have been converted are, in fact, little better than a specious form of the world hidden under the respectable garb of a Christian profession. In such

religious systems, they are held back by a thousand ties of habits, family and social claims, and often, more strongly still, by the ministry found there, and the edification resulting therefrom.

Those who have really at heart the care of the Lord's sheep must be deeply sensible of the many dangers to which these souls, still young in the faith, are exposed, and the imperative need for their being sheltered in the bosom of the true family of God. It becomes, then, of all importance that they should understand the place which every Christian has, and is responsible to take in the assembly, which is the "Body of Christ" here below.

When these young souls, after the first joy of conversion, begin to be conscious of the dangers by which they are surrounded, we often hear them asking with much heart-exercise, "What shall I do? or to whom shall I turn? Should I not remain as I am advised to do, in the surroundings where I have been converted, whether Catholic or Protestant? And, if not, where shall I go?"

It is easy to reply as Abraham did to his servant, "Thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred; . . . beware thou that thou bring not my son again into the land whence I came" (Gen. xxiv.). That is to say in other words, do not go back to the world from which God has drawn you; seek your place in the family of God. But after this advice has been given, the difficulty is far from being solved. The work of God's spirit in these days has not been confined to lessening or removing clerical hindrances which prevented the spread of the gospel. God has also been pleased to awaken in the hearts of His children the desire to come together simply as believers and not on the ground of any vain profession or humanly devised order.

Any earnest soul enlightened on this point, feels that it cannot longer continue to be hampered and stunted in its growth by a lifeless profession, and, consequently, seeks for an assembly of the children of God who come together on the ground of the faith which is common to them all. Such assemblies are indeed now everywhere to be found, but they are, alas, in very many instances separated from one another. Then comes the anxious question as to which of them should be recognised? for it is evident that the simple fact of being a child of God is not sufficient for these associations, but that they each and all have added other principles which constitute them distinct bodies. So it is with the Baptists, Methodists, etc. The young believer longs for a sure guide to lead him through this labyrinth, and such is only to be found in the Word of God. By its light, we may with patience detect in these different associations certain things which answer, or which do not answer to the thoughts of God for us; and the believer, led by the Holy Spirit, need not be long in finding them out.

The possession of an infallible guide in the Scriptures, coupled with an earnest desire to obey the thoughts of God as revealed in His Word, would prevent a believer from joining these different denominations. Henceforth, it no longer suffices to seek to have communion with the children of God on the ground of a common faith, but he must try to find a communion based on the whole Word of God, which alone can set forth divine unity in its reality. In searching this Word, he learns that Christians are not brought together merely by a common faith and a common origin as born of God, but that, in virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, they are together constituted "one body" by the Holy Spirit. He unites them individually to Christ, the

heavenly Head of His Body upon earth. The believer realises the immense importance of this unity of the "Body of Christ"—because God has established it in the world for the glory of His Son: "There is one Body and one Spirit." It will be set forth eternally in "the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23).

Once we are truly subject to Scripture; we must admit that it is of all importance to give expression to the truth of this unity, according to the injunction given to us to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). It follows consequently that to take up bonds of union other than that which Christ has established is to obscure if not to deny a vital truth of Christianity.

Let us not forget that the decadence of the Church was foretold by the apostles; it had indeed already begun in their lifetime (see Acts xx. 29-31; 2 Tim. ii. 16-18, iii. 1-9; 1 John iv. 1-6; 2 Peter ii., iii. 3-7; Jude). But this fact in no wise prevented the Apostle Paul, even when a prisoner at Rome, from insisting upon the truth of the unity of the Body. If the large majority of Christians practically refuse to give effect to this unity, it is still the duty of even two or three to manifest it on behalf of all their brethren who are scattered throughout the religious systems of the world.

However great the ruin, and however hopeless the general condition may be, it is all the more important that this unity should be manifested, and set up like a banner on a high hill, which shall serve as a rallying point to all the children of God. The unity exists in spite of the ruin, and will continue to do so in the sight of God. Our responsibility is to give expression to it, so that it may be seen outwardly down here.

The Church, as a whole, the "Assembly of the living



God " has entirely failed in this duty. Is this a reason for saying it is impossible, or that only "two or three" should not return in humiliation and contrition to that which was established at the beginning? "Stand ye in the ways and see," says the prophet, in a time of declension, "and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. vi. 16). The table of the Lord where is found the one loaf of which all partake, is the place where the "unity of the Body of Christ" is set forth, regardless of the number of the children of God who are gathered together there (1 Cor. x. 17). The important question for them is: Are they in heart gathered to *the Lord*, around His blessed person. If they are, they will surely find the reality of His presence; for He is with "two or three" gathered to and in His name (Matt. xviii. 20). H. R. (*Vevey*).

## Christ Our Object and Our Hope.

*Thoughts suggested by an address by J. A.*

I WISH to draw your attention to three passages of scripture. The first you will find in Philippians i. 21, "To me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain." Is it not blessed to see Paul, a man of like passions with ourselves, so occupied with Christ, that he could say, "to me to live [is] Christ"? Christ so filled his whole soul, so controlled his moral being, and had so taken possession of him, that, for him, to live was Christ.

Is it so with us, beloved, in our measure, as we pass through this world with all its difficulties and trials and distractions?

The next passage is in Chapter iii. 14. "I press

toward the mark." I need hardly tell you that for this to be so, you must *see* the mark, I mean, of course, with the eye of faith. The mark is Christ—Christ in glory as the object for the heart.

Paul was like one running a race with the eye on the goal; pressing on through everything no matter what it might be. To press towards the mark, you *press on* through every hindrance; you are not occupied with things around, you are carried on superior to your surroundings.

Paul could say "This one thing I do." Oh to be so engrossed and occupied with Christ that we cannot be satisfied without Him! Is everything which would come in between our souls and Christ felt to be a hindrance? If Christ fills your soul, you will be a pilgrim on the way home, and a stranger who is not at home down here. I think I have mentioned before about one who once said that her home was heaven, but now she had learned that heaven was her home.

It is quite true that we have to fill the relationships and occupations of life—you may be a father or a mother or a business man—but whatever position in life you may occupy, are you pressing toward the mark? Are you really taken up with Christ where He is in glory, and thus carried above the things by which you are surrounded?

My third text is in 1 Thessalonians i. 10, "To wait for God's Son from heaven." It is still Christ, still the same Jesus, here as the coming One. To be waiting for the Son from heaven is quite another thing from merely believing in the Lord's coming, or holding the doctrine that He is coming. If I ask you to tea at my house tomorrow at five o'clock and I am there punctually at a quarter to five to receive you, I am waiting for you.

Every Lord's Day, as we remember His death, "till He come," we should be more occupied with Him and more expectantly waiting for the Son from heaven. And if so, you will have a heart to sympathise with others. Many of the Lord's people much need our sympathy just now; oh, may we have hearts to feel for them as we wait for His return!

### Perfect Love.

THE more perfect *love* is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object, and this will give it at times a very different bearing; because its way will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its *way*, therefore, at times may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew xvi., or when He reproved the two disciples in Luke xxiv., but this is only because the love is perfect, and therefore it is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise. More attractively at times, but far, far intrinsically less true, because imperfect love will not, in this way, unmixedly consider its object, but *itself*. It will be set upon *enjoying* its object rather more than on *serving* it, and this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit; while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blest and profited.

Where do we see this *perfect* love but in Jesus—in God? A mother has it not, but will at times *enjoy* her child. But Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was with them; and He ordered His way

with them to *their* profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age, when He need no longer care for them, as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will have no occasion then, in the exercise of perfect love, to consider only their profit, for their profit will have been brought to its accomplishment in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

J. G. B.

### My Welcome.

Not a suppliant at His gateway,  
 But a son within His home ;  
 To the love, the joy, the singing,  
 To the glory I am come.  
 Gathered round that wondrous temple,  
 Filled with awe His angels see  
 Glory lighting up the Holiest,  
 In that glory Him and me.

There He dwells, in me rejoicing,  
 Love resplendent in His face—  
 There I dwell, in Him rejoicing,  
 None but I can know His grace.  
 To His blessed inner chamber,  
 Ground no other foot can tread,  
 He has brought the lost and found one,  
 Him who liveth, and was dead.

This the ransomed sinner's story,  
 All the Father's heart made known—  
 All His grace to me the sinner,  
 Told by judgment on His Son—  
 Told by Him from depths of anguish,  
 All the Father's love for me,  
 By the curse, the cross, the darkness,  
 Measuring what that love must be.

T. P.

## Lessons for To-day.

**A**MIDST the many conflicts and trials of the present time, it is helpful to ponder over the bright examples given us in scripture of true, earnest, devotion to Christ in other days of stress and difficulty.

We live, doubtless, near the end of this dispensation, and if we look back on the end of the previous one—at the close of the Lord's life on earth—we shall find many encouraging examples. Of these we can only refer to one, that of Mary of Bethany (Matt. xxvi., Mark xiv., John xii.).

It was a time when the power of evil was rising to a head, and when everyone was put to the test. On the part of the religious leaders of the Jews, we find enmity and bitter hatred to Christ; on the part of the disciples, much weakness, though they truly loved Him; on the part of Mary, devotedness.

The dark shadows of the cross were already falling on the path of the Saviour, when this devoted woman came with her box of "very precious," "very costly" ointment. No hatred of man, no lack of heart even on the part of believers, sufficed to turn her aside from the path of service to the One she loved.

It may be asked, Who told Mary to come with the box of ointment, and how did she know it was the right thing to do? Ah, it was that spiritual instinct and intelligence, born of love and affection, which guided and prompted the act. It was, no doubt, the best service ever rendered to Christ on earth. It was just the right thing, done at just the right moment.

Mary was not occupied with the powers of evil, which seemed to dominate everything, nor with the lack of energy on the part of the disciples, but with Christ. Long before this, she had sat at Jesus' feet and

listened to His word (Luke x. 39). She truly valued His word; this was the secret, *Now*, when the time of trial came, she was ready, when others were lacking in a true apprehension of what was suitable for the moment.

We may be persuaded of this, that a real and deep appreciation in the soul of the Person of Christ, and a value for His word, are immense determining factors in the spiritual growth and testimony of the Christian. This is especially so in days of difficulty and testing, when we cannot lean on human props or resources.

Mary had a deep heart-affection for the Lord Himself. It could not have been said of her, "Thou hast left thy first love." Others might find fault—even true disciples, alas, under the bad influence of Judas (compare John xii. 4; Matt. xxvi. 8)—nevertheless, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." This spoke more loudly than all their complaints. Thus, without Mary's ever thinking about it, everyone was compelled to take notice of her appreciation of the Person who was so precious to her soul.

Another point we do well to remember is this—Mary availed herself of the right opportunity to render this service to the Lord. Had she missed it, she never would have had another. They had the poor always with them and they could do them good at any time, but Jesus would not be always there to be ministered to.

*Now* is the time for service. May it be service flowing from communion with the Lord; service done, not as a matter of form or routine, but out of love to the One who has so served us, and who will never cease to serve!

Moreover, the Lord showed His appreciation of the act. He erected a monument to Mary's memory, if we may so say, both lasting and universal. The monuments

to the great men of this world, the kings, emperors, etc., have nearly all disappeared under the hand of time, but this one will never perish. Nor is it confined to one locality, for "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Mary never thought of doing this service to get reward, or to win the approval of others. It was a single eye, a devoted heart, an intelligence begotten of love, which prompted her act. It must have been particularly grateful and sweet to the heart of Jesus, just when the dark hour of the cross was about to close in upon His holy soul. And it stood out in marked contrast to the thoughts and malice of men, blinded and urged on by Satan as they were at that very moment. Doubtless, even Mary herself could not have told, in so many words, what was coming upon Him whom she loved; but she had an inward apprehension of it spiritually, and the Lord knew well how to give the true interpretation to the real meaning of her act when He said, "She did it for My burial."

May we take to heart the lessons given us in the inspired record, so encouraging and so needed for to-day!

F. G. B.

## The Red Sea and the Jordan.—II.

THE two lessons, referred to on page 13, both of which are aspects of the death of Christ in their moral application to a sinner saved by grace, demand our sustained attention. There is a tendency in these days to limit the gospel to deliverance from the power of Satan and from the judgment to come. These are indeed all-important, but we must not leave

out what the apostle expresses as "going on to perfection," or the full growth of manhood; for this alone can produce the fruits of grace which are for God's glory (Heb. vi. 1-3).

In the previous chapter, he complains of the Hebrew Christians, who were supposed to be well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, saying, that at a time when, in the ordinary course of spiritual growth, they ought to have been teachers, it was needful, in their case, to go over the first elements of the oracles of God, and feed them like babes with milk and not with strong meat (ver. 12). They had no power of spiritual discernment, their consciences not being exercised as to practical righteousness, in order that they might duly distinguish between good and evil. The lack of habitual and patient reading of the Scriptures leaves the majority of young people, in the present day, spiritually incapable of profiting by the little they do read, or may hear expounded, so that growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord is feeble, and sometimes, as it were, deformed (2 Pet. iii., 17-18).

Let us not forget that the first Epistle of Peter, addressed especially to Christians of Jewish origin who had already for the Word's sake endured many trials and persecutions, has just this fundamental character of "milk" needed for "new born babes." It is thus of the greatest value for those recently converted. Besides being full of quotations from the Old Testament, especially from the Psalms and Isaiah, it is written in a language with which every reader of those scriptures is familiar. Consequently, it helps the inexperienced Christian to apply them correctly, and draw from them divine and practical instruction for his daily path. In this way, proper Christian growth up to



the state or condition of "manhood," is promoted and attained.

We must not, however, forget that a corresponding work, in conformity with the instruction given, is essential. If we do not put into practice what we learn in reading, we are no longer like the "tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit *in its season*" (Ps. i. 3). Of this, the blessed Lord was Himself the perfect example: He knew how to sit with the doctors in the Temple, "hearing them and asking them questions," and at the same time He was subject to Joseph and His mother at Nazareth. There was nothing misplaced or phenomenal in His outward life and walk. He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke ii. 43-52). We may indeed think it all wonderful, as we remember who He was; but He deigned to be a perfect example of humanity in every stage of life, so that each one, even the youngest, may learn to walk as He walked (1 John ii. 6). There was in Him no self-assertion, no seeking to dominate others. He "came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45). May we indeed, each and all, have this blessed Model ever before us.

But, to return to our types, Satan's power and God's judgment were marvellously illustrated at the **Red Sea**.<sup>1</sup> The judgment was so complete, that none of the Egyptian host survived to go back to Egypt and tell the tale of its destruction: horses, men, soldiers, and captains, all perished in the waters. They found they were fighting, not with Israel, but with Israel's God. How vividly it portrays the judgment which will overtake unbelievers before "the great white throne!"

<sup>1</sup> Moses reminds the people of it when addressing them in the Plains of Moab (Deut. xi. 3-4).

God is in no hurry to bring it on, for judgment is His "strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21), so He puts it off even till the *end* of the thousand years of Christ's reign over this earth (Rev. xx. 11-15). But when it does come, there will be no escaping from it, everyone will be "judged out of those things which are written in the books," and these are in God's safe keeping. What a mercy then it is to be assured of the fact that the enemy, who held us in his grasp, *has* already *been* judged in the cross of Christ! In view of it, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out!" (John xii. 31). Jesus never called Satan the "prince of this world," until He was about to suffer on the cross. Then we find it *three* times (see John xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11).

The cross shows, as nothing else does, how the whole world is under Satan's power, and of that, the enemy is fully conscious (Luke iv. 6). Jesus did not dispute it, for Adam had practically sold his supremacy to the enemy, when he elected to cast in his lot with Eve, in order to do his own will, notwithstanding the judgment of death which hung over him (1 Tim. ii. 14). But in order to deliver the fallen human race, in righteousness, Jesus must needs take upon Himself the penalty of death ; and that, as far as its outward execution went, was in Satan's power because of man's sin (Heb. ii. 14).

And let us note carefully in this connection that the cross of Christ manifested completely, not only the state of this world in enmity against God, but at the same time, God's infinite love towards sinners, in that in order to save them, He spared not His own Son (John vii. 7 ; xv. 18 ; Rom. viii. 32). In the cross, of which the brazen serpent made by Moses was a figure, we find four things brought together: man's

*sin, death*, its wages according to God's *judgment*, and *Satan* who has the power of death. These things are severally set forth in John's gospel (v. 21, 22; viii. 34-36; xii. 31). One verse in the epistle brings them altogether, as *past*, so that the believer may have full confidence in looking on to the day when God will bring every work into judgment (Eccles. xii. 14; Acts xvii. 31). For the believer, the judgment is *already past*: Christ has borne it, and now, "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). It does not say, "as He *was*," which of course is, in every sense, impossible; but "as He *is*," that is *past* death, which is the wages of sin and the precursor of judgment, and beyond the reach of Satan's power. All is already settled for us in the cross of our Saviour, who has already gone through the judgment in our stead. What an infinite blessing it is to know this, and to have at present full confidence in God as to the future.

It is interesting to notice also that the brazen serpent was at the *end* of the wilderness journey, of which the passage of the Red Sea was the beginning (Num. xxi. 9). The people had sinned against God; and they acknowledged it (ver. 7), saying, "We have sinned," asking Moses at the same time to intercede for them. God's gracious answer came in ordering Moses to make the serpent of brass, and any one bitten, who looked at the serpent, lived. Faith had its reward then, as now, but it is always needful to submit to God's word, and obey it.

After that incident, we read of no more murmurings in the Book of Numbers. There was refreshment, progress, victory, and the people began to take possession of the promised land, under God's guidance.

But there was a further lesson in the serpent of brass; it had to be "lifted up," that is, "set upon a

pole." Three times does the Lord make use of that expression, not only to signify His death, but that there was only one kind of death which met perfectly man's condition, and satisfied God's righteousness, and that was because the curse was attached to it. (See John iii. 14; viii. 28, and especially, xii. 32-33.) It implied the CROSS, as explained in Galatians iii. 10-13. All Paul's preaching was summed up in the word, "Jesus Christ, and Him **crucified**" (1 Cor. ii. 2). Jews might be scandalised, Gentiles might mock, but those who received the message, whether Jew or Gentile found it to be "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Those who refused it, did in effect call Jesus "accursed," whereas they that received it, like the dying thief who owned the justness of his condemnation, called Jesus "Lord" (1 Cor. i. 24; xii. 3).

God's account of the passage of the Red Sea and subsequent short journey to Mount Sinai, is summed up in His first message to the people by Moses, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exod. xix. 4). It is, as it were, the believer's start in life, deliverance from all the power of the enemy being complete. Thenceforward begins responsibility for a walk in holiness, and withal conflict of another kind, practically unknown until the Jordan is crossed. This we must reserve for another time.

W. J. L.

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The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

J. N. D.

## First Love, Brotherly Love and the Truth.

### II. THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

THE more the *presence* of the Lord is sought for and realised in practice, the more also may we expect to prove the blessedness of keeping the unity of the Spirit; and our responsibility in setting it forth becomes of even greater significance, because in these days it might seem to us almost beyond the hope of practical realisation. For it is no longer a question of mere personal enjoyment, but of a necessity laid upon us for the glory of our blessed Lord (compare 1 Cor. ix. 16-19).

As an example, we may refer to the history of the unity of the tribes of Israel; for without being identical with the unity of the Body of Christ (which is composed of individual members and not of assemblies), it may serve as an incentive for our recognising the principle. The unity of the twelve tribes in God's account had been borne witness to from the time they entered into Canaan, by the twelve stones placed in the midst of the river Jordan, and by the twelve stones taken from the river-bed, and set up at Gilgal. It had been already set forth in the tabernacle in the wilderness, by the twelve stones of the breast plate, and by the twelve loaves on the table of shewbread. Moreover, the sacrifices and the number of victims in the religious rites of Israel constantly recalled it. But when, with the exception of the hidden few, all Israel had apostatised and had given themselves over to the worship of Baal, the prophet Elijah was alone in maintaining the truth when he set up the altar of twelve stones, whether for the eye of God, or as a rallying symbol before the ten tribes.

Again, at the time when the ten tribes were carried into captivity by the king of Assyria, and when Hezekiah celebrated the passover, its purpose was to represent the whole of Israel, in token of its unity, and the king took care to invite the remnant of the ten tribes to Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxx. 1-14). In the same way, after the iniquity of Manasseh and Amon, Josiah celebrated the passover for the whole people, not only for Judah, but also for any that remained of the ten tribes, in spite of the fact that these latter no longer existed as a nation (2 Chron. xxxv. 18).

Later on, in the days of Zerubbabel, at the dedication of the House of God (rebuilt by the captives returned from Babylon, a feeble remnant of the tribes of Judah and of Benjamin), the sin-offering was offered "for all Israel"—twelve he-goats, according to the number of their tribes (Ezra vi. 17).

In a similar way at the present day, the unity of the body of Christ may be set forth around the person of Christ, the true Passover Lamb, in the place where God has set His name, that is in the assembly. It is a blessed privilege to be entered into by all those who, in separation from the world, have applied their hearts to an intelligent knowledge of the thoughts of God.

So far, we have sought to follow the believer in the development of his convictions as to a collective testimony, which is the portion and consequent responsibility of the children of God who desire to meet around the person of Christ alone, and who do not own any other bond of union than the unity of the Body of Christ. But having come thus far, a faithful soul finds a fresh obstacle in his path. He makes a discovery which is very disconcerting to the young, and which would tend to make them give up altogether any further search for the path marked out

by God with reference to the assembly. He finds that if divisions have taken place, and are still doing so, in all the sects of Christendom, Satan has also succeeded in introducing them among those whose main object was to set forth the unity of the Body of Christ. In this latter case these separations are all the graver, inasmuch as those who have known and recognised that precious truth and who ought to have continued witnessing to it, have nevertheless covered it with dishonour.

If, then, those who gather on the ground of unity are no exception to the general failure, must we necessarily give up as impracticable the truth which they have neglected or lost sight of? Must we suppose that we cannot give effect to that which God has ordered?—God has given us His word to direct us, and would it not be rebellion against Him not to obey it? Have we, then, any fresh light to direct us as to God's path for us, notwithstanding the failure which has led to these separations?

Voices, fresh from the irritation of recent conflict, keep calling to the puzzled believer, "Come and join us on the ground of the scriptural principle of the authority of the assembly." This principle is true, but it is not the whole truth, in spite of the insistence of those who have separated from their brethren. Other voices again, more insinuating still, and in much greater number, are heard whispering. "Come and join us, for we have given up the principles which have led our brethren into such humiliation; **we** gather, not on the abstract and impracticable principle of the authority of the assembly and still less on that of the 'Unity of the Body of Christ,' but on a much more reasonable and practical ground, namely, on that of the brotherly love which unites all true Christians. It is true that many have

forgotten or forsaken their first love, but you will find among us a love which unites us in spite of inevitable divergences in thought and practice. It is indeed needful that our assemblies should be independent, one of another, but then all are united in a common faith and practice of worship."

Now it is just at this stage of his painful research, and at the point where the decision which he has in view appears to be even more difficult to arrive at than on any previous occasion, that we beg every young believer to stop and examine in the light of the word of God, the character of the path in which he is invited to walk. We warn him by saying, "You ought not to gather with the children of God simply on the ground of a *few* principles, nor even on the plausible pretext of so-called 'brotherly love.' In the first case, you would only find a withering spirit resulting from some truth little known and badly interpreted, a spirit which excludes, neither spiritual pride, nor animosity against other brethren; while, on the other hand, it leads to the exclusion of those who may honestly have a different judgment; in a word, as to many details, you would meet with principles which are the denial of true love, whether in theory or in practice. In the second case, you would find a love which is barren, because it is separated from its source, a love out of touch with the truth, and in the sincerity of which, when you discover the real state of things, you will no longer have any confidence."

Let us then examine the alternative of which we have spoken, and try to discover if it is still possible to find a path which is of God, in the midst of the shameful disorder introduced by the thoughts and devices of men. We must not expect any new or fresh light in order to find this path, such as youth



and inexperience might in anguish search for; there is only one infallible guide which we must never lose sight of, namely, the "Word of God," accepted in simple faith, and applied to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. We need nothing else. Let us therefore not let it slip away from us for a single moment. Our journey may perhaps appear long, but sooner or later we shall be assured of finding the needed instruction.

H. R. (*Vevey.*)

### The Conscience.

**I**N offering a simple word on this subject, we can only do so to edification, as we recall the facts divinely recorded for us. These show how, when, and where *conscience* first originated, leading us back indeed to one of the earliest incidents in the history of the human race. We refer to Genesis, chap. iii. As is well expressed by another, in speaking of this, "God took care that man, falling into sin, should, in and with the sin, acquire the knowledge of good and evil. It was a profound and admirable ordering of divine wisdom, as it was impossible he could have that knowledge before."

Adam, till the Fall, was in a state of innocency, and had no evil to take knowledge of. The enemy, already fallen, knew this, and sought by deceit to get God's perfect creatures into the condition he himself was in. The woman accepted the bait and fell, and the man elected to throw in his lot with her (1 Tim. ii. 13-14). Bound up with this knowledge of good and evil is the sense of responsibility to God, which the natural man chafes under, and hates to think of. Indeed, through obstinately refusing this responsibility, he has so deteriorated, that morally he has become lower than the

“brute beast” (Jude 10). His enmity reveals itself in that he will not have the name of God mentioned, if he can help it, except perhaps when he gives way to passion and profane swearing.

This was very distinctly seen in Adam and Eve, when, the moment they heard God’s voice, which hitherto had been their delight, they went to hide themselves (Gen. iii. 8), and for the first time are said to be “afraid.”

Man is thus a sinner, standing before God as his Judge. And it is quite evident that unless he be hopelessly banished and condemned, his conscience must be convicted so that he may be brought to the same judgment about himself as his Judge. This claims our first attention.

**I. The Convicted Conscience.** This, as hinted at above, is what Adam exhibited when, in spite of himself, he had to appear before his Creator who up to that moment had treated him with confidence and intimacy. He owns his *state*, saying he was “afraid,” but he does *not* own his *sin*, until God pointedly put the question as to what he had *done*.

It is most striking to notice that, as at the start here, so also to the end, this state of *fear* marks all those who are lost. *Fear* is always the portion of every one who is ignorant of the *grace* of God. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, but the *fearful* and *unbelieving* have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. xxi. 7-8).

This *convicting* aspect of the work of the conscience will continue with man, whether Jew or Gentile, till he is removed into that new heaven and new earth, and there fixed on a soil founded on redemption, where no evil will exist. As to the *Jews*, a remarkable

instance of it is presented when they brought a sinful woman to Jesus in order to get Him to condemn her, and so deny the **grace** which marked His teaching (John viii., 1-12). They were each and all "convicted by their own conscience and went out," unable to stand the light of the Lord's presence "beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." They respected one another but they dared not remain before Him.

With the *Gentiles* also, this same convicting, yet most important office of conscience is seen throughout the ages (Rom. ii., 12-15). The reasoning which goes on within, proves that the heart is not at rest. The thoughts accuse or else endeavour to excuse. This is true of believer and unbeliever. It is a sign of divine mercy, especially in the case of the believer, when, as soon as he sins, his conscience protests, and blessed is the man who listens to the warning voice. Next we will notice what we may call—

**II. The Imperfect Conscience.**—Hebrews, chap. ix., speaks of service that could not make him that did it perfect as pertaining to the conscience (ver. 9.). This condition differs from the former, in that it characterises the pious worshipper under law, rather than the sinner, whether self-righteous or godless.

It is pointedly applied to Israelites (or as we say, the Jews) who alone were under the law; though alas, it is to be greatly feared that owing to erroneous teaching, thousands of Christians in this day are just in the same position, ignoring the fact that "the law made nothing perfect" and could not furnish that "better hope," by which we can happily "draw nigh to God" (Heb. vii. 19).

The sacrifices and offerings of the law were indeed "shadows of good things to come"—the good things which are only to be had in and through Christ Jesus,

"the body is of Christ" (Col. ii. 17). But these shadows had no virtue or power to clear the conscience or cleanse the sins of the worshippers (if we except the sins unconsciously committed, see Numbers xv. 22-29). This was specially the case in the service of the great day of atonement, for in it "there was a *remembrance again* made of sins every year." "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. x. 3-4). The only virtue attached to these ceremonial offerings was outward and temporal: they served for "the purifying of the flesh," but "they could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience." (Heb. ix. 9-13). Indeed, the more devout and faithful an Israelite might be with his offerings, the more deeply would he feel the sinfulness of his heart, and the lack of any solid rest through their constant repetition. The sacrifices could not but keep up the *imperfect* state of their conscience.

Is not this the utmost produced by the accredited teaching and much of the outward show of worship in the churches and chapels of the present day? Those things that were proper and comely under the law, have no divine place in this dispensation, presenting as Christianity does ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE which has put away sins ONCE FOR ALL. Therefore outward genuflexions and ceremonials; pious rights and exhortations to people to present to God duties and observances of the flesh, are a blind and a trap of the enemy of souls. They leave the conscience imperfect and unsatisfied.

Other most important conditions of the conscience mentioned in Scripture, are reserved for our next issue,  
D. V. W. M. R.

## “That Blessed Hope.”

**A**MIDST all the changing scenes around us and the great events which are taking place in the world to-day, what a stay it is to the Christian to know that there is a hand which restrains and controls it all. Whatever happens can but accomplish His purposes.

Of old God used “the Assyrian” as His “rod” to chasten His guilty people, Israel; but afterwards He broke the rod because of their pride and wickedness, and He will do so again in a future day (see Isa. x. 5-19; xiv. 24-27; xxx. 31, etc.). There is, no doubt, an analogy in the present war. God is using His rod to chasten the nations; the question is (and it is a very serious one), Have they yet acknowledged God’s chastening hand? But in the end the rod itself will be broken.

But the proper hopes of the church lie outside this world, and are inseparably linked up with the coming of the Lord. This being so, it is encouraging to find that many believers, in different parts of the world, have been reawakened of late as to the nearness of that event.

But let us remember that it is a most practical truth, not merely a theory; and if truly realised in the soul, it affects every detail of christian life and service. We cannot be involved in the things of the world—its pursuits, its schemes, its pleasures and amusements—and at the same time be really looking for the Lord’s return.

If the hope is to have vital power and freshness in the soul, if we are indeed “waiting for God’s Son from heaven,” as the Thessalonians were of old, the heart and affections must be set upon the *One* who is coming.

And surely He is worthy, and more than worthy, of all our best affections and desires.

What a prospect Christ's coming is, to animate the soul and carry us on through the adverse circumstances of the way! *Then* He will present His church to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And how infinitely precious His saints are to Him, as the gift of the Father! How Christ Himself will rejoice in that day to view His church as His bride; covered with all the beauty and perfection which He Himself has put upon her, the object too of His purest and deepest affections, and the perfect satisfaction of His heart's desires (Eph. v. 27; Rev. xix. 7-8)!

Many letters and articles might be quoted to show how widespread is the interest in this subject at the present time, but we can only briefly refer to two or three.

Extract from a letter from Switzerland:—

"What is most certain is, that the events of the end are approaching fast. I have been much interested, in comparing Matthew xxiv., Mark xiii., and Luke xxi., to find that the last takes in, for a great part, the *Christian* side, as contrasted with the Jewish side of things in the first two gospels (see Luke xxi. 12-24). Note also that even verses, 9 to 11, apply much more to present events than the corresponding passage in Matthew xxiv.

"This would lead us to believe that the coming of the Lord is at hand. Perhaps before this dreadful conflict ends we shall be for ever with Him. There is certainly a great work going on in the hearts of men. The Spirit is mightily at work, and, I would say, even more in the hearts of God's children."

From a letter from Belgium:—

"Soon the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven, and, when His assembling "shout" is heard, we shall be gathered together around Himself in the air. Thus all

the testings and trials of the wilderness will come to an end for all His redeemed. Whilst waiting for the final deliverance, may He graciously keep us close to His heart, so that we may enjoy His great love, keeping His word and walking in obedience to His commands."

From Philadelphia, U.S.A.:—

"I believe we have a right to be cheered by seeing the Lord's coming so near, and I believe it is our duty to seek in every possible way to aid in the awakening of God's people to the immediate return of the Lord. . . . There are companies of God's people who have continued since the going out of the "midnight cry" to rejoice in His coming as the hope of the church; but now it would seem our special duty, as well as privilege, to see that every blood-bought child of God is awakened to the fact that the descent of the Lord to take His church is at hand, and answering to His word, when He says, 'Surely I come quickly,' in the prayer, 'Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus'" (Rev. xxii. 20).  
F. G. B.

## The Morning Star.

*"And I will give unto him the morning star"* (Rev. ii. 28).

**I**S not this blessed? Not merely association with Christ in the day of His power, when the stronghold of men shall be broken to shivers like the vessels of a potter, but "gathering together unto Him" before that day. The hope abides in all its fulness, and as fresh as at the first. Christ only could so speak and act.

The sun, when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning star shines for those only who sleep not as do others—for those who watch as children of light and of the day. We shall be with Christ doubtless when the day of glory dawns upon the world; but the morning star is before the day, and Christ not only says, "I am . . . the bright and morning star,"

but "I will give . . . the morning star." He will come and receive His heavenly ones before they appear with Him in glory.

May we be true to Him in the refusal of present ease, and honour, and power! May we follow Him, taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily! He will not forget us in His day, and He will give us ere it comes the morning star.

W. K.

### The Red Sea and the Jordan.—III.

*(Continued from page 40).*

REFERRING again to page 13, let us now consider with more detail the passage of the Jordan, which we may call our second lesson in its spiritual application to the death of Christ. The first thing we have to notice is that when the Israelites crossed the **Red Sea**, in the path miraculously prepared for them, there was no one to lead them. The God of Israel was in the cloud behind them, giving them light, while He enshrouded the pursuing Egyptians in darkness. Even Moses must have been behind, as his duty was to stretch out his rod over the sea, when the last of the Israelites had got safely through. The way was opened: the only thing to be done was to walk in it, and there was no possibility of erring either to the right hand or to the left. It was a passage through the waters.

When they came to the **Jordan**, all that was changed. There was no passage between waters: the mighty river in flood was held back, and below a mountain of waters—ever rising higher—the river-bed was dry. But the people had to follow the leadership of the priests "who bore the ark of the covenant of Jehovah their God" (Joshua iii. 3). Yet there was to be no



approach to the ark. A distance of two thousand cubits (more than half a mile) had to be maintained between it and the foremost ranks of Israel's host. And the order given them was accompanied by the words, "That ye may know the way by which ye must go, for ye have *not passed* this way heretofore."

As we read the narrative, it seems clear that the fact of keeping, as we say, at a respectful distance was not the only reason for this restriction. The waters had to be divided or cut off; and that took place only at the moment when the soles of the feet of the priests that bore the ark were "dipped in the brim of the water." The priests had then to go down into the midst of the river, still bearing the ark, but standing on dry ground, at the base of the mountain of waters restrained by Jehovah, "the Lord of all the earth"; and the people passed over below them without any impediment at all. The priests remained where they were until everything was accomplished according to God's order; finally, they also came up out of the river-bed until the highest flood-mark was passed, and then "the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, flowing over all its banks as they did before" (iv. 18).

There was no enemy pursuing them, as at the Red Sea, nor was there any confronting them, seeking to hinder their progress: the wonderful passage which formed an epoch in their history was soon over, and all was done in the quietness of God's presence. A lasting memorial of it was, however, carefully arranged. In the first place, a chosen man of each tribe was to take up a stone from the place "where the priest's feet stood firm" in the deep bed of the river, and the twelve stones were set up in Gilgal in the place where the people lodged that night (iv. 3-8, 20). On the other hand, twelve stones were set up in the bed of the river,

"in the place where the feet of the priests which bore the ark of the covenant had stood." Added to this is the memorable word, "And they are there unto this day" (iv. 9).

How striking an intimation of death and resurrection is here, and that in its practical application to the believer's walk! If fear filled any mind when crossing the river-bed, as they looked to the right hand at the mountain of waters ready to overwhelm them unless kept back by God's mighty hand, it was surely the priests who were standing at the foot of the flood who had most reason to be afraid. But they carried the ark, and nothing could affect them which did not also in the same degree affect the holy ark they carried. And the ark was the throne of Israel's God in the midst of His people. *His* power and *His* glory were alone to be considered.

Could anything more strikingly set forth for the Christian's walk and life the fact that all real power consists, not in his own personal experience or feelings, but in having the thoughts and affections centred in the Person of Christ, who has Himself gone through death in order to deliver us from its bondage and its power (Heb. ii. 14, 15)? Jesus has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19).

It may be objected that this was also the case at the Red Sea; but if the facts are carefully considered, the difference is very marked. At the Red Sea the main point was *salvation* from the enemy ready to swallow them up; and at the same time God was pouring out His wrath on their oppressors. That was in no way the case at the Jordan. And so, for us, Satan can no longer hold a Christian under his power, but he can lay snares for him to trip him up, or shoot his fiery darts, which can only be warded off by the shield of faith.

Here, at the Jordan, there is a fresh lesson, in which no doubt or question as to complete salvation of the soul can be allowed to come in. The people were God's people, and had been so for forty years; but what was to prepare them for the practical conflict in Canaan when they would have to strive for the actual possession of the land? They had to learn God's intervention on their behalf in a wholly new way.

And so with us; we have to bear about in the body, not our own death as has been the custom with certain monks, but "the dying of Jesus," in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal body (2 Cor. iv. 10). In His great mercy to us, God makes this more practical and real by the trials He brings us through, as He did with the blessed apostle himself; but, in *principle*, this is not a question of "feeling," in the sense in which this word is often used, but of *faith*. When the affections are set upon the Lord's person, we can and we should be constantly learning in a deeper measure the exercises of *His* soul, in the way in which death affected *Him*. Consequently, the apostle could add, "Death *worketh* in us." The trials he went through practically, are detailed further on in chapter xi.

Suffering is a great reality, of course, but feeding on one's own sufferings can only produce selfishness; whereas feeding on Christ leads to a deeper apprehension of what He went through on our behalf, and then there is spiritual growth and progress.

It has been said that the second epistle to the Corinthians presents the picture of a life lived in the power of the truth set forth in the epistle to the Colossians; much may be gained by reading them together. *Romans* gives the basis of salvation according to God's righteousness, through Christ's death, and in that epistle *resurrection* is always *future*, the actual

resurrection of our bodies (chap. vi. 5, 8; viii. 11). *Colossians*, on the other hand, presents it in its moral power as seen in Christ; and in that sense we are said to be already "*risen* with Him through the *faith* of the operation of God, who *hath raised* Him from the dead" (chap. ii. 12). This is what we have called the second lesson; and its connection with Gilgal and the circumcision has already been noticed.

There is, however, a note of sadness in this history. Though *all* Israel were represented at the Jordan, all were not practically there. Two and a half tribes had elected to stay on the eastern side, and though they sent a contingent to help their brethren in the coming conflict, it was only a third of their full number, 40,000 instead of about 120,000 (compare Joshua iv. 13 with Numbers xxvi. 2, 7, 18, 34). Is not this also a figure of what we see around us, in many who, professing certainty as to their salvation, are only half-hearted in their walk. These tribes were the first to suffer from invasion, and afterwards to go into captivity. May we all be stirred up to greater devotedness!

W. J. L.

### A Desire.

O FILL me with Thy fulness, Lord,  
 Until my very heart o'erflow  
 In kindling thought and glowing word,  
 Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,  
 Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where;  
 Until Thy blessed face I see,  
 Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.

## First Love, Brotherly Love, and the Truth.

### III. BROTHERLY LOVE.

**L**ET us begin our inquiry by examining what is said about "brotherly love," which is so often proposed as the only satisfactory rallying-point for the children of God. In the first place, it is of all importance to remember that such love, however precious and needful it may be, is not the same thing as that which the Lord, in addressing the churches, calls "thy first love" (Rev. ii. 4). This latter, so precious to meet with in all its freshness in the recently formed church of Thessalonica, is not the mutual love of Christians which would, however, naturally flow from it, but their individual love for Christ. To put it more exactly, we should rather say that it is "Christ's love" known, tasted of, and realised in the heart of the believer. Indeed, this first love, like the magnet, is not to be measured by the comparatively small amount of magnetism imparted to the needle of the compass, but by the influence which the magnetic pole exercises over it. This love is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers (Rom. v. 5). Thence flows the earnest desire, through grace, to be gathered around the Person of Christ apart from the world (John xv. 12-13, 17-19; 1 John v. 1-3).

The conversion of the first Christians in Thessalonica was so characterised by the love of Christ, that all their activities flowed from it, just as a stream of water naturally flows from the source on which it depends. Their "work of faith," their "labour of love," and their "patience of hope" were derived from one common root alone, namely, "Our Lord Jesus Christ," like three branches growing out of the trunk of a tree. Their faith had for its source and object

“Christ;” their labour for their brethren, as well as for unsaved sinners, was accomplished for Christ’s sake, through the lively sense of His love towards them; and as to the future, their thoughts were directed on high, attracted thither by the Saviour Himself, whose imminent return they calmly and patiently awaited. This divine sequence of known redemption is beautifully expressed in Psalm cxxx. 3-6—“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning.”

Such, then, is the “first love.” Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians furnishes a second example of it. Even if, as we find later on, in Revelation ii. 1-7, they had forsaken it, the very fact of having done so proves that at one time it existed among them. Paul shows it to us in its pristine beauty and development among the Christians of Ephesus. This epistle is full of the blessed person of Christ, and of the place of privilege which is ours in Him before God. In that portion of it which exhorts to brotherly love, and even to the love that belongs to natural ties which God has established, we read: “Walk in love, *as Christ also has loved us,*” and again, “Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church.*” In Revelation ii., when the Ephesian church had forsaken “the first love,” many of its fruits still remained. As an instance of this, we may refer to the care shown towards other members of the Body of Christ, for which the Lord commends them. These things had not disappeared, but the love of Christ in their hearts had given place to mere christian activity. It was for this

reason that the judgment of the assembly was imminent.

We may notice here that, in the book of the Revelation, it is not so much a question of a local church, as of the church as a whole; that is, "the House of God" in general, to which all Christians belong, even though pictured by what was then true of certain local assemblies in Asia Minor. So far as concerns the responsible church in its entirety, this first love had been lost, and will never be found again. Sad to say, the church as a whole has now only to expect the Lord's judgment, and will eventually be spued out of His mouth. But the exhortations given remain for our instruction, that we may profit by them.

In effect, then, we find here what characterises the loss of the "first love" among Christians. It is, that in spite of much outward activity, the Lord has no longer the first place in their hearts; they have let other interests come in so prominently, that Christ has lost the consideration which is properly due to Him. Worldiness in all its forms, ecclesiastical ceremonies, and often, alas, spiritual pride, which arrogates to itself the gifts of the Spirit as though they were personal virtues, have usurped the place in the heart which belongs to Christ alone. And that is not all; for the enemy takes advantage of every kind of weakness, even the ordinary interests and concerns of daily life, however needful in themselves (we do not allude here to evil things), and by such means seeks to displace Christ in our hearts; then we may be sure that the decline of the "first love" has already set in.

The natural depravity of the human heart is by no means confined to a few solitary instances; the heart, as such, is described in the Scriptures as

"deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9); hence it becomes an easy thing with us to allow "brotherly love" to serve as a pretext for quieting the conscience as to the loss of the "first love," ever due to Christ Himself. It is not, alas, a very uncommon thing even to meet with Christians who remain apparently unmoved when the name of Christ is reviled, rather than break off associations with the blasphemers. And such culpable indifference is excused under the plea of maintaining what is called "brotherly love." The moment this takes place, it is evident that the "first love" has been already let go, and the "brotherly love" that many are inclined to separate from the love of Christ, has also lost its true meaning, as weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. H. R. (*Vevey*).

### The Conscience.

**H**AVING already noticed the "Convicted" and the "Imperfect" conditions of the conscience, we shall now show how God, who is full of mercy, does not leave us to the restless influences of these states, but would have us to enjoy what may be rightly termed—

**III. The Purged Conscience.**—In consequence of this we read—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works" (Heb. ix. 14). These dead works are the pious and faithful services we looked at in speaking of the imperfect state of the conscience as disclosed in Hebrews (chap. ix. 9-13).

Looking at this chapter squarely, we find that the spotless offering of Christ at Calvary, and the power of His blood, wrought a miracle that the altars of Israel



could never accomplish. On Him there was laid by God the whole weight of every sin, of every believer, in every age, before the cross and after it—in other words, from Adam to the eternal state—and all was met and borne and paid, with a value that will abide without interruption for all eternity to the glory of our Saviour God (see ver. 15 and Rom. iii. 25).

“Once” only was sufficient,  
 The thorny crown to wear;  
 “Once” only, and for ever,  
 The nail and spear to bear;  
 “One Victim”—great and willing,  
 Hushed all the claims of God;  
 One Jesus—dead and risen,  
 Has cleansed us by His blood.

The moment a man rests by faith on this one surpassing sacrifice of Christ, he sees his sins gone for ever, and he has a *purged conscience*; yea, it is absolutely enough to silence and purify both the *convicted* and the *imperfect* conscience. If the sacrifices of Israel were accepted in lieu of temporal punishment for outward impurities, how much more will the sacrifice of Christ clear us from eternal judgment, and the deeper impurities of heart which disturb the conscience and hinder us from drawing near to God “with a true heart.”

We must not forget, however, that under the law every direct offence against the ten commandments was punishable by death, and no sin offering could shelter the offender (Num. xv. 22-36; Heb. x. 28). Let us therefore thank God that in that selfsame Word of His which presses on *our* consciences the depth of our *own* corruption, and therefore *our* doom, He presents also the atonement of the Cross. This is

His all-availing provision for every sin which that word, acting upon the conscience, can bring to light. The just judgment due to our sins was executed and exhausted completely on the cross. The blood-shedding and death of Christ serve to blot out the sin from God's sight, and consequently, seeing that, "the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 2). This *purged conscience* is the portion of every believer, and nothing less than the enjoyment of this should be his conscious possession. He gets it the moment he rests his all solely and only on the blood of Christ.

Our consciences are thus set at rest as to every charge of sin and guilt *against* us. We have no more conscience of sins *upon* us. But it does not follow that we shall have no *consciousness of sin in us*. Indeed the very opposite is the case. The longer a Christian walks the heavenward path, and the more he learns of Christ, the more conscious he becomes of his weakness and of the depravity and sinfulness of his own heart, which in its tendencies ever remains bad. But he is not discouraged thereby, for he learns that God has made provision even for this, in prayer and the reading of His Word. These give him strength to overcome.

A *second* or repeated *application of the blood of Christ* is *nowhere taught in Scripture*, and it is not needed. Such a thing would be in fact and in principle a denial of the efficacy of the one offering which has perfected and purified the believer before God for ever. Where Scripture speaks of a *second application* it refers to the *water* of the Word applied repeatedly. It is connected with the advocacy of Christ on high, with a view to our restoration when failure and defilement have come in, and we are conscious of the activities of the sin in us, though not *upon* us (Num. xix. ; John xiii. 5 and 11 ; Eph. v. 25). We read also of—

**IV. The Good Conscience** (1 Tim 1, 5; Heb. xiii. 18; 1 Peter iii. 16-21).—Elsewhere this is expressed as a “conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” (Acts xxiv. 16); or again, “a pure conscience.” (1 Tim. iii. 9; 2 Tim.; 1-3). While a “purged conscience” springs from the *work* of Christ, a “good conscience” characterises the consistent *walk* of the believer. It is our privilege to enjoy this continually as the result of constant obedience to the will of God.

The apostle Paul, having already a “purged conscience,” laboured on to maintain a “good conscience.” He pressed on the saints the importance of doing the same, as one of the three essentials to warring a good warfare (1 Tim. i. 5, 18). There can be no joy in the heart, no growth in grace, no victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, no power with God in prayer, nor with men in preaching, if we have not a good conscience. Other virtues inseparable from it are set out in Ephesians vi. (ver. 14). Purity within and a righteous walk without (ver. 15), a peaceable disposition (ver. 15), having faith as a shield which foils Satan’s darts (v. 16), God’s full salvation known and characterising the believer, like a helmet *on* the soldier, and God’s Word *in* the heart as the sword of the Spirit (ver. 17). Finally the habit of prayer in the Spirit for all God’s saints, God’s servants, God’s testimony (ver. 18-20).

If failure should come in, the way of restoration is open. For “if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And again, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But alas, there is a conscience which knows no restoration, *i.e.*—

**V. The Seared Conscience** (1 Tim. iv. 2).—This

is the case of a man professing the name of Christ without possessing Him. Through his conscience not being subject to the word of God, he gives heed to doctrines of men who teach by the power of wicked spirits. Teachers and teachings of this order are, sad to say, only too common in so-called Christian circles, and are greatly on the increase. These have "departed from the faith," and have their conscience "seared as with a hot iron." They are, in fact, apostates, and their presence is a feature of the "latter times." There is no hope of anyone in this terrible condition being ever recovered (see Heb. x. 26-31). Of the same order is the "defiled" conscience of Titus i. 15.

May God grant to all His people richly and always to enjoy the "purged" and the "good" conscience, and so be guarded from the terrible snare of the "seared" conscience. Thus to be always living and walking to the praise of His glory, whilst watching and waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

W. M. R

### Four Things Worth Remembering.

1. The nearest way to a man's heart is round by heaven.
2. The best place for quarrellers to meet is in the dust.
3. The next best place to being with Christ in glory above, is to be with Him in meekness and lowliness below.
4. Cliques, coteries, and parties in the church, are like the dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary: they should be sedulously avoided.

## “His Appearing.”

**L**AST month we dwelt a little on the “blessed hope” of the “coming of the Lord.” We desire now to draw attention briefly to another aspect of the same subject, namely, “His appearing.”

When we think of the Lord’s **coming for** His people, what is sometimes called “the rapture” (1 Thess. iv. 13-17), we are occupied more with the *privileges* of the Christian. It is a question of what pure *grace* has done for us and given us in Christ. But when we think of our **appearing with** Him, this brings in the thought of our *responsibility*. It takes in, we believe, our being manifested before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10), where our walk and service for Him will all be seen in its true light, and where we shall receive our reward, or suffer loss, as the case may be.

The Apostle Paul, in the last chapter of his last epistle (2 Tim. iv.), speaks of the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to him in that day—the day of manifestation. And it would be given, not to him only, but to all those who love “His appearing.”

To truly “love” Christ’s appearing, there must be a good conscience; a consistency of life and walk and service, according to *the truth*.

This is the solemn side of the question of the Lord’s return. It is one which needs to be pressed upon the attention of the people of God in a day of widespread and easy-going profession like the present.

Is our life, our walk, our practical conduct as Christians, formed and fashioned in view of the day of manifestation? We may know much truth, which is all very good in its place, but is our every-day conduct in the world and in the church, in our homes, at our

work or our business, in keeping with the truth we profess? How far are we seeking to serve and please the One who has saved us, in view of the day when He shall appear.

Another apostle has told us that "Every man that hath this hope in Him [that is, the hope set upon Christ, who is to be manifested] purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). What a standard this is! It is not that we can be what He was, for Christ was perfect in all things, but the effect of having the hope set upon Him is, that we purify ourselves according to that standard. If I know I am to be perfectly like Christ when He shall be manifested, and when I shall see Him as He is, I should aim at being as like Him now as I can.

And it is a blessed fact and encouragement for the soul, that we are one day to be "manifested with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Yet even here the apostle brings in our responsibility also. He shows us that the Christian is one who is "dead with Christ," "risen with Christ"; his mind is to be set on things above, where Christ is, "on the right hand of God." We are to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to walk in holiness and separation from what is of the flesh and of the world.

Thus we have, on the one hand, the blessed and cheering hope that when Christ, who **is** our life, shall be manifested, every one of His saints shall be manifested with Him in glory. There is this blessed and intimate link with the risen Christ in glory, who is so soon to appear as our life, and we are to appear with Him also.

But let us not fail to keep before our souls the more solemn and searching aspect of the day of manifestation, connected with our responsibility. *Then* we shall

review our life and service in its true light and see everything as it really is. Then, too, all those who "love His appearing" shall receive their reward from the One who knows how to act in perfect righteousness as well as in grace—the Lord Himself, the righteous Judge, our Saviour.

F. G. B.

### Things to be Remembered.

1. The true key to the understanding of prophecy is to see that Christ is the centre of it all. If God is going to put down evil and set up His kingdom in this world (as He surely is), it is for **the glory of His Son**.

2. It is not by being acquainted with the thousand and one strange voices in the world that the sheep of Christ are preserved. If the sheep keeps close to the Good Shepherd, and is familiar with *His* voice, it is at once able to detect and shun the voice of a stranger.

3. "**Buy the truth, and sell it not.**" What we buy we acquire for our own use, because we want it and value it. It costs us something to possess. What we sell, we part with because we no longer require or value it. For **the** truth no price is too high to pay, and no price is high enough for which to exchange it.

### The Sun of Righteousness.

(Malachi iv. 2.)

**T**HE blessed Lord's prayer in John xvii. begins with the significant words, too often forgotten at the present day, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." If all our hearts were searched as to how constantly and how

deeply **His** *present glory* occupies our hearts, should we not in general, if weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, be "found wanting"? There was a time when those who feared the Lord "spake often one to another," and in profiting by every opportunity given for such holy intercourse, had their hearts pre-eminently filled with this blessed subject, the whole tenor of their lives being regulated by it, so that their testimony flowed naturally from the living source within, in the power of the Spirit. How far is that the case now? Do not the great majority of Christians content themselves with a few elementary truths, all most blessed and needed in their place, though, alas! often corrupted by the preachers? and do not their gatherings tend more and more to drop down to the ordinary delights of social intercourse?

This is a serious matter for us all, and may the Lord enable us to face the question, with true heart-searching in His presence! The tendency to decline is nothing new; all scripture history is full of it. Even the apostle himself, who had been teaching at Corinth for eighteen months, had to write in his second epistle, not so very long afterwards, "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God," or handle it deceitfully, "but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ" (Acts xviii. 11; 2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 1-2). That confirmed and emphasized his words in the first epistle, "I came not unto you with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith



should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. ii. 1-5). Would it not be well for us all to allow these words to search us thoroughly? But in days of "toleration," of outward ease and prosperity, we understand very little the meaning of having "the sentence of death in ourselves," and of "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus," in a world that cast Him out and crucified Him (2 Cor. i. 9; iv. 10-11). Oh, may the Lord Himself stir us all up, and lead us to profit in our souls by the present sorrows and suffering which we see and hear of all around us! It is only through the Lord's present, patient grace, that we have been so far spared. A time of yet greater trial may be nearer than we think; but for faith, the Lord Himself is sufficient for everything: He will not allow us to be tempted more than we are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Let us then consider for a moment the words we have referred to in John xvii. The Apostle Peter, in summing up the consistent testimony of the prophets of old, recalls almost the very words of the Lord Himself to the two disciples, on their way to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 26-27; 1 Peter i. 11). So Paul, in showing the application to the saints of this correlation between the suffering and the glory, writes, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 10-12). Without *His* suffering, we could have no part with Him at all; the blessed "corn of wheat" must needs "fall into the ground and die," in order to bear any fruit for eternity (John xii. 24). But having died and risen, the glory,

for Him, is a *necessary* consequence. And His present glory is the antepast of that reserved for all those "many sons," whom God has given to Him, and whom He will transform into His own likeness (Heb. ii. 10-13; 1 Cor. xv. 49; Phil. iii. 21).

Two consequences of Christ's present glory were soon made known: the *first*, on the day of Pentecost, immediately following His death and resurrection, as explained by Peter on that same day, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts ii. 32-33). That wonderful gift of the Spirit had been definitely announced by the Lord Himself before He suffered—once in public, in the temple, in mystical language (John vii. 38-39), and afterwards most definitely to His disciples, "after Judas had gone out," on the very night in which He was betrayed (John xiv. 16-17, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7-16). The Lord confirmed it again to the eleven, when He "led them out as far as to Bethany," just before He was taken up, and they gazed upon Him until the cloud received Him out of their sight (Luke xxiv. 49-51; Acts i. 8-9). The *second* consequence of Christ's glory was revealed to Paul.

Great indeed was the mercy that marked out the apostles to be the witnesses of His ascension; and how much they needed it, in order to meet the storm of unbelief and opposition which awaited them in Jerusalem! But God was with them, and Peter, after his first imprisonment, received strength and courage to proclaim the truth of the gift of the Holy Ghost, before the whole Jewish sanhedrim: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree; Him hath God exalted with His

right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of their sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts v. 30-32).

At that time, the leaders of the Jews—all Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body—were scarcely restrained, by the learned Gamaliel, from putting the apostles to death; but a short time afterwards, when Stephen was brought before their council, and made his apology before them all, they "stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord, cast him out of the city and stoned him." The Lord stood by His servant, however, and gave him a vision such as no apostle had ever had up to that time, so that he was able to say, while his very face was apparently reflecting the glory above, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." To him was given grace to be the ambassador to whom the Lord referred, as the "message sent after Him," with the definite refusal to recognise His authority and glory, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 12-14; Acts vii. 51-60). That sealed their fate, as nationally set aside.

Stephen had also the privilege of being called to a double presentation of the Lord's inmost feelings, as given by Luke, at the beginning, and at the close of His sufferings upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"; and then, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 34, 46). Stephen also interceded for his murderers, and committed his spirit to the Lord Jesus.

Now note what follows: Saul of Tarsus was there, in Jerusalem, "consenting unto His death." He had

before his eyes the dark picture of the hatred of his nation against Jesus of Nazareth, little knowing then that it was but the reflection of his own heart, mind, and will, to be soon dealt with in sovereign grace.

For him, as yet, all was dark within; the "Sun of Righteousness" had not yet risen for his eyes to gaze upon. It was to come about before long, in an unexpected way, when further advanced in his career of mad opposition to the very name of Jesus, and far away from the religious centre of that favoured people to whom had been committed the oracles of God (Rom. iii. 1-2). He himself, having been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, was well acquainted with these oracles, together with all the Jewish lore which obscured their true meaning, and practically made the word of God "of none effect" (Matt. xv. 6).

Such are the wonderful ways of God, who raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory (1 Sam. ii. 8). The Lord Himself had His eye on Saul, and was about to show Himself to him with a word, which practically involved the unity of His mystical body, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **Me**?" For him was reserved also the further unfolding of this "mystery," kept secret since the world began, and only at length made known to this chosen vessel, who had to learn practically how great things he must suffer for the Lord's sake (Acts ix. 15-16; Rom. xvi. 25-26; Eph. iii. 7-12). For that reason too, he could exhort the saints "not to faint at the tribulations" he suffered for their sakes. It was "their glory" inasmuch as these two things, as we have seen, always go together.

*(To be continued.)*

W. J. L.

## First Love, Brotherly Love and the Truth.

### IV. THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY.

THE instance of Ephesus, which we have mentioned, directs attention, however, to a local assembly.

In past history, it has often happened that the first love, even though lost by the Church as a whole (and as such it will never be found again), has shown itself, notwithstanding, in a touching manner, on a small scale, whenever the truth of the unity of the Body of Christ has been proclaimed by saints gathering together around Himself. It is needless to mention the Christians in France who assembled simply in this way, in the early days of the Reformation, or similarly the Moravians at their beginning; and then, others who followed and were more fully enlightened. The "first love" was revived locally among all these, as it had once existed for a short time in the days of the apostles. But whether we think of the Church as a whole, or of certain portions only, the usual tendency has been gradually to allow the world to make its way into the assembly, and then the "first love" disappears. It has always been thus in the history of the people of God, whether we consider the case of Israel or that of the Church.

We have just referred to Israel. Nothing is more touching than the description of their "first love" in Jeremiah ii. 1-3: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of His increase." The Shepherd of Israel, their Saviour, their true Bridegroom, was the acknowledged leader of the Jewish bride, all through that "great and terrible wilderness," where there was

no attraction for their hearts. Having Him alone to look to and to follow, they were blind to everything else, holy, separated unto Him from anything that could claim their attention. What mattered it to them that "the land was not sown"? Israel was drawn to her Lord with "cords of love" (Jer. xxxi. 3). But in course of time, after they had been for nearly four hundred and eighty years settled in the land of Canaan, what happened?—Ten tribes definitively withdrew from Judah, and set up their false gods in place of Jehovah. Their first love was gone, and God takes their lamp from its place. Then, after some years of God's forbearing grace, they disappear from the scene. Judah remained, already corrupt indeed, as a whole, but God, who delights in finding any little turning to Him, still saw some good among them (2 Chron. xii. 12); and to put heart into these feeble few, He caused revivals which, as we have already noticed, always take place at the same time as the realisation, in some degree, of the unity of the people of God. An awakening of this kind is, in principle, the "first love" found again; locally no doubt, but when that is the case, the unity of His people is recognised.

Presently, however, darkness settles down more and more over Israel. It reached, as we know, its culminating point at the Cross; but with the resurrection of Jesus, a fresh chapter in the history is opened, and the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven. By His action, the unity of the Body of Christ was made a reality for the first time upon earth, and was accompanied by the "first love." Israel, as the immediate object of God's care, was set aside, and the Church, that great parenthesis in the ways of God with the earth at large, takes its place, so that the history of responsibility begins over again.

But from the very outset, Satan has been at work to cause the assembly to lose sight of Christ as its one controlling object. Having succeeded with the whole, we nevertheless find, in spite of all his working, the "first love" coming up in what we may call the remnant Churches. It is so with Philadelphia clearly (Rev. iii. 7-13), but the same characteristics are found in the godly remnant called "the rest," in Thyatira. When the "first love" is lost everywhere else, it is found there.

Let us here notice three inseparable things which meet in Philadelphia: first of all, the Person of Christ, the Holy and the True; He has the key of David, emblem of the whole authority centered in Him, and He alone is before the eyes of the Church. She waits on Him. Here again is the "first love." Then we find that truth, Christ's character as revealed in His Word, is kept; lastly, "brotherly love" is, so to speak, expressed in the very name of Philadelphia. But alas, this state is succeeded by the sad one of Laodicea, the picture of which I need not draw.

What remains? God is able, no doubt, to produce fresh awakenings, and He has done so many a time. For we must notice that the last Churches in the book of the Revelation are not only successive as to their commencement, but that they each go on to the end, and consequently exist together. So also there may be repeated revivals. And even supposing these did not recur, the "first love" may exist individually, and may be found again and again. The Apostle Paul furnishes an example of it: during the whole of his career, he never lost it. He could say at the close, "The love of Christ constrains us"; and again, "For to me to live is Christ." At the end of his life upon earth, he said, "I have finished my course." Christ

was his sole object, and he had followed His footsteps, so as to be able to say, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." From this "first love" sprang his devotion to his brethren, and his unceasing care for them. Thus he could say, "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail" (1 Thess. ii. 9; and compare that, with chap. i. 3). Again, he says, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. ii. 7).

Oh, beloved brethren, if only, like the apostle, we realise individually this "first love," if Christ be our all, if in our affections we put nothing before Him, not even the dearest ties of nature or our happy fellowship with the children of God, we should very soon find ourselves once more together on the one true ground, if it were but a few assembled in the unity of the Body of Christ, to serve and glorify Him in real "brotherly love." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that my heart is set upon beside Thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 25). H. R. (*Vevey*).

### Christ our Advocate and Priest.

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."—(John xiii. 10).

**W**E must remember that in this passage it is a question of water, not of blood, however necessary the blood of the Saviour be. It is a question of purity, not of expiation.

Note, in the next place, that the Scripture uses two words here which must not be confounded; one means to wash the whole body—to bathe—the other to wash the hands, the feet, or anything small.

The water itself, employed here as a figure, signifies purification by the word, applied according to the power



of the Spirit. One is "born of water"—the whole body is washed: there is a purification of the thoughts and actions by means of an object that forms and governs the heart. It is the reception of Christ by the word. But although the disciples were thus washed, converted, purified in reality, by the Lord's words, yet they were going to walk in a defiled world, where they could indeed defile their feet. Now this defilement does not suit God's house, and the love of the Lord does what is needed that the remedy should be soon applied if they contracted defilement which shut them out. Ready to do everything that they might be blessed, the Lord washes their feet. This action was the service of a slave in those countries, and was the first and constant expression of hospitality, and of the attentive care it claimed (see Gen. xviii. 4; Luke vii. 44).

With this washing of the feet is connected the truth that conversion is not repeated. Once the word has been applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, this work is done, and it can never be undone any more than the sprinkling of blood can be repeated or renewed. But if I sin, I defile my feet: my **communion with God** is interrupted. Then the Saviour occupies Himself with me in His love.

It will be well to notice here the difference that there is between the Priest and the Advocate—Christ is both, of course. In practice the difference is important. Both offices have to do with intercession; but the Advocate is **for sins** that have been committed (1 John ii. 1), while the Priest is there that we may **not sin**, and that goodness may be in exercise in respect of our weakness; I speak of the Priesthood in heaven (Heb. iv. 15-16). On the great day of atonement, of which we read in Leviticus xvi., the priest

*represented* all the people, confessing their sins, with his hands laid on the head of the live goat. It was indeed the work of the priest, but not properly a priestly act. This work in its reality is accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, made once for all. By His one offering He has **perfected for ever** those that are sanctified, so that we have no more conscience of sins (Heb. x.). But, as belonging to the pilgrim band, Christ, as the great Priest, intercedes for us, in order that we may obtain mercy, and that we may find grace in time of need ; so that in our weakness we may be the objects of the care of God's goodness, and that we may not sin.

The Advocate intercedes, when we have sinned, to re-establish the interrupted communion, for it is a question of communion in 1 John i. Righteousness and propitiation remain always perfect, and form the basis of what is done for us when we have failed (1 John ii. 1, 2). The effect of this grace in Christ is that the Spirit applies the word—of which the water is the figure—humbles us in convincing us of sin, and brings us near to God. The story of the red heifer in Numbers xix. is a very instructive development of this renewing of communion.

The washing of the feet is, therefore, a service with which Christ is now occupied for us. When by our negligence—for there is never any necessity that we should do it—we have defiled our feet, and we have made ourselves unfit to enter spiritually into the presence of God, Christ purifies us by the word, so that communion may be re-established between our souls and God. *It is a question of our walk down here essentially.* When the priest among the Jews was consecrated his body was washed, then he washed his feet and hands at the time of the accomplishment of

each service. Here it is only the feet that had to be washed, as it concerns our walk only.

The Lord gives what He had just been doing as an example of humility; but the spiritual intelligence of what He had done would come when the Holy Ghost had been given. Still, we are called, in this sense also, to wash one another's feet; to apply the word in grace to the conscience of a brother who needs it, and in the humility of which Christ has given the example. But the teaching refers to what Christ is doing for us on high, remaining ever our Servant in grace.

It is indeed a wonderful truth that the Son of the Most High, in infinite grace, humbles Himself even to us, and is pleased in His love to make us fit to enjoy the presence and the glory of God. He took the place of a Servant to accomplish this work of love, and in His love never gives it up. Even in the glory He will still serve us, for love delights to serve (see Luke xii. 37). May the thought of this grace fill our hearts with praise.

J. N. D.

### **“Faint, yet Pursuing.”**

“FAINT, yet pursuing,” we go on our way,  
The Lord is our Leader, His word is our stay;  
Though suffering and sorrow and trial be near,  
The Lord is our refuge, and whom shall we fear?

He raiseth the fallen, He cheereth the faint,  
If the weak are oppressed, He hears their complaint.  
The way may be weary, and thorny the road,  
But how can we falter, whose help is in God?

And to His green pastures, how gently He leads!  
His flock in the desert, how kindly He feeds!  
His lambs in His bosom, He tenderly bears,  
And brings back the wanderers safe from the snares.

Though darkness surround us, our God is our light ;  
 Though foes rage around us, our God is our might ;  
 So "faint, yet pursuing," still onward we come,  
 The Lord is our Leader, and heaven is our home.

And there all His people eternally dwell,  
 With Him Who has led them so safely and well ;  
 The toilsome way over, the wilderness past,  
 And Canaan, the blessed, is theirs at the last.

J. N. D.

**"In whose heart are Thy ways"** (Ps. lxxxiv. 5.)  
 It is the way to Jehovah's house, where He dwells.  
 It may be through the valley of Baca (*i.e.* tears), for  
 we never can expect to escape conflict and trial, if we  
 really stand for God in this world. In heaven it  
 will be all joy and no conflict. But here below  
 God would teach us the experiences of the psalmist,  
 "blessed is the man whose strength is *in Thee*." It  
 is thus that the "vale of tears" becomes a "well-  
 spring," watered by the early rain which comes down  
 from heaven and which "covereth it with blessings."

\* \* \* \* \*

**Difficulties.**—If we could only look upon a difficult  
 crisis as an occasion of bringing out, on our behalf, the  
 sufficiency of *divine grace*, it would enable us to preserve  
 the balance of our souls, and to glorify God, even in the  
 deepest waters.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Our Safety.**—Remember that though Christ has  
 promised us a safe landing, He has not promised us  
 a calm passage.

## A Word for the Times.

**W**E sometimes hear the question asked by men of the world, Why does God allow this terrible war? and the infidel spirit of the age would even cast the blame for it upon God. But he who weighs things in the presence of God and in the light of His word, knows perfectly well that it is man's sin and man's ambitious designs which have been the real root-cause of the events now taking place in Europe. At the same time, God can and does use it to speak solemnly to the nations, yea to us all.

What should be the place and attitude of the Christian who desires to walk with God at such a time? We believe it is the place of humble dependence upon God, obedience to His word, and a true separation from the world.

We cannot be like Lot, breathing the polluted atmosphere of Sodom, mixed up in the civil or military or political associations of the age, without our spiritual judgment becoming blunted and our relish for heavenly things being diminished. Let us never forget that this present evil world is a world which has rejected Christ, which does so still, and which is going on to judgment.

We have a beautiful illustration of the true character of the man of God and the man of faith, in Abraham. Called out from the world, he was a pilgrim, a stranger and a worshipper. He was the man of the tent and the altar, and he had God as his portion. Then, when the judgment was just about to be poured out upon the guilty cities of the plain, Abraham was in the mind of God about it all. He was on the mountain top with God, enjoying communion with Him and interceding for others, whilst Lot was vexing his

righteous soul in that very world over which the dark clouds of judgment were hanging.

Truly the present is a time when there is a serious call for humiliation, prayer, and intercession. If we have eyes anointed to see things as they really are, we have only to look around us and take note of the state of the world, the state of the Church of God at large, and of the assemblies of God's people. Oh that we felt more deeply the urgent need for true and earnest confession and prayer, such as we find in Daniel ix., Nehemiah ix., and Ezra ix.!

Moreover, let us remember that God is ever ready to bless; we are not straightened in Him, but in ourselves. It is His joy to grant revival and blessing, if we are really in the true place where He can give it. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a *contrite and humble spirit*, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "To this man will I look, even to him that is *poor and of a contrite spirit*, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2).

But God desires reality, truth in the inward parts, and not merely an outward show of sorrow for our failures. When there is this, He is sure to respond in blessing, as He says, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your *heart* and not your *garments*, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil" (Joel ii. 12, 13). Again, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the

Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. iii. 10). Wondrous *grace* of a pardoning and loving God; may we ponder well His words!

F. G. B.

## The Sun of Righteousness.

*(Continued from page 72).*

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv. 2).

WE have referred briefly to the two consequences of Christ's present place in glory, after having accomplished that blessed work of redemption without which none could have any participation with Him at all. It is indeed only on the ground of accomplished atonement that His present glory can affect the children of men, sinners by nature, so that He might arise for them as the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings" (see p. 69). But having suffered, and gone up to glory at the Father's right hand, He at once accomplished His promise of sending the Holy Ghost, for which they had to wait before commencing their service (John xvi. 7; Acts i. 4, 5). Secondly, not very long after, in reaching that "chosen vessel," Saul of Tarsus, His first word from the glory, "above the brightness of the Sun," involved the unfolding of the "mystery," of which Saul was to be the appointed minister, through great and continual personal suffering (Acts ix. 15-16; xxvi. 13; Ephes. iii. 1-13).

This "mystery," so long hidden in reserve, is the secret of our present relationship with Christ, and of our witness for Him, during the whole time which must elapse between His going up to heaven from the mount of Olives, until He shall come again "in the cloud" to

take His redeemed to Himself, just previous to His rising as "the Sun of Righteousness" for His earthly Jewish people, now set aside, but still "beloved" notwithstanding all (Rom. xi. 7, 12-15, 25-29). In the meantime, *we* know Him as "the morning star" (2 Pet. i. 19; Rev. xxii. 16-17, 20-21). And this must ever be kept distinctly before our souls. For, as the figure implies, the "morning star," anticipating the rising of the sun, presents to us blessing, heavenly in its character, blessing of which those left on earth can know nothing in their own personal experience. The star does not light the earth, but it announces beforehand the rising of the sun which will do so, when as yet there is no glimmer of the dawn on the eastern horizon.

From this point of view there is perhaps no figure which more aptly describes the difference between the *earthly* hopes of the redeemed in Israel, of the *future*—the natural descendants of Abraham according to the flesh,—and the *heavenly* hopes of believers at the *present time*, whether gathered out from amongst the Jews, or from the Gentiles which were "afar off." To both classes, the gospel of peace is *now* preached indiscriminately, until, in the increasing darkness of the last days, the Lord shall come in secret, and in "mercy," as Jude intimates (ver. 21), in order to take away His suffering saints to be with Him and like Him for ever.

At that moment the earth will be universally given up to judgment for a short space of time, under the personal rule of the prince of darkness, cast out of heaven, as we read in Rev. xii. 7-13. His chief object of antipathy will then be the Jewish nation, as being the objects of God's promises, promptly about to be verified according to His word.



What a blessed and comforting assurance it is for the saints who are now waiting for the Lord, that they will be spared from passing through that time of "great tribulation," called also the "hour of temptation" (Jer. xxx. 7; Rev. iii. 10); and, in thinking of the Jewish nation still down-trodden, does not the Christian's heart go out to *them* in the certainty that those among them who fear God's name, and survive that awful persecution, will be cheered by the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness?"

Now it is a remarkable fact that, of the four gospels, Matthew is the only one which mentions the Church, while continually referring to the accomplishment of Old Testament prophecies. There are no less than five examples of this in the first two chapters. This gospel thus serves as a key to the New Testament, showing the intrinsic value of all that had been previously *written*, to which the Lord Himself delighted to refer (Luke xxiv. 44-48). In this sense, Matthew is the most complete of all the gospels, giving briefly the facts, leaving to others their development and various application.

But the great keystone and centre of everything is Christ, known as Emmanuel, "God with us" (Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8, 10). It is, however, most noticeable that though Christ as "Bridegroom" is three times indicated, there is no mention in Matthew of the "Bride." The church is spoken of as a spiritual building, *i.e.*, as God's habitation, or as the assembly, in the midst of which the Lord condescends to be (Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 20; see also 1 Cor. iii. 9; Eph. ii. 20-22). It may be advanced that the term bridegroom supposes a bride. But while that is true, the thoughts of the careful reader are fixed upon the person of Him by whom alone the Church can be known in that character. *We* say in general that there cannot

be a bridegroom without a bride, whereas the scripture reverses this order, and leads us to grasp the blessed foundation of all that is reserved for us, so that our thoughts get centred in the Bridegroom, without whom there can be no bride in the full Christian sense.

This is all the more interesting, since we do find in the Old Testament a clear indication of the application of the term to God's relations with His *earthly* people of Israel. The "Song of Songs" is a remarkable example of this, the "spouse" being presented as yet *unmarried* (chap. viii. 1; and compare Isa. lxii. 4-5, and Ps. xlv., the subject of which is "the King"). But all such passages have nothing to do with the church, whose character and relationships are heavenly, *in contrast* to what is of earth. It is when the Lord comes for His saints, at His return in glory, that He will "present the Church to Himself" (Eph. v. 27); and the account of the marriage in heaven is given in Revelations xix. 7-9. Even then, however, the thought of the building already referred to is not forgotten, for it is so unfolded to John in Revelations xxi. 9-27.

Matthew's object is to present blessing in relation with the Lord's own person, showing what His presence with His disciples on earth involved for them, and also the kind of way in which they were called to look for His return. See chap. ix. 15; xxii. 2, where He is introduced as the King's Son; and lastly, xxv. 1, 10, which, for a Jew, was entirely contrary to their expectation and attitude. The faithful among the remnant of Israel waited for redemption *in Jerusalem* (Luke ii. 38), whereas the Christian is called away from this earth, and the satisfaction of earthly hopes, in order to be intimately associated with Him, whose love is the source and measure of all our blessing, and consequent responsibility. Therefore, instead of waiting for the

Bridegroom to come to them, the "ten virgins" are represented as "*going forth*" to meet Him—a very different thought.

This "going forth" entirely agrees with the fact of knowing the Lord as "the bright and morning Star," rather than as the Sun which sheds its glory on the earth and enlightens it, as we are reminded in Psalm xix. 4-6. The whole scene there depicted is *earthly*, and the effect recorded is that of God's testimony upon earth, even when the source of it is in the heavens. But there is no such added thought, as we find in 1 John iii. 2, that "when we see Him we shall be like Him." This latter is the proper Christian hope.

The Christian period of witness, in view of this bodily transformation, began when the Lord left His disciples in Acts i. 9, and the "cloud received Him out of their sight"; it goes on until His promised return in the cloud again, when we shall be "forever with the Lord" (John xiv. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 14-18). May this hope be ever more vivid in our souls, and characterise our walk in every detail!

To return to Matthew again, it is precious to notice that in the account of the transfiguration, his is the only gospel in which we find the words applied to the Lord Himself, "His face did shine **as the sun**" (xvii. 2). And it is again only there that we find that remarkable verse in the parables of the kingdom of heaven, "Then shall the righteous shine forth **as the sun** in the kingdom of **their** Father" (xiii. 43). This touching allusion, without further comment, gives wonderful point to the passage above quoted from John's epistle, "when we see Him we shall be like Him."

And is it not remarkable, and quite in keeping with Matthew, to find that thought expressed in the

very first passage which speaks of the sun rising, "Let them that love Him be as the **sun** when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges v. 31)? This is at the close of Deborah's song, the first of its kind in the Old Testament. Deborah, like Malachi, speaks of the sun "*rising*," whereas the Lord's word in Matthew establishes the fact of the "righteous" continually shining. The passage in Judges appeals pointedly to the conscience, giving the characteristic feature of those who are through grace accounted righteous, namely, that they "love the Lord" (compare Prov. viii. 17, 21, 34-35, with Ps. lxxxiv. 11).

Such was David's relief, as seen in his "last words," when mourning over the failure of his household, that the true and definite ruler over his people would be "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). Such, indeed, will be the morning when the saints are caught up to meet the Lord, in the anticipation of coming again "with Him" to share the glory of his millennial kingdom (1 Thess. iv. 14; and compare Rom. viii, 17-18, and 2 Cor. iv. 17).

Twice in Revelation do we find the Lord's face shining "as the sun" (i. 16, and x. 1); and in the millennial kingdom He replaces it as being still brighter (xxi. 23; xxii. 5). That confirms Isaiah xxiv. 23, and xxx. 26. May we not repeat the Lord's words at the close of Matthew xiii. 43: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!" For those who do not listen, the sun will go down at midday, as when the Lord was crucified (Amos viii. 9; Matt. xxvii. 45).

W. J. L.

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## Christ's Death no Afterthought with God.

"Christ . . . who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world " (1 Peter i. 20).

THE Lord Jesus Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, was *verily* foreordained to redeem us by His precious blood before the foundation of the world. The word "verily" gives force to that foreordination.

The *facts* of Christ's incarnation and death, in their own appointed times, appear as a basis of the divine dealings of the creation and government of the world. Without these facts before the mind and heart of God, this world would have taken a different course and had a very different history. Those who believe the Old Testament history know that from the beginning God had Christ, and Christ too as the bearer of sin, constantly before Him.

We are not here dealing with the question of how much men knew of Christ or His atoning work before His manifestation ; but we are rather directing attention to what *God* knew, and to how God was free to act in view of the ultimate death of His Son.

It is not going too far in the least to attribute every blessing we receive, both temporal and spiritual, to God's mercy through Christ. For *His death* is the available righteous ground on which God's mercies are bestowed on sinful man.

Now if we reflect upon it we shall see that this is not only true for ourselves, but that it was no less true for men who lived in the earliest days of the world's history. Sin was in the world from the time of Adam ; death, spiritual and physical, reigned from Adam to Moses ; and not only to Moses, but also to Christ. It reigned also since then, save in the case of those who have been saved through Christ's death.

It was needful to punish sin, if the throne of God was to be vindicated. The sin of those who are saved is adequately dealt with in the death of Christ. But in view of that future death, God was free in a sovereign way to bless men from the first, according to His own good pleasure; as indeed we find in Romans iii. 25. When Christ died, His death had a retrospective as well as a prospective application. It was not only a "propitiation through faith in His blood," but a manifestation of God's righteousness "in respect of His passing by the sins that had taken place before, through His forbearance"; *i.e.*, God's righteousness in passing over sins committed by men beloved of God, before Christ came, was now shown forth.

God's forbearance was indeed actively in evidence from the first, but it was not exercised even then apart from His righteousness, though His righteousness might not be actually *manifested* until Christ had, in due time, paid the penalty for sin. But Christ as the only One who could atone for sin, was always before God, and it was His good pleasure in manifold ways to present Christ to man as the Redeemer.

For instance, when our first parents sinned, and tried in vain to cover their nakedness, "Jehovah God made them coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. iii. 21). The fact that the name "Jehovah" is here associated with that of God, suggests a relationship established in mercy between Him and His fallen creatures.

Again, Noah's first recorded act after leaving the ark was to offer burnt-offerings to Jehovah. We then read that "Jehovah smelled a sweet savour." Who that knows God to be a Spirit, dwelling in infinite majesty and glory, can entertain for a moment the thought that these animal sacrifices were, in themselves, a sweet savour to Him? But when we remember that

Jehovah ever had Christ before Him as a sweet savour, we can understand that, in view of His sure coming, He could righteously say, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake" (Gen. viii. 21).

Later in the history, when God brought Israel out of Egypt with strength of arm, He gave in the first place an unmistakable evidence of His own thoughts as to the value of the atoning blood—a fresh testimony to Christ. That was the secret of the power in righteousness of that mighty Arm, stretched forth for Israel's temporal deliverance, however little they might understand it. Jehovah saw the blood. It was sprinkled for Him to see, even in the night. He said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exod. xii. 13).

We may thus trace, especially in the beginning of certain epochs, how God demonstrates now and again, in various ways, the reality of that atoning blood which was to be shed "in due time." It was indeed an infinite reality to Him before the foundation of the world. After our Lord's resurrection, we find the hearts of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, burning within them, as He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. He asked them:—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" His death was in harmony with the prophetic word, with the purpose of God, and was in accordance with the divine decrees. For, observe that Christ died at a prepared time. God, who made the times and seasons, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was "in the fulness of time" that God sent forth His Son. The Preacher instructs us that there is a "time to every purpose under heaven" (Eccles. iii. 1). "In due time,"

neither too early nor too late, "Christ died for the ungodly."

Christ's death coincided not only in an antitypical way with the feast of the Passover, but also with the period of the year when that feast was annually celebrated. As also the real Pentecost coincided in point of time with the typical Pentecost of Old Testament times. Thus the very seasons of the year were ordained to correspond with the crucifixion of Christ, His resurrection, and the giving of the Holy Spirit. All this shows Christ's death in the light and reality of His purpose who foreordained it; and it shows, too, how fully it was present to the mind of Him who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11).

The divine decrees are unalterable. Though Christ was taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain, yet was He none the less delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, who determined beforehand that this very thing should be done (Acts iv. 28). Was it not this certainty of purpose that gave deliberation and constancy to the divine operation in love to man before Christ died?

T. H.

## Speaking with Tongues.

**I**T is not the object of this short article to dwell upon the extravagant and excitable proceedings of meetings for the display of tongues, but to look into the matter briefly from a scriptural point of view.

What was the object of tongues? "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Cor. xiv. 22). God gave these signs, or miraculous gifts, at the beginning, to act upon unbelievers, and to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. But in



the assembly, where the Christians came together, the great point was *edification*. Then, again, everything was to be done "decently and in order."

The Corinthians were acting like children, displaying themselves and their gifts in the assembly, which was most disorderly. But there was more excuse for them than there is for those who go in for these kind of displays at present-day tongue meetings. Most of them had just come out of heathenism, and in the heathen assemblies people spoke all kinds of gibberish under the power of false spirits or demons.

Even suppose one had the gift of tongues, what would be the use of speaking a foreign language, unless there were some there who understood it or someone to interpret? To speak gibberish would be still more inexcusable. No one would be edified and only man would be exalted, or rather would think himself so. Paul himself had the gift of speaking foreign languages more than any, yet he would rather speak five words with his understanding, so that others might be edified, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

In the list of gifts given us in 1 Cor. xii. 8-10, and 28, that of tongues is placed *last*; and it is not mentioned at all in the list in Rom. xii. 6-8, and Eph. iv. 11-12. Tongues were graciously given of God at the beginning of a new dispensation, when the Holy Spirit came, at Pentecost (Acts ii.), thus setting aside the confusion brought in at Babel (Gen. xi. 7-9), and enabling the various nations present to hear the Word of God in their own languages. The same was the case when the Gentiles were brought in (Acts x. 46), and when the twelve men who had believed in John's baptism were fully instructed as to Christ by the apostle Paul (Acts xix. 6).

There is, however, one consideration which must

weigh with everyone who is subject to the Word of God, and who is aware of the present state of the Church of God, as compared with what it was at the beginning. It is this—the Church is not now as it was at the first. Those days of early life and freshness have long since passed away. Worldliness and corruption have grown apace. Indeed, all the later epistles foretold that this would be so.

Church history is the sad record of growing corruption, until it reached its climax just before the Reformation. To-day, the Church of God is divided into numerous rival sects and parties, and true Christians are to be found scattered in nearly every denomination of Christendom.

Alas, many are not at all alive to the real state of things. The truth is, they do not know or consider what the Church of God was in its primitive order and unity, as set up by God at the beginning; hence they are little concerned about its present broken and scattered condition.

Does God accredit this broken state of the Church by giving an outward mark of his approval such as tongues, gifts of healing, or what we might call “sign gifts”? To do so would be to put His stamp upon the confusion and corruption which mark the present broken state. It is true He graciously works in blessing in the gospel and amongst believers, far and wide, by His Spirit; but this is quite another thing. He who is wise to-day will bow to the chastening hand of God, owning His righteousness in it, and will not pretend to displays of power which would be out of keeping with the ruin of the dispensation, at the close of which we live.

We may learn a most precious lesson as to this from the godly remnant of Israel in other days. After they

had been carried away captive to Babylon under the judgment of God, a feeble remnant were brought back, as we find in Ezra and Nehemiah. But no miraculous signs accompanied their return, as was the case when they were brought up out of Egypt and planted in the promised land. God moved the heart of the Persian king to favour them, and He acted for them just as truly, but He did not accredit the broken state of the nation by outward miracles and signs.

They also recognised this. They set up the altar of Jehovah in the unwall'd city in faith, counting upon Him for protection and blessing. They had no shekinah of glory, no priest with Urim and Thummim, no fire from heaven descended upon the altar as in the palmy days of Solomon. They did not pretend to what they had not competence for, and God was with them in blessing.

This principle ever remains true. If we pretend that the Church is now as it was in apostolic times, we only deceive ourselves and get out of the place where God can bless us. We cannot rightly look for outward displays of power like tongues and miracles; if we do so, we only throw ourselves into the hands of Satan, who is ever ready to dishonour Christ, imitating the power of the Spirit of God by the activity of false spirits.

We do not, however, hope to persuade those who, in self-will, like to display themselves at meetings where the excitability of the flesh, or the power of evil spirits takes the place of the power and action of the Spirit of God. Such persons are seldom disposed to listen to the truth, being ensnared and "beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 3). But the humble Christian, who seeks only the glory of Christ and the edification and blessing of the saints of

God, will find an unfailing and sufficient resource in God and His Word. And if the Spirit of God is ungrieved and unhindered in our assemblies, He will minister to the hearts of the children of God, just as truly now as in the brightest days of the Church's history, though not in outward displays of miraculous power.

F. G. B.

### Points Useful to Remember.

**Taking Poison.**—For a sinner to seek healing of soul from works, instead of the blood of Christ, is like taking poison to cure a disease.

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**The Secret of Power.**—I used to hold Christ with one hand, and work with the other. Now I let Christ hold me, and so I have both hands to work with.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Conversion not Reformation.**—Mere reformation differs as much from conversion, as white-washing an old rotten house differs from taking it down, and building a new one in its place.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Three Certainties.**—If Christ is the object of my trust, the foundation of my safety, the ground of my certainty, they are all alike eternally unalterable.

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**Sacrilege.**—Read Isa. liii. 6, and then beware of committing the greatest of all sacrileges, that of taking down your sins from where the Lord has laid them.

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## “Be of Good Cheer.”

THERE is much consolation to be found in the parting words of the Lord to His disciples given us in John xiv. to xvi., which latter concludes with the above words.

Four things are specially brought before us. Let us consider them briefly: (1) Jesus was going away and would be absent from them; (2) the Holy Ghost would take Christ's place as the *abiding* Comforter; (3) they would be placed in direct relationship with God as *Father*; (4) and, finally, the future would be illuminated by the blessed hope that the Saviour who loved them would come in person to receive them to Himself and conduct them to the Father's house, where He had prepared a place for them.

It was the confidingness of divine love, which counted on a corresponding answer on the part of His own, which moved our blessed Lord to make these communications to His disciples just on the eve of His departure. He well knew the world in which He was leaving them; and it was no better and no worse than the world to-day, although now a large part of it has embraced nominal Christianity. Man's heart is the same in all ages, though the outward aspect of things may change.

Do we not find, in these blessed and unchanging truths, a precious consolation in the times through which we are passing? Jesus is absent, that is true; but He is coming, how soon we know not. And He would turn our eyes and link our hearts with *heaven*, where He is.

Then the Holy Ghost has come, having taken the place of the absent Christ. He is here to glorify Christ, to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us, to lead

us into all truth. It is one of the greatest and most blessed privileges of the Christian that he has received the Holy Spirit, though it is almost entirely forgotten and ignored in Christendom. The world, we are told, cannot receive Him, because it does not see or know Him; but *we* know Him—such is our privilege and position.

Further, we have here the Lord bringing before us the precious relationship of *Father*. It was a new and unique privilege, first fully declared from the resurrection side of the empty grave, through the lips of Mary, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” This relationship it is the special work of the Holy Ghost to give us the conscious enjoyment of; putting into the heart and the mouth of the believer the cry, “Abba, Father.”

Do we realise this daily? At our work, in the office, in the workshop, or in whatever calling we may be placed, can we not turn the eye of faith heavenward and enjoy the blessed relationship expressed in the word “**Father**”?

Finally, it is ours to know—whatever the state of things in the world may be—that the One who loves us most and best is coming for us. He wants to have His people with Himself, and nothing can frustrate His purposes in the accomplishment of this. The dark shadows which have fallen upon the path of many a true Christian during this terrible war shall then give place to nothing but light and joy. This world is not our rest, it is defiled.

But above all, there is the unselfish desire and longing of the Christian’s heart, on which the divine love of the Saviour counted when He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” The answer to it is

simple and comes from the depth of the believer's soul, "Yes, Lord, we have tasted Thy love, and we shall never be fully satisfied until we see Thee face to face."

May this blessed prospect brighten the lives and cheer the hearts of His people while waiting for His return!

F. G. B.

### The Love of Christ.

**W**HAT deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when he had denied Him! What a moment was that when, without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him, who had thus denied Him, the sheep and lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just given His life!

Now this love of Christ's, in its superiority to evil—a superiority that proves itself divine—reproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of everyone who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love; we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him Himself.

J. N. D.

### Sower and Reaper.

**F**OR the better understanding of the parable of the Sower, it seems needful to set forth a few prefatory remarks as to the place it has in the gospels, and more particularly in Matthew and Mark. The gospel of Luke, written to a distinguished Roman, and furnishing abundant illustrations of Paul's preaching, though it does in the main follow the chronological order, deals more with the presentation of sovereign grace to the *sinner*, and the dispensational side of

"the Jew first" is less in evidence. (Compare Luke i. 4; ii. 32; vii. 4, 5, with Matt. x. 5, 6; Acts xiii. 4-6, and Rom. i. 16.)

Mark is the shortest of all, and the earlier chapters are so condensed that it is particularly easy to follow; the more so as the frequent repetition of the word "again" connects passages which are similar in their wording, and in each case the phrase, or the particular portion of it referred to, is repeated once only. That serves to bring out in a remarkable way two sides of the truth thus prominently set forth. (Compare, for instance, i. 16 with ii. 13; and i. 21 with ii. 1, iii. 1, and iv. 1). The attentive reader will notice many such cases. We may add that the natural divisions of this most interesting book are introduced by the words "He went out from thence" (vi. 1; x. 1). The first five chapters set forth the character of the service; the four following show how it was carried out. Chapter x. gives the last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, followed by what took place in the last week previous to the crucifixion, together with the Lord's death and resurrection.

The little word "again," in Mark iv. 1, especially claims our attention. It introduces an entire change in the character of the Lord's ministry in Galilee, and is immediately followed by the parable of the "Sower." We shall see in a moment that this change is very prominent in Matthew, but being more complicated with important details, it is not quite so easy to distinguish as in Mark.

From the first chapter of Mark we learn that the Lord began His ministry with the call of four disciples, after which they went into Capernaum as their future place of residence with Him, and He began to teach in the synagogue of that place.



Matthew tells us that Capernaum was chosen in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (ix. 1, 2), implying that the ministry, though directed especially to the seed of Israel, reached out in principle to the despised Gentile. And how wonderfully the Lord explained this in His discourse at Nazareth, when He returned there some time afterwards, and read the Scripture which showed what the "acceptable year of the Lord" was (Isa. lxi. 1). This is only given by Luke, and confirms what we have said above as characterising his gospel. But in closing the passage which speaks of it, he mentions the definite sojourn in Capernaum, "a city of Galilee" (Luke iv. 16-32).

It was in every way most necessary that the chosen children of Abraham should have the *first* offer of blessing through the promised "seed"—"Son of David and Son of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 16); but God's declared purpose was that it should go out eventually to the ends of the earth (Isaiah xlix. 6; Acts xiii. 47).

Sad indeed it is to note the solemn fact that the only place in *Galilee* where they sought to take the Lord's life, was Nazareth, "where He had been brought up." The Scribes which came down from Jerusalem to Galilee, and especially the Pharisees, sought to lay hands on Him (Matt. ix. 34; xii. 14; Mark iii. 22). But we do not read that the people of the country thought of so doing, except at Nazareth. Even to the end, "the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark xii. 37); and John vii. 20 shows that when they were at Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles, they were ignorant of the plots of the Jews (compare verses 1 and 25 of that same chapter vii.)

In connection with God's final purpose of universal blessing, let us notice in particular Mark's repeated expression "by the seaside" (i. 16; iv. 1). In the

latter passage it is accompanied by another, even more striking still: He "*sat in the sea.*" It was a fresh beginning of ministry, no longer confined to the "land" of Israel, but going out in principle to *Gentiles*, constantly spoken of in Isaiah as the "isles of the sea," an expression familiar to the inhabitants of Palestine, on account of the islands which everywhere attract the attention of mariners sailing westward from their harbourless coast. In Mark especially the sea has this signification (compare Rev. x. 2, when the Lord is about to establish His authority over the *whole* earth, not in Jerusalem and the land of Canaan only). The Israelites had never been a maritime people until Solomon sought to begin it; but the secession from Judah after his death practically put a stop to it, and external commerce fell into the hands of the Tyrians. The Israelites were, so to speak, identified with their *land*, and the Gentiles, in their minds, were characterised by the isles of the *sea* (Isa. xlix. 1, etc.; xlii. 4).

Consequently, the Lord's attitude in Mark iv. 1 is very significant, and all the more so as we notice what had previously taken place. He was then practically the rejected Christ, described in John i. 11: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Not only had the "Scribes which came down from Jerusalem" attributed His ministry to Satan, but even His own kinsmen, who had failed to recognise in His previous quiet life the Sent One of God, were equally unable to sympathise with His untiring service and self-sacrifice, when the time to begin it had arrived. "They went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark iii. 21). The end of the chapter seems to show that even His mother had become affected with this sort of well-meaning anxiety (verse 31, and compare Matt. xii. 46).

It was on that *same day*, as Matthew shows, that Jesus "went out of the house, and sat by the sea side" (xiii. 1).

There had been a fair time of trial through direct teaching, accompanied with miracles of healing, the like of which in abundance and character had never been seen before; besides which, Jesus had even empowered His disciples to heal sicknesses and cast out devils (Matt. x. 1; Mark iii. 15). And that had never been done before during the lifetime of any prophet; for Elisha only received the double portion of the Spirit when Elijah, his predecessor, went up to heaven. But all that had been apparently forgotten, and produced no definite result on the unbelieving people.

John the Baptist's ministry was over. It had been confined to Judea and the region round about Jordan. Numbers had gone to him, even from Galilee, though it does not appear that John ever went there himself. He had never done any miracles, and, at the time we are speaking of, he was in prison; for the Lord did not begin His public ministry until Herod had shut him up (Luke iii. 20; John iv. 1-3). The miracles spoken of in John ii. 23 seem to have been exceptional, at the time of the first passover. But, on the other hand, in as far as the appeal to the nation was concerned, Jesus took up definitely the call to repentance which had been begun by John. The words in Matthew iv. 17, as compared with iii. 2, makes this quite clear: repentance was called for, because God was about to set up His kingdom, and He must needs take into account the condition of every soul morally before Him. The difference between the two ministries was this: John's was a call to confession of sins; each one had to state what they knew about themselves. The Lord's preaching was also a call to repentance; but encouragement was given by a practical testimony through miracles of all kinds, which proved what God could do and would

do on behalf of those who suffered from Satan's malicious power.

When, however, those who frequented the synagogues, and were supposed to be acquainted with the scriptures which were read there, remained unmoved by all the miracles of grace they witnessed, the time came when the call to repentance, begun by John the Baptist, had run its course. We note that the Lord's preaching, as given in Matthew iv. 17, is word for word the same as John's in iii. 2; but when Jesus sent out His twelve disciples in chap. x. 7, the word "repent" is dropped. May it not have been that the desired exercise of conscience in God's presence was already shown to be so feeble, that there was little use in insisting upon it? Still the day of unrestrained grace was not closed until every effort on God's part had failed again, as all His goodness to Israel had done in Jeremiah's day, when a limit to divine patience was reached in the captivity of the people, and the destruction of Solomon's temple.

But another side of grace had still to be made known: Jesus would deal with the *heart*, and bring in the "word" of which Isaiah had spoken. That word could and would accomplish in the heart the work whereto God had sent it: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. lv.). The time for looking for fruit from a people responsible to draw *from their blessings* a power for repentance and true confession of their sins, had run out; it remained to show what God in grace could do for those who in themselves werē hopelessly estranged from Him. For that Jesus would become a **sower**, bringing in the divine word, and looking for fruit from the word sown in the heart. That was the point of the first "parables," a form of teaching quite new to the disciples, who were astonished at it.

W. J. L.

(*To be continued.*)

## Christ's Death no Afterthought with God—ii.

GOD'S WAYS WITH MAN IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S COMING.

**W**HEN our Lord was here He said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." The Saviour uttered these words in connection with a work of mercy on the Sabbath day, and in doing so suggests to our minds the incessant divine labour (we may reverently say) from man's fall onwards, for the blessing and comfort and good of poor, lost, helpless, and suffering men.

Think of God's merciful dealings with the world. These did not commence with the time of Christ. God did not begin in the days of Christ to make His sun to rise on the evil and on the good. He did not begin then to send His rain on the just and on the unjust. His tender mercies have ever been and still are "over all His works." God is the temporal Saviour and Preserver of all men. But is it not becoming that we should trace all these natural blessings to the righteous basis which is laid for them in the propitiation of Christ? He is the propitiation for the whole world (1 John ii. 2).

If the secrets of divine mercy, treasured up in God's bosom, could only fully be *revealed* after Christ's death and resurrection, the fact remains that they were treasured there, and so treasured that God's delights might be with the sons of men. And this even though the sons of men themselves were at that time ignorant of the mystery of Christ. The fact, too, that God kept secrets to Himself until Christ came shows how dependent we are on Him.

The mercy of the Lord is not only *to* everlasting; it is also *from* everlasting. God could look upon His people with divine favour. He could make known

through the lips of a man like Balaam, not only that He did not behold, but that *He had not beheld* iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel. Was not this because He ever beheld Christ in their room and stead?

Again, at the time when David found out his great sin after, as a king, he had actually pronounced on oath sentence of death against himself, was it not because of the blessed Christ that Nathan was commissioned and entitled to say, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die"?

Who then shall measure the consolations of God dealt out to men in those early days? Some felt that God's lovingkindness was better than life even then.

God looked lovingly upon men in those days, awaiting their repentance; yea, He gave then repentance. Sometimes repentance was very real. Men confessed in those days, "I have sinned and perverted that which is right." And in those days also God said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24).

And if men believed God, and experienced His mercy at that time, it was not absolutely necessary that they should fully know the why and wherefore of that mercy. We may indeed ask whether the most enlightened fully understand it even now? And yet we must remember that the Holy Ghost was sent in order to lead us into the knowledge of the mystery of Christ. But God could afford to be gracious from the first.

Again, in preaching the gospel, we are enjoined to offer men life through faith in Christ's blood. We have to make clear to them that they are not entitled to life apart from the question of their sin being dealt with on the cross of Christ, notwithstanding that sinful men, from the earliest times, received a new life. It is true, of course, that the change was not then brought to

light with gospel clearness as it is now. Life and incorruptibility are now, indeed, in the gospel times, brought to light; but they were in existence long before.

Clearly, spiritual life in this world, and an incorruptible and blessed existence after death, were secured to those men whose life was forfeited through sin, before Christ actually died for them. In the case of Enoch and Elijah, their bodies were taken to heaven without dying.

In the book of Proverbs we read about the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish: the persons referred to in that book included men and women who actually lived in those days. In the days of Solomon, as in the generations before and since, there were those who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. But the just, the good, and the wise were what they were as the result of the new life they had received from God. Doing what was right in the sight of the Lord was clearly a manifestation of the new life they had received from Him.

We may regard the beautiful characters presented to us in the Proverbs, and in the historical books, as a kind of illustration of what God wrought through grace in those days, as well as of what He is working to-day. For in all generations, good men could only be what they were by the grace of God. And God ever wrought in men's hearts and lives to His glory, righteously, through the shed blood of Christ, who came in the fulness of time.

May these thoughts help in the understanding of God's word!

T. H.

## God Working.

**Creation.**—When God began the work of creation, He did not stop till it was completed. Then, when all this scene was ordered in spotless beauty and perfection, we read, “God rested the seventh day from all His works” (Heb. iv. 4).

**The Fall.**—Sin came in. Man, the work of God’s hands, dared to disobey God. From the day that Adam fell, every man, woman, and child has inherited a nature estranged from God, and has done deeds sinful in the sight of God.

**Grace.**—God works. “My Father worketh hitherto and I work” (John v. 17). From the day that Adam fell God has been working. Why is God working? He is working in grace, He is drawing souls to Himself.

In a world stained with human sin and misery, God is offering all the rich attractions of His grace. Peace, pardon, eternal life now, and heavenly bliss hereafter, is God’s offer to those who have sinned against Him. How marvellous! Will you, dear reader, take your place as a sinner before God, as a rebel against God, and receive the blessings of His grace?

**The Cross.**—Christ has done the work on the ground of which God can bless you. Christ has shed His blood, has gone down into death, has borne the weight of God’s judgment against sin, that God may righteously pardon you, the sinner. Will you accept God’s salvation and be eternally saved?

**The Glory.**—God will not stop His work of salvation till everyone of those redeemed through the precious blood of Christ are gathered into the glory. Will you find your place among that white-robed multitude?

A. E. H.



## The Roman Empire.

**R**ECENT events, now that Italy has joined in the Great War, make the question of the future re-formation of the Roman Empire one of special interest. All students of prophecy, who have any intelligent understanding of the Word of God, admit that the reconstituted Roman Empire will play a most important *rôle* in the future history of the world, *after* the coming of the Lord for His saints.

When the Empire is reconstituted in the future, Satan will have been cast out of heaven (Rev. xii. 7-12); he will be no longer there to accuse the brethren before God. The future head of the empire, arising out of the state of anarchy which will then exist, will represent Satan's power and authority on the earth (Rev. xiii. 1-10). This beast has seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads are seven mountains (Rev. xvii. 9), which locates it geographically at Rome. And there are seven kings, or forms of power; \* five of which had passed away in John's day, one existed then, and another was to come and continue a short space.† The eighth was "of the seven," and is still future.

This eighth head will revive the empire under Satanic authority, causing all the world to wonder. We learn from Daniel vii. 8 and 24, where he is represented under

\* "The beast is thus distinguished. There had been—1, kings; 2, consuls; 3, dictators; 4, decemvirs; 5, military tribunes; who held successively and constitutionally the imperium. And these five were fallen. The sixth was actually then in power—emperors. The seventh had not yet come; and it was to be transient. The eighth is the imperial form, which had been wounded to death (xiii. 3), revived by the dragon as the resurrection-head of the empire rising up at the close against the risen Lord of glory."—W. K.

† "My impression is, that the first Napoleon and his brief empire is the seventh, and we have now to wait for the development of the last."—J. N. D.

the figure of the "little horn," that this king contrives by some means to put down three others and take their place.

The ten "horns" or kings under the future empire receive power for one and the same time with the beast (xvii. 12), therefore it is clear that the empire must be revived, after ceasing to exist ever since it was broken up by the barbarians about the fourth and fifth centuries.

It has been remarked that "the empire existed at the first without these kings. Then these kings existed without it, and you have the ten kings without the beast. At the end you get the ten kings with the beast . . . I can surely say we have not had the beast in this form yet" (*Coll. Writ. J.N.D.*, xi. 499).

As to the extent of the future empire, it seems probable that we should exclude from it those portions of the ancient empires referred to in Daniel ii., which did not, at the time they existed, form part of it. These are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian empires, which successively preceded the Roman. Some remains of these empires will, doubtless, be found at the close; not in the form of extensive empires as they once were, but as minor kingdoms or states.

So, when the "stone cut out without hands" (Christ coming in judgment), falls on the image, it breaks to pieces, not only the legs and the feet (the Roman part), but the *whole* image. It would seem, therefore, that the previous kingdoms may have some kind of existence, concurrently with the Roman, till the end (see also Dan. vii. 12).

Another reason why it is likely that the future representatives of these three empires should be excluded from our forecast of the ultimate form of the Roman Empire is, because these probably belong to

the confederation of Powers in Asia Minor, Syria, Greece, etc., which will come under the control of the great northern Power, the final phase of which will be the "Gog" of Ezekiel, or Russia (Ps. lxxxiii., Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix).

Even if the Roman beast of the future gained possession of the *eastern* part of the ancient empire for a time, it is probable that it would soon pass under the influence of Gog and his allies. This may be embraced in the series of events brought before us prophetically in Rev. viii. and ix.

Roughly speaking, the Roman Empire of the future would embrace what is now Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, in Africa; and in Europe, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, part of Southern Germany, part of Austria, and England. But the present war will doubtless modify these divisions considerably.

The imperial head of the future Roman Empire will have the seat of his authority at Rome, and he will be closely leagued with the Antichrist, the seat of whose power and pretensions will be at Jerusalem.

F. G. B.

#### FRAGMENTS.

**Pull Me Up.**—"If you see me going away from the truth, and getting loose and careless as to Christ, and what is suited to Him, in a poor sinner saved by grace, but now a feeble saint who owes everything worth having for time and eternity to Him, then the best service you can do me is to pull me up sharp."

*Extract from a letter.*

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**Trial.**—There is not a trial or difficulty that Christ has not passed through before me, and found His resources in God the Father. He will supply the needed grace to my heart.

J. N. D.

## The Rapture of the Saints.

Hark to the trump ! behold it breaks  
The sleep of ages now :  
And lo ! the light of glory shines  
On many an aching brow.

Changed in a moment—raised to life,  
The quick, the dead arise,  
Responsive to the angel's voice  
That calls us to the skies.

Ascending through the crowded air,  
On eagles' wings we soar,  
To dwell in the full joy of love,  
And sorrow there no more.

Undazzled by the glorious light  
Of that beloved brow,  
We see, without a single cloud,  
We see the Saviour now !

O Lord, the bright and blessed hope  
That cheer'd us through the past,  
Of full eternal rest in Thee,  
Is all fulfill'd at last.

Praise, endless praise, alone becomes  
This bright and blessed place,  
Where every eye beholds unveil'd  
The mysteries of Thy grace.

Past conflict here, O Lord, 'tis ours,  
Through everlasting days,  
To sing our song of victory now,  
And only live to praise.

E. D.

## “Pray Without Ceasing.”

**T**HIS exhortation is as much needed to-day as when the Apostle Paul wrote to the young converts at Thessalonica. “Let us not sleep as do others,” but let us watch and be in earnest in waiting upon God. There has seldom been, in the world’s history, a more serious and solemn time than the present, and there is surely much to call for earnest, true, believing prayer.

Daniel, in his day, though a captive in Babylon, was found on his knees three times a day in prayer. No doubt his time was much occupied with the affairs of the responsible position in which he was placed in the state, but he found time for prayer. The psalmist says, “Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice” (lv. 17). *We* (Christians) can plead in prayer before the Father all the value of the name of Jesus (John xiv. 13; xv. 16; xvi. 23).

But the special subject concerning which we wish to draw attention in connection with the need of prayer just now, is the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. When we think of the numbers called away on the field of battle, as well as in the hospitals and elsewhere, leaving widows, orphans, and bereaved on every hand, is there not a serious call for earnest prayer?

Oh that God, in His mercy, may arouse all His people to a deeper interest in souls perishing around us, and to the special needs of the times! It is a day of widespread indifference and unbelief, and the danger is lest we ourselves should become infected with the spirit of the age. But God is able to break down the indifference, to awaken the most careless,

and to give blessing in answer to prayer, as He has done so many times in the past.

Let us, then, be encouraged to persevere in prayer, counting on a faithful and loving God, whose joy it is to save and bless. And let each reader of this little magazine join us in earnest prayer for revival of the work of God in the blessed gospel message to the unsaved. As it goes forth indoors and out-of-doors, by the circulation of the scriptures, of tracts, books, or whatever means may be used for that end, let us earnestly and diligently supplicate God our Father to give the blessing.

### “What is Truth?”

**I**T was the summer of 1914. An ardent sportsman flung himself into the railway carriage I was travelling in.

“War declared!” he exclaimed, as he opened his morning paper, “and that among the so-called *Christian* nations,” and with an exclamation against all we have been taught to reverence, he threw down his paper in disgust.

As we travelled on in silence, I pondered this strange scene. Here was a highly-polished English gentleman abusing the very name of Christianity through the conduct of so-called “Christian nations”!

Some months passed, and I entered a village shop where I was acquainted with the shopman. “I don’t know what to make of it,” he observed, “people talk of improved civilisation and philanthropy, and yet here we are in 1915, and the *Christian* nations of the world are waging fierce war on one another.”

“I could not understand it either,” I replied, “till I looked into the Bible, and there I saw what God

says about the heart of man. 'The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked' (Jer. xvii. 9). And again, as far back in the world's history as the book of Genesis, God could say that 'every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually'" (Gen. vi. 5).

"Let me leave you with one question," I added, "Who tells us the truth—*God*, or man?"

Yes, so it is; civilisation and philanthropy have not altered the heart of man. They have doubtless put an outward polish, and comfort, and bettering on the face of human life; but they cannot reach or change the human heart. That remains the deep-seated root of evil passions, from whence spring wars and fightings.

In the Bible we get the truth about the heart of man; and in the Bible we get also the truth about the heart of God. Will you, dear reader, *read the Bible* and accept the truth as God tells it about yourself, and *about God*? It will be for your eternal blessing if you do.

A. E. H.

## Is the "Sermon on the Mount" Practical Christianity?

THE present conflict between Christian nations (so-called), has again brought to the front the question as to how far the well-known discourse of our Lord's, which is known amongst us all as "The Sermon on the Mount," is applicable in its principles and injunctions to Christians in our day.

It may, therefore, be well to inquire what its legitimate bearing is. If it is not intended to apply to Christians in this and every other age when true followers of Christ will be found on the earth, to whom does it apply?

It was addressed, as the Gospel of Matthew plainly tells us, to His disciples. Jesus, having withdrawn from the multitudes for the time being, and His disciples having come to Him, unfolds to them the principles which should guide them in their intercourse with the world around. These principles are, doubtless, suitable for all time, while His disciples are found on the earth.

Commencing with the character of persons who would have part in His kingdom upon the earth, the very first utterance, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," tells us that Jesus is not contemplating a nation, or a people, that collectively has to "hold its own" amongst other nations struggling to maintain their rights amidst more or less hostile conditions, or even seeking their own natural development as a state, where any aggressive act might arouse the jealousy of neighbouring states. Could anything more futile be conceived than to preach "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and "Blessed are the meek," to the contending nations at the present time, be they English, French, or German? Yet of such (the poor in spirit) our Lord declares is God's kingdom; and to "the meek" is the inheritance of the earth promised.

Apart altogether from the instructions as to alms, prayer, purity, and other forms of personal righteousness, which are enjoined upon His disciples, the difficulty as to these principles of truth is in their application to so-called Christian *nations*. Now when people speak of "Christian nations," they mean nations which adopt Christianity, and profess it as their religion. But to be a Christian really, one needs to be "born again" to possess divine life, to have received the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ. Obviously, it is of but a very small minority in any of the nations that these things



are true. How then could we expect nations, as such, to act in a way, and on principles given to guide the conduct of true disciples, when the great mass of those nations are only Christian in name?

This is the reason why we see some strange paradoxes in these Christian lands to-day, and it is no great wonder that many are bewildered.

At the same time, it is true that even the outward knowledge of the truths of Christianity has had a moralising effect upon the so-called Christian nations, and it would be a mistake to overlook this. It is also noticeable in connection with the present war, that where the giving up of the Bible (which is chiefly due to the spread of German rationalism) has been greatest, the disregard for all the laws of humanity, and what Christianity would teach, has been greatest also.

So far as the government of the world is concerned, God has ordained the "powers that be" to represent His authority and maintain order. They are responsible to act righteously, justly, and mercifully towards all men. If they act unrighteously, they suffer under God's chastening in the long run, however great His patience may be. We see this fully illustrated in the Old Testament histories, not only in the case of Israel, but of the nations in general (see Jer. xviii. 7-10).

Our chief desire in this short paper is to help our fellow-Christians who are reluctant to yield up any of the precepts of the Bible, and who are rightly jealous of that sort of explanation which would deprive us of the profit we may get from this or any other portion. A remark, made by a well-known member of parliament, that the "Sermon on the Mount" is not practical Christianity, has been much quoted in religious periodicals, and therefore we would seek, in this inquiry, to help any that are exercised about it.

Does not the main solution of the difficulty lie in the fact that this scripture does not contemplate any nation, or political state, endeavouring to exist and govern on such lines? Where is there any thought in scripture of a Christian *nation*? Or that any people or nation would occupy, in this day of grace, a position analogous to the place and privilege that the Jews had before God in a former dispensation? The scripture declares that God is taking out from among the Gentiles (nations) a people for His name (Acts xv. 14); calling out from both Jews and Gentiles His Church, and forming them by the power of the Holy Spirit into an entirely new and unique thing, of such a distinct character and calling that it is actually called *one new man* (Eph. ii. 15).

However, we must not pursue this phase of the truth any further, because it would take us beyond our present purpose, which is to show, so far as we can, that one solution of the difficulty, if not the main one, lies in the anomalous conditions of Christian thought. It is surely always true that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Moses may sing of God as a "God of war," and David could say, "Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," but this is not to be confused with what is proper to a *Christian*, who is exhorted to "Resist not evil," to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. v. 44, etc.).

All this makes it perfectly clear that I cannot walk in a world like this, according to the principles of the "Sermon on the Mount," without being daily and hourly dependent on God to support me in a path and line of action that is utterly contrary to the world's precepts

and practices. And also is it not equally clear that no kingdom of man's devising and governing can exist on such principles to-day? If a nation professes to be on God's side, or fighting for God in any war, it would be well to read what the scripture says. Take, for instance, the passage in 1 Chronicles v. 22, where it says that "The war was of God;" the 20th verse tells us that the Hagarites were delivered into the hand of the children of Israel, "For they cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them because they put their trust in Him." But if we read a little further, we find what it means to have to do with God in such a way, for when these same tribes of Israel transgressed against the God of their fathers, He stirred up against them the spirit of the kings of Assyria, who carried them away captive.

The government of God amongst the nations of the earth, must not be confused with the path of the child of God, in his life of dependence on the mercy and faithfulness of "the Father." When the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ (Rev. xi. 15), many of these difficulties will be removed, for righteousness will reign, and not, as often now, be overborne by wrong.

When the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, He said, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16), and if we carefully read this chapter, with its instructions as to their mission, we shall see that the characteristic features are practically the same to-day, although modified in some countries by long acquaintance with the truths of the Bible. There is not such a thing as one *nation* of "sheep," and another nation of "wolves." Alas! we see how much of the wolf nature is found where sheep might be expected. But one thing is clear from the scriptures

quoted above, and many others, namely, that for God to act on their behalf, the sheep must really *be* His "sheep," and then His power to strengthen and uphold them will be manifested.

Does not, then, the difficulty that exists in the minds of many, as to these precepts, lie in the mistaken conception of what the path of a Christian really is in this day? The simple-minded believer is puzzled, as he compares the actions of many Christians (and notably their leaders) with the path of meekness and suffering enjoined upon us in the word of God. But the main difficulty disappears when we discern the character of the Christian's place and calling during the present dispensation or period of time, as being "not of the world."

Christians have not learned to distinguish between the times of a rejected David, and a reigning Solomon—Christ is the anti-type of both. Did not the world say, "We will not have this man to reign over us?" Yet Christians generally speak and act as if Christ were now reigning; but is it so? "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," is the word addressed to the rejected Jesus by God; and there He abides, until the time appointed for Him to take to Himself His great power and reign. God has not given up the reins of government, though He may be silent where most expected to be heard. He speaks unto us now by His Son, and blessed are they whose ears are open to hear what He has to say.

Does not the whole world cry aloud for the return of the only One who can set things right? When He comes and reigns over the earth as God's appointed king, it will be true that the nations "shall learn war no more;" but not till then.

T. R.

## Sower and Reaper.

**H**AVING looked briefly at Mark's account of the change in the Lord's ministry, after His rejection as a "prophet;" let us now turn to the fuller unfolding of this subject in Matthew. And we may note at once that Matthew brings in this rejection twice: first, at the end of chapter xii., which is similar to Mark iii. 31-35 (the added word in verse 21 being found in Mark alone: "And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself"); secondly, at the end of chapter xiii., the visit to Nazareth, after He had been for some time in Capernaum and the neighbourhood.

This visit to Nazareth is described by Luke with greater detail, showing still more pointedly, by the reference to Elijah and Elisha, that it was the prophetic character of His ministry which was definitely refused by those who ought to have known the Lord better than any others. Mark refers to it later in his gospel, in another connection, emphasising their "unbelief" (chap. vi. 1-6).

In truth, it was God's *word* that they rebelled against. This is a solemn warning for our consciences, enabling us to detect the root evil of so much in us that hinders growth in grace, and practically renders us incapable of service which would honour the Lord, besides being fraught with blessing to our fellow creatures. The Lord sought not honour from men, but He did desire the widest practical results from His ministry of grace; and this was hindered at Nazareth more than elsewhere by their unbelief (see Jer. ii. 11-13). Jesus "marvelled" at it (Mark vi. 6; viii. 17).

When the disciples questioned the Lord as to the *reason* of His speaking to the people in *parables*, He told

them that it was a judgment on their unbelieving teachers, who paid no attention to the oracles of God, notwithstanding the fact that they boasted in the possession of them; but they thought little of their privilege and responsibility in this respect (Rom. iii. 2). For the same reason, Paul gave them up at Antioch in Pisidia, and turned to the Gentiles (Acts xiii. 41, 44-47).

On the other hand, parables were a form of instruction interesting and impressive to the minds of children, and calculated to produce real exercise of conscience towards God, in those whose knowledge was very limited.

The leaders of the people are described as being "without," that is outside the pale of grace. They had had their opportunity for receiving it, and definitely despised and rejected the Lord's teaching (Mark iv. 11; compare Luke vii. 26-30). The common people, however, were "very attentive to hear Him" (Mark xii. 37; Luke xix. 48). Those who were outwardly "wise and prudent" possessed indeed "the book"; but they paid no heed to it, and fell under judgment (Isa. xxix. 10-14). The truth was thus hidden from *them*, whereas the "little ones," whom they ignored, became the objects of God's attention, through the work of His blessed Son (Isa. xxviii. 9). The Lord refers to both of these passages in His thanksgiving to the Father (Matt. xi. 25). Thus it was that the door of grace was closed to the "despisers" whom, as we have seen, Paul afterwards gave up at Antioch. And in so doing, he also refers to the first half of Isaiah xxix. 14, besides quoting more fully Habakkuk i. 5.

We may add that this is seen with greater detail in Luke's gospel (x. 18-24), which at the same time shows the place destined for the disciples in heaven,

their names being "written" there (compare Heb. xii. 23, where the proper Christian title of "first-born," in association with the Lord Jesus, is given to every member of His church, of which He is the already glorified Head).

The actual moment of time at which the Lord's thanksgiving was uttered was no doubt at the end of His public ministry in Galilee, when He was on the point of leaving the country definitely, having His last blessed service to carry out at Jerusalem; for, as He said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish elsewhere" (Luke xiii. 33). Sad testimony indeed to the unbelieving people!

Before leaving the sphere of His ministry in patient grace, He was minded to give three of His disciples a glimpse of His coming glory, as well as of His intercessory service above. This is presented characteristically in Luke, "as He prayed" (ix. 28, 29). It reminds one of the chariot of fire which took away Elijah to heaven, for Matthew speaks of the inside *brightness* of the cloud from which came the voice owning Jesus as the "beloved Son"; and Peter calls it "the excellent glory" (2 Pet. i. 17). But instead of leaving this scene when His public ministry was practically closed, as Elijah had done, He let the chariot go and was "found alone"; and then coming down with His three disciples from the mountain, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 36-37, 51). He was the perfect "servant" who had fulfilled His complete time of service, but preferred to be "a servant for ever," and had to have His body pierced, accepting death in order that there might be fruit for God in His own house for eternity (see Exod. xxi. 2-6). What a blessed and deep meaning is thus given to His own words in John xii. 24, "Except a corn of wheat fall

into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit!"

The continual reference to Jerusalem by Luke, makes it clear beyond question that the ten chapters, from the end of ix. to the end of xix., are occupied with that journey, covering many weeks of time, during which Jesus went backwards and forwards over a large part of Palestine, even including Samaria (ix. 52; xvii. 11), so as to give many, who perhaps up to that time had not seen Him in private, an opportunity for receiving Him if they would. For that purpose He sent out seventy messengers in thirty-five different directions to warn them beforehand of His intention, without fixing any date for making the call, or mentioning any *order* in which His visits would be successively paid. But if they received and entertained His messengers, that simple fact would prove their readiness to receive Him, not now as a great benefactor, but as the "rich" One who had "become poor." What a wonderful picture, have we not here, of true service in the gospel (compare Luke x. 1-11 with 2 Cor. viii. 9)! The refusal to receive Him brought down woes on the cities of Galilee, which had not profited by His previous ministry in power. Matthew puts all this forward in his gospel as we shall see; but by constant references to Jerusalem, Luke presents it as the way up to the cross. And what a point that gives to the beautiful parables which set forth the character of Paul's gospel from different points of view. The Shepherd who went after the "lost sheep" was on the way to death and judgment, and where alone indeed it could be "found," so as to satisfy divine righteousness. The dying thief just expressed it. (See Luke ix. 31, 51; x. 30; xiii. 22, 33; xvii. 11; xviii. 31; xix. 11, 28, 41).



After this digression, so full of blessed interest as to the Lord's path of grace in this world, and which no hardness of heart could damp or alter, we return to Matthew, who puts forward—not indeed the transfiguration scene—but the woes pronounced on the favoured cities of Galilee, and the Lord's thanksgiving, in order to set forth more prominently the entire change in His ministry, when His mighty works had produced no salutary effect on the mass of the unbelieving people. They were pleased to have miracles of healing performed, but their hearts remained hard and unrepentant. The leaders of the people attributed His power to Satan, and took council to kill Him (Mat. ix. 34; xii. 14, 24). John's gospel shows this more abundantly on the occasion of the Lord's visits to Jerusalem and the temple, at the appointed national feasts (v. 16; vii. 1, 25, 44; viii. 59; x. 31, 39; xi. 49-53; xii. 10, 11).

The sad fact remained, even as to those in Galilee who did not go so far as the Jews in seeking to put the Lord to death, that they showed no disposition to repent, in spite of all the miracles which clearly testified to the grace which was being shown to them. The twentieth verse of Chap. xi., is quite peculiar to Matthew's gospel. Capernaum was the most guilty of all the cities, for there it was that the Lord had resided with the twelve.

But then we find in the Lord a higher and richer service, now unfolded for the first time, namely, the revelation of the Father; and it is this which forms the subject of John's gospel. Matthew merely states the *fact*, without any of the development in view of which John wrote; for he begins his gospel with a definite statement of the Lord's *rejection*: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the

world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (i. 10-11). John adds that "to as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become children of God." That is Christianity in principle. Matthew merely shows that the transformation depended on the revelation of the FATHER'S *name*. And he adds that most precious invitation of the Son, who offers a new kind of "rest," of which no mention is made in the Old Testament, a rest depending on the knowledge of Himself as the Revealer of the Father (see John i. 18). And it is here contrasted with the "*rest*" of the Sabbath day, spoken of by Matthew for the first time at the beginning of chapter xii.

The whole of the twelfth chapter of Matthew is indeed parenthetical, in order to draw attention to various glories of the Lord Himself in contrast to well-known types and figures of the Old Testament. He was "Lord even of the Sabbath day," which the Jews respected above everything,—the true Anointed One, though despised and persecuted as David had been, but able to share with His followers both kingly and priestly privileges. He was greater than the Temple, the Dispenser of mercy according to God's thoughts,—the true Servant, chosen and beloved, who would open the door of grace to the Gentiles, as Isaiah had foretold. But in order to proclaim wisdom in accordance with the largeness of God's purposes, a wisdom greater than Solomon's, he must needs pass through death in reality, even as Jonas did in figure. And He closes with a most solemn word of future judgment on the "wicked generation" who refused Him (ver. 45).

Finally, we find the inability of even His own family to enter into the character of His service, accompanied though it was by such mighty miracles, and Jesus proclaims a new relationship depending, as He says, on

doing the will of "My Father which is in heaven" (xii. 50; and compare vii. 21, and John xv. 14). At this juncture it is that He goes outside "by the sea," and begins a new order of ministry with the parable of the **Sower**.

W. J. L.

(*To be continued.*)

## Texts Sometimes Misunderstood.

**Philippians ii. 12.**—This verse is sometimes read as though it were a question of working *for* salvation. It is working *out* into its complete result a salvation which we have already got. "Your own" salvation is in contrast with Paul's working for them and with them. He had taught, helped, and guided them when he was with them; now he was in prison, and he puts them on their own responsibility to go on, in dependence on God, working out into result the salvation they had through Christ—as he says, "Now much more in my absence." It was now a question of *God's* working in them, and "salvation" is looked at here as the complete thing at the end of the Christian's course.

\* \* \* \* \*

**1 Corinthians ix. 27.**—Some people use this verse to prove that even a true Christian can be lost. This is a mistake, as we know from many passages of Scripture (John x. 28-30, etc.). The word "castaway," however, must not be taken in a limited sense, as though it meant merely disapproved in his ministry. It is not so used in the New Testament.

What makes the difficulty in some minds is, that they fail to see that it is not here a question of a man being a true Christian, who has eternal life, and a castaway; but of his being a *preacher* and a castaway. Alas, we know there are many such, and Paul wanted

to show by his whole mode of life, in which he kept his body under, that he was not one of these.

He says in chapter iv. 6, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself, and to Apollos for your sakes"; this explains the words in our verse, "I, myself." It was not that Paul himself could be lost or cast away, but he applies it to himself as a preacher to make the case plain (see the same in Rom. ix. 3).

\* \* \* \*

**1 Peter iii. 18-20.**—Much erroneous teaching as to Christ's preaching to spirits in prison has been built upon the misuse of this passage. Let us remember that Peter was writing to Christian Jews, who were but a small and despised company saved out of the mass of the nation. It was as much as to say, "Do not be discouraged; even in the days of Noah's preaching, when the long-suffering of God waited so long, only eight souls were saved."

It was the Spirit of Christ in Noah who preached to them, before the flood, *when they were alive*. We have the same expression in chapter i. 11, the "Spirit of Christ" in the Old Testament prophets, testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. In Genesis vi. 3 we have the contrast between flesh and the Spirit (of God), where we read, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*."

The idea that Christ went and preached to spirits in prison between His death and resurrection is quite a mistake. But the spirits of the men to whom the testimony was rendered through Noah in his day, are now "in prison" awaiting judgment, because they were unbelieving as to the testimony given by the Spirit of Christ through Noah, when they were alive.

F. G. B.

## A Stronghold.

“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum i. 7).

**C**OMFORTING words these at any time, but especially in times like the present!

The context describes the Lord, Jehovah, in the most striking and majestic language, as a jealous God: taking vengeance on His adversaries, reserving wrath for His enemies, and by no means clearing the guilty. His power, His majesty, and His judgments are infinite.

But what is He for His people—for the soul that trusts Him? “The Lord is good.” How sweet this is! Have we not proved it many and many a time? Then He is a “stronghold in the day of trouble.” Yes, it is the very same God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity, who must judge sin because it is contrary to His nature—it is this very same God who is the unfailing resource and refuge for His people in every time of trouble.

And not only so, but “He knoweth them that trust in Him.” Precious consolation to the heart! He is not unmindful, He never forgets, He never fails the trusting soul, and surely He is worthy of all our trust and confidence.

Let us then, in the dark times as well as in the bright, in days of trial as well as in days of sunshine, trust in Him *at all times*. If He puts us in the crucible, if He puts faith to the test, it is in order that it may be refined, and be found “unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

## Spiritual Forces.

A RATHER remarkable letter under the above heading, signed "From the Fighting Zone," appears in a recent issue of the *Times*. The writer pleads for a day of national intercession on 4th August, and proceeds to show that, while there is an improvement in the most vital necessities of modern warfare—arms, ammunition, etc.—yet there is a lack on the spiritual side; a lack of that simple faith and dependence which characterised our country in past struggles.

Alas, it is only too true! The spirit of infidelity and unbelief in God's word has done its deadly work in this as in other countries.

But God speaks to the nation solemnly at the present time; He speaks to us all. It is certainly a matter for thankfulness to find, in a letter such as this, a craving after something better than the gross materialism of the age.

Let us consider solemnly the word of God to Israel of old, "The people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day" (Isa. ix. 13, 14; see also Jer. v. 3; Hos. vii. 10; Zech. i. 4).

England has had many privileges—an open Bible, the preaching of the gospel far and wide, etc., but has there not been an undeniable giving up of God, and an inordinate running after pleasure, sin, and vanity?

Has there been real humiliation and a turning to God even since the war began? It is true that individuals here and there have done so; but such has not been the case in any general way as it ought to be.

And so God, in His governmental dealing, uses the

rod of chastisement. The rod will be broken in the long run we firmly believe; but He has still doubtless much to say to this country, as well as to others, in this terrible war before His hand is removed. May He lead all, but especially His people who ought to have the light and knowledge of His will, to humble themselves at such a time!

### Sower and Reaper.

OUR rapid glance at the twelfth chapter of Matthew (see page 126), which serves as an introduction to the parable of the sower, will, we trust, have prepared the careful reader for a better apprehension of the interesting chapter xiii. which follows it, and is one of the most remarkable summaries of the service then begun by the Lord, that is anywhere to be found. We only recall here verse 20 of chapter xi., which has no parallel passage in the other gospels, because it emphasises the terrible indifference to all His miracles in Galilee, where His three years of blessed service were spent: "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not." The word "began" shows clearly the change in the character of His ministry. And is this not in accordance with the fact previously noticed, that when He sent out His twelve disciples, the word "Repent" is omitted from the message specially confided to them? (Compare chap. x. 7 with iii. 2, and iv. 17.) Does it not seem to indicate that the preaching so continually slighted was passing into a new phase?

Besides this, the omission by Matthew of any mention of the Sabbath day, until it could be contrasted with the *new* "**rest**" offered by the Lord, through the

revelation of the Father's name, adds emphasis to the change above referred to. Previously, He had been, in the terms of the parable, "seeking fruit on the fig tree" (Luke xiii. 6-9), that is to say, appealing to a people in outward relationship with God, on the ground of the providential care and solicitude which their former history might naturally lead them to expect from His gracious hand. There was, however, no fruit to be found, and the only resource was in God's revelation of Himself in the person of His beloved Son. Compare, as to this, Amos iv. 12, 13, and Isaiah lvii. 16-19. There was no question of emendation; God would act in new-creation power in which human "works" had no place, lest any should "boast" (Eph. ii. 9, 10). And His way of doing it, was in working by means of His own word, as in the first creation (2 Cor. iv. 6; 1 Pet. i. 23). Isaiah lv. 8-11 had foretold it.

The "men of Nineveh" would therefore rise up in judgment against the unbelieving Galileans, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah when he only testified of its overthrow: whereas Jesus had been unwearied in His exercise of divine power, meeting every class of human suffering. Jonah had also passed through death in a figure "in the whale's belly"; the Lord was about to go through it in reality, being "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," not merely dying as Lazarus did, but with ineffable suffering as the *sin-bearer*, a cup of which He alone could taste. That was the only "sign" suited to that "evil and adulterous generation" (xii. 38-41).\*

\* It is noticeable that their desire for a sign is repeated at the beginning of chapter xvi., when the Pharisees were accompanied by the rationalistic Sadducees for the same purpose; in that case, they particularly wished for "a sign *from heaven*." He then met them on their own ground by speaking of the *sky*, and repeated verse 39 of chapter xii., referring again to Jonah.



Sad indeed is it and humbling, though very needful for us to notice this hardness of the human heart; it is not only deaf to invitations to repent in view of having to meet God, but also callous in presence of divine sympathy and grace which meets every kind of suffering and need. Does it not bring into prominence the hidden root of the evil, namely, that the satisfaction of natural desire, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which characterises "the world," has far more power over the heart, and far more attraction for it than anything which comes from God? That is how Satan maintains his authority over the world (Eph. ii. 2, 3). And how thoroughly the Lord's ministry brought this out!

John the Baptist had no gospel to preach, but his invitation to repent by the confession of sins was wonderfully answered to. Even Pharisees and Sadducees yielded to the general outward effect of it. There was something to *do*, and people no doubt credited themselves with a good character in doing it. In the case of the Lord, things were different. John did no miracle, but all the Lord's miracles testified of grace meeting human need. For that, the great majority cared little or nothing. And the religious Pharisees, who only saw in it the weakening of their own power over the people, despised Jesus and sought to kill Him. So the Lord "went out of the house, and sat by the sea side" (Matt. xiii. 1).

We recall here what has already been mentioned on page 102, namely, that the "sea side" is used figuratively both in Matthew and Mark, as indicating that the following parables contemplated Gentiles as well as the Israelites. In Isaiah the expression "isles of the sea" refers habitually to the nations, especially perhaps those surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, which is remarkably so characterised, being full of islands and

peninsulas. The harbourless coast of Palestine served to emphasize the figure to the Jewish mind. In Mark the expression is very strong: "He entered into a ship and sat *in the sea*" (iv. 1). The Jews possessed the oracles of God (Rom. iii. 1, 2), and it was necessary that the gospel should be preached first to them; but when they refused the word testified by their own prophets, and very particularly by Isaiah, the door of grace was opened wide to the Gentile world (see Acts xiii. 46, 47 on which occasion the Apostle Paul treated Isaiah's prophecy (xlix. 6) as the Lord's "command"): "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Such then was the **SOWER** whom the first three evangelists present to us. In comparing them, we have no difficulty in discerning that Matthew, as usual, gives prominence to His *person*, while Mark develops in a general way the character of His *work*, and Luke draws special attention to the means used, that is the *word*. One line, quite peculiar to Mark, resumes these three points: "The **Sower** *soweth* the **word**" (iv. 14). In Matthew we read, "**He** that soweth the good seed is the **Son of Man**" (xiii. 37). In Luke, "*The seed* is the **word of God**" (viii. 11); whereas in Mark iv., all three parables turn upon the thought of *sowing*, and the expression itself occurs a dozen times in the chapter. That is all the more beautiful inasmuch as an added parable, not found elsewhere, speaks of the patience of the sower, while waiting for the long looked for harvest (Mark iv. 26-29).

From whatever point of view the subject is considered, one thought is prominent, namely, the *contrast* between a ministry addressed to a people accustomed to hear read in their synagogues the Old Testament Scriptures (by which they were surely *responsible* to

appreciate the Lord's *works of power*) and, on the other hand, a divine operation through the *word sown* in the individual hearts. All Satan's efforts were directed against that *word*, either to snatch it away at once, or, by various devices, to hinder its bringing forth fruit to perfection. God looks for fruit simply, and only, through the word *sown*. All personal endowments or attainments apart from that, have no value in His sight.

To complete, however, the fulness of divine revelation, another gospel was needed, that of John, in which we find the blessed Lord in a new character, not as the "Sower," but as the SEED. In the closing words of His public testimony at Jerusalem, before retiring into the solitude of the upper chamber in order to eat the passover with His disciples, we find the wonderful words, "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (xii. 24). This was upon the occasion of the coming up of certain Greeks to worship at the feast, and who desired "to see Jesus." What a precious confirmation is this of what we have seen above, namely, that the rejection of Jesus by His own people was the opportunity chosen of God to open the door of grace world-wide to the Gentiles!

In John, all through, He is the living WORD, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, but who could only be known in life-giving power, by going Himself through death, in order that the fruit sought for might satisfy the requirements of divine righteousness. He could not and would not return to the Father without having finished the work for which He had taken human form, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Ps. xl. 6-8; Heb. ii. 9-15; x. 5-10). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). W. J. L.

## A Lesson in the Potter's House.

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it" (Jer. xviii. 1-4).

**B**ESIDES the obvious lesson taught us in this scripture, of God's prerogative to do what He wills with any people or nation, and so, as to Israel, to cast her off if she repents not of her departure from Him, we might surely learn something of deeper interest still as to God's ways with man.

Few processes are more interesting than the potter at the wheel. To stand by and watch the facility with which his deft fingers form the shapeless lump of clay into a thing of beauty has a fascination of its own; especially when the form fails to please him and being marred in the potter's hand, he produces something, on the second turn of the wheel, altogether different, perhaps, from the idea with which he started.

Jeremiah is sent down to the potter's house to learn the sovereignty of God's will. **We** would go there to learn the sovereignty of His **grace**, and to trace a little of the deep and blessed lesson taught us by the contrast between the first and the Second Man, the first Adam and the last.

Truly, the vessel once formed in the image and likeness of God has been marred; so marred as to make it often a difficulty to trace the lineaments of the original design of the Maker. Yet there were the most evident marks of dignity and wisdom in the moral purpose of God as to this vessel (Gen. 1 and 2). Nor

*Continued on page 137.*

is there any lack of evidence of wisdom and ability in man now, for, in many respects, the world we live in is man's world, abounding everywhere with proofs that it is still true as God said at Babel, that "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. xi. 6).

But all is marred by sin, and departure from God. "God is not in all his thoughts," and, as the wise man's comment is alas! true, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

A modern writer has said of man, that "in him is found the loftiest ideals, and the basest passions, even in the same person."

What sighings and longings we find all down through the ages, for some one to satisfy the heart of man—to fill the vision of his soul. Surely there is some such aspiration, when Solomon says, "I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead." And again, when Job cries for the daysman "that might lay his hand upon us both." Ages have passed since, the world has rolled on, and man's developments have all proved vain to satisfy his heart. At bottom he still feels that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," although he clings to a vain hope of some day finding a panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to.

With what relief do we turn to consider a little the Second Man, the Lord from heaven,—the only other representative man, the only head of a race since the first man Adam was made a living soul. And there is not another to follow after, for He is the "last Adam." There is no third kind of man yet to come, and it is the language of all and every one that has truly found Him, that we look not for another.

Truly, as a vessel made of clay, the first man is

marred in the hand of the potter, but another work has been wrought on the wheels, and as we consider this "Second Man," we can say with delight, in the words of another—"There I find what my heart as quickened of God wants; and I learn what blessedness is in Christ, by whom God has revealed it to us." God has before Him but two men, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam, a quickening spirit." . . . "The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven; as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 45, 47, 48).

There are these two Adams, in which we find both the pattern and model of all other men that are after their image. In the first, Satan found an easy prey: for, seduced by the tempter from his allegiance to his Creator and God, he fell from his first estate of innocence, only too quickly. The second, exposed to a temptation in every way more searching, met the same powerful enemy in simple dependence upon God and His written word; and the prince of this world found "nothing in Him." No possible triumph could Satan effect there.

The blessedness of having such an one to think of, and be engaged with, has been beautifully expressed by another, thus:—"When I look at Him down here, I can say, There is my life. If I look at myself, I see the life mixed up with much that ought not to be"—much of the first man, of the first Adam nature—"but when I look at Jesus, what obedience, what patience, what graciousness! and I say—This is my life. I can bless God for giving me such a life. He was perfect in everything. What rest it gives to the spirit to be able to say in beholding all that perfection in Him, 'That is mine.'"

But this is not all. Another and equally blessed side of this subject is to think of *God's* portion in the Second Man, and what it was to God to be able to look down upon this world, lying in the wicked one, and yet be able to say of a man in it, "In whom I am always well pleased." Again I quote from a different writer than the above, "Every step, word, and action, carries with it a ray of this (moral) glory; and the eye of God had more to fill it in the life of Jesus, than it would have had in an eternity of Adam's innocence. It was in the midst of our moral ruin, that Jesus walked; and from such a region as that, He has sent up to the throne on high a richer sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour than Eden, or that Adam in Eden,—had it continued unsoiled for ever,—would or could have rendered."

How gladly our hearts endorse all this, and with what joy would we seek grace from God to minister something of this refreshing and satisfying portion to the restless hearts of His people in this scene of weariness and strife. The world talks of a "superman," a proof in itself that all man's efforts and wisdom have failed to satisfy the craving of his heart. Christ alone can do this. We have to confess for ourselves how little we know of that deep content which filled Paul's heart when writing to the Philippians, he says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content"; but we may hear a still deeper note struck, when he says, "To me to live is Christ."

And so as we learn little by little, and how slowly at best, some of the graces and perfections of Christ, we say with St Augustine "Too late have I come to love Thee." But it is our privilege to add with David, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Ps. xvii. 15).

T. R.

## Millennial Dawnism.

**T**HIS system of teaching has been so much pressed upon the public and brought to the front by the sale and circulation of books and tracts, as well as by public lectures, that it is well that people should be plainly warned of its true character.

In the first place it is to be remarked that the title of the publications has been constantly changed, the editions having appeared as "Millennial Dawn," "Zion's Watch Tower," "Studies in Scripture," "The People's Pulpit," etc. Why these frequent changes? The object is, doubtless, to evade the searching light of criticism, so that when it is exposed under one name it can take refuge in another, and thus deceive the unwary with the idea that it is some commendable Christian effort to expound and unfold Bible truth.

But when stripped of the drapery with which the system of doctrine is sought to be adorned, and the sophistry by which it is defended, and viewed in the light of scripture, it will be found to be one of the most deadly assaults of Satan upon almost every truth of Christianity which has appeared of recent years.

**The Deity of Christ.**—Take, for example, the great foundation truth of the person of Christ. What does Millennial Dawnism teach as to this? It teaches that Jesus, in His prehuman existence, was a spiritual being, higher than angels, but a creature; prior to His incarnation, and during His early life, He was a creature, but not God. As a reward for His obedience unto death, He is now exalted to be God (vol. i. 177-188).

We have not attempted to state all, or nearly all, the false doctrines on this point. They are on lines somewhat similar to the old Gnostic speculations, and



the Socinian and Unitarian doctrines of later date, all of which have been rejected and refused with righteous indignation by orthodox Christians of every denomination. The testimony of scripture on the fundamental truth of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus, is most complete and irrefutable, but space forbids us to refer to more than a few passages.

Take the Gospel of John, written specially to establish the divine glory of the Son, the Eternal Word, against all the vain speculations of the human mind. How does it open?—By presenting to us in a few brief and concise sentences a most complete unfolding of the eternal pre-existence, the distinct personality, and the absolute Deity of the *Logos*, the Word. Here we have the affirmation, “The Word was God” (ver. 1). It is not here a question of what He “became,” as in verse 14, “The Word became flesh,” but of what He **was**; He “was God,” and that was eternally so. Creation is brought in, in verse 3, but only, if we may so say, to pay a brief homage to the Creator—for creation here is ascribed to the Son in the most positive and specific manner. Now, to create is a divine prerogative; no one can create but God, and clearly He who creates must be *before* that which is created. We have, therefore, a further and an irrefutable witness to the Deity of our Lord.

If we had only this scripture, Mr Russell and his system of doctrine would stand convicted of casting a deep dishonour on the Son of God, by the denial of an essential attribute of His nature, namely His Godhead. This is very solemn.

Turning to Philipians ii. 6, we read “Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God” (R.V.). This passage plainly proves that Christ Jesus subsisted ever in “the form

of God," therefore, He did not think it anything to be grasped at or attained to be on an equality with God, for He was God. The wonder was that He should have laid aside, not indeed His Deity, which could not be, but the glory proper to Godhead, in becoming a man; and voluntarily taken upon Him the lowly form of a bondservant. His Godhead, before incarnation, is plainly stated, and this is just what Mr Russell denies.

But let us follow the Saviour to the moment of His birth in this world. Here, too, scripture is no less emphatic and explicit in safeguarding the glory of our Lord. And so we read in Matthew i. 23, respecting the babe born at Bethlehem, "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us." This quotation from Isaiah vii., concerning the Messiah of Israel, is a remarkable one. Though the woman's Seed, born of the Virgin, truly and really man, yet He was, as to His divine nature, GOD with His people; the supreme Jehovah whom the prophet had seen in vision in chapter vi. This is affirmed in John xii. 41.

But, as the truth of the Deity of Christ is fully confessed by all Christians who are sound in the faith, we need not pursue the matter further here, and would simply refer the reader to Romans ix. 5; Colossians i. 19 and ii. 9; Hebrews i.; 1 Timothy iii. 16, and many other passages.

How solemn, yea how awful, the responsibility and the guilt of those who fill pages and pages of print in the endeavour to explain away the plain teaching of scripture; and who press upon the public a system of doctrine which denies the very foundation of the christian faith, and casts so deep a slight on the God-head glory of the Son of God!

Our Lord Himself has said, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent

Him," and the Apostle John says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." He who casts a dishonour on the Son of God, dishonours not only Him, but the Father who sent Him and the Holy Spirit whose special office it is to glorify Christ (John xvi. 14).

The same apostle, in chapter ii. of his 1st epistle, warns the believers against the "many antichrists" which were even then in the world; how much more so now! *The Antichrist*, when he comes, will deny that Jesus is the Christ and will deny the Father and the Son, and these "many antichrists" are actuated by the same spirit. Everyone who denies the true Deity of our Lord is an antichrist in the sense of this passage.

Then, in chapter iv., our apostle gives the test of the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. A false spirit will never "confess Jesus Christ come in flesh."\* Now these words "come in flesh," if applied to a mere man, even a good man, would have no sense, because such could not come in any other way. But the wonderful thing was that a divine person should so come; an angel would have no right to leave his first estate. It involves, in fact, the confession of the whole truth of Christ's person, as both GOD AND MAN IN ONE PERSON. These "false prophets" who had gone out into the world, refused to acknowledge this truth, being actuated by a "spirit of error," that is, by a satanic spirit.

What should be the attitude of the true Christian respecting such? We find the answer to this question in John's second epistle; all the more striking because it is addressed to a woman, the "elect lady." He says, "Whosoever goeth onward [*i.e.* beyond the true doctrine

\* This is the more exact translation. To confess "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," is to confess a historical *fact*, but to confess "Jesus Christ come in flesh," is to confess *Him* when so come, that is to confess a *person*, in a way that is true of no other.

of Christ] and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God" (R.V.). Many deceivers had gone out into the world, who did not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh (verse 7), and if any came, not bringing this doctrine, the faithful Christian is told not to receive such into their house or even to greet them (verses 10-11).

Some might say this was narrow and showed a lack of christian charity; but he who receives one who teaches a false Christ, is "partaker of his evil deeds." It is never true charity to make terms with Satan and his emissaries; it is only disloyalty to the Christ who is our Lord and Saviour. Of course the case of a simple soul, misled by false teachers, is quite another thing; here we may well apply the words of the epistle of Jude, "of some making a difference," and earnestly seek the restoration of such.

F. G. B.

*(To be continued.)*

**The Temple of the Lord.**—"Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" (Jer. vii. 4). When the people are far from God, they attach themselves to ordinances; it is the mark that all is going to ruin. From the moment that God is of little importance to the conscience, ordinances become the objects of superstition, and take the place of God. . . .

Ecclesiastical influence is always greatest at the moment when the conscience is hardened against the testimony of God; because unbelief, which trembles after all, shelters itself behind the presumed stability of that which God had set up, and makes a wall of its apostate forms against the God when they hide, attributing to these ordinances the stability of God Himself.

J. N. D.

## A Soldier's Letter.

The following touching extracts are taken from the letter of a young soldier, twenty-five years of age, to one in sorrow owing to the death of her husband, who was killed in the war. The writer of the latter was himself killed by a shell, just twenty-four days after it was written. We think the extracts will be helpful to some at the present time.

*Sunday, 16th May 1915*

**W**HEN we consider the case of our beloved one, whom the Lord has taken to Himself, can we not say that it is a great blessing for him? What a change! To leave this world of distresses, of miseries and of tears, to be with Jesus, where God rests in His love! Surely he would not come back for anything in this world; and we, even were it in our power, would we recall him? Surely not—is it not so? We would not wish him to come down into this sorrowful place where sin dwells—a place which we ourselves will soon leave, it may be this evening or tomorrow.

Even though the hope of the coming of the Lord may be somewhat deferred, it will certainly be made good; “though it tarry, wait for it” (Hab. ii. 3). And we are going onward towards that hour when we shall again meet those whom we love, and, better still, we shall see Jesus. Then there will be no separation, no more tears; this is a comfort to our hearts.

But for the present, it is a reality that your dear husband is no longer with you, and you are left to continue your journey alone. For us (Christians) the *despair* of death no longer exists. Your husband is not lost; for when we look with the eye of faith, the heart sees him with Jesus.

Oh, what a hope is ours! How fitting it is to sustain

and encourage us, yea even to enable us to rejoice amidst our tears, for we sorrow not as those who have no hope.

And, besides this, you are not left alone. God, the God whom we know, has promised to sustain you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me" (Jer. xlix. 11.), says the Lord. He is the God who takes care of the orphan and the widow (Ps. lxxviii. 5). He knows your sorrow (Exod. iii. 7), He alone can apply a balm to the wound made in your heart (Ps. cxlvii. 3).

But, even if His ways with us are often incomprehensible, let us not forget that He loves us as He loves His own Son (John xvii. 23). Loved with such a love, we have nothing to fear. With a tenderness of which the heart of our Father alone is capable, it can be said, "Thou countest my wanderings; put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" (Ps. lvi. 8). There is not a sigh of your afflicted heart which passes unknown to Him, and He will meet all your needs. . .

The Lord Jesus is also ever with us to encourage us. He speaks with His voice of love; He knows His sheep by name. He says to us, as of old to His disciples, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matt. xiv. 27). This voice causes our hearts to burn even amidst our tears . . .

It is not that our grief is not felt; it must be felt. The Lord well knows that it fills us with sadness, but He Himself weeps with us. And we—we can pour out our tears into His heart and tell Him our grief. You have His blessed bosom on which to repose your wearied head; take it not from there. Whatever may happen, we can say, as does the hymn,

“Earth’s storms against me rage and swell,  
 The driven waves run high ;  
 I fear not, for all must be well,  
 With Jesus ever nigh.”

Receive, with my Christian sympathy, my true and affectionate salutations in the Lord.

*(From the French.)*

## Trustworthiness of the New Testament.

A RECENT book by Sir W. M. Ramsay, entitled “The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament,” is of more than passing interest. It is well to see it issued at a time when the work of the destructive “Higher Critics” has done so much to unsettle belief in the Bible amongst the masses.

The writer had, during his early studies, accepted the position of the critics, whom he admired for their learning. After years of investigation, study, and travel in the East, he, however, changed his judgment, and now strongly supports the trustworthiness and credibility of the New Testament.

We give below a few brief quotations from the book. In the preface he says:—

“My aim is to state certain principles that result from modern discovery, and to illustrate their bearing on the New Testament. The method is to show from the examination, word by word and phrase by phrase, of a few passages, which have been much exposed to hostile criticism, that the New Testament is unique in the compactness, the lucidity, the pregnancy and the vivid truthfulness of its expression. That is not the character of one or two only of the books that compose the New Testament; it belongs in different ways to all alike, though space fails in the present work to try them all. . . .

"I do not follow the prevailing tendency of German criticism of the New Testament. It is wrong because it is narrow, and because it judges from erroneous premises, and unjustifiable prejudices; and one welcomes any signs of a return to a saner and better-informed judgment."

Further on he says, referring to Luke ii. 1-3:—

"I confess that, when I see the self-satisfied and pretentious ignorance of the critical theologians miscalling and vilifying this most wonderful little gem of historical insight and word-painting, I find it difficult to maintain my indignation. These are the dull and blind savants whom the modern world has accepted as learned, and to whom so many have humbly bowed down and done homage, and worshipped."

Referring to the Acts, he says:—

"The question among scholars now is with regard to Luke's credibility as a historian; it is generally considered that he wrote at a comparatively early date, and had authorities of a high character even where he himself was not an eye-witness. How far are we to believe in his narrative? The present writer takes the view that Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. . . . You may press the words of Luke in a degree far beyond any other historian's, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and hardest treatment, provided always that the critic knows the subject and does not go beyond the limits of science and justice."

## Sower and Reaper.

*(Continued from page 135.)*

"**B**EHOLD, *a sower went forth to sow*": such is the striking affirmation in the first two gospels. Luke, while omitting the word, "behold," adds "His seed" at the end, most characteristically, as already remarked on page 134: "The seed is the word of God," and its prominence, as the *basis* of



faith, is everywhere striking in the third gospel. We have only to refer to the short and stirring account of the angel's visit to the shepherds at Bethlehem, as an instance in point. The shepherds did not go to the manger to learn whether or no the word they had heard was true; but they judged of what they saw *by* the spoken words, which told them beforehand who and what that Babe was; even Mary, His mother, kept the words, "and pondered them in her heart" (Luke ii. 19). "The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had *heard* and seen, *as it was told unto them*"—a precious commentary indeed on the apostle's word, "So then faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17).

John, unfolding the secrets of the divine mystery, shows that only through the Lord's own *death* can any word of God become available for a sinful creature, when God's purpose is to bring such into present and permanent relationship with the Author of all good. Had the blessed Lord, at the end of His ministry in Galilee, returned into heaven from the mount of transfiguration, there could not have been a possibility for any human creature to have access into the paradise of God. And this surely explains the constant references to His *death* in the scriptures of old, both by word and by types, beginning from the moment when Adam was driven out of Eden (Gen. iii. 15). But when Christ was crucified, the marvellous word was given to the dying thief, "Verily I say unto thee, *To-day* shalt thou be *with Me* in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). How blessedly complete are the scriptures of truth, where each part shines in its own intrinsic glory, besides affording a gradual unfolding of the purposes and ways of God, suited

to the particular circumstances through which His saints were passing !

The reference to Jonah being "three days and three nights in the whale's belly," with the Lord's comment that the Son of man should likewise be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," unexplained at the time,\* is thus seen to be a fitting introduction to all that follows in Matthew xiii. The Lord's death was the underlying necessity, in order that grace should flow out to sinful creatures, and in view of which grace the Lord would become a Sower.

But the Gospel of John lays a further stress upon this, inasmuch as his relation of facts introduces death, in some form or other, as an intrinsic part of the Lord's service. This is noticeable in every one of the first twelve chapters, except chapters iv. and ix., which speak of worship, and show how and why the objects of God's saving grace are brought to Him; for indeed the Father "seeketh" worshippers who shall "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (iv. 23-24).

Let us then recall the passages which speak of the Lord's death :

(i.) John i. 29: The first announcement divinely given by John the Baptist, when he saw Him coming for baptism, is, "Behold the LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

(ii.) 19-22: The "sign" given by the Lord Himself to the contending Jews, who clamoured for one, was, "Destroy this temple" (referring to "the temple

\* This is all peculiar to Matthew, unless Luke xi. 30 be taken to refer to it; but there is no mention in Jonah's prophecy of the Ninivites being aware of that fact of his having passed through the sea, and Luke says that he was (personally, no doubt in his preaching), a "sign" to the Ninivites. *They* repented when they heard it, whereas those who heard the Lord did not repent. So Matthew also states in the next verse, xii. 41.

of His body”), “and in three days I will raise it up.”

(iii.) 14-15: In His discourse with Nicodemus, He shows that there was no possibility of any one having eternal life unless the Son of man were lifted up, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” The figure was in itself explicit; but the expression “lifted up,” used again by the Lord in chapter viii. 28, is expressly stated in chapter xii. 32-33 to indicate the particular kind of death which alone could avail for sinners, that is, “the death of the cross” (Phil. ii. 8). For, as the apostle explains, that was the only death which carried the *curse* with it (Gal. iii. 10-14); and the whole chapter xxvii. of Deuteronomy is most conclusive in showing that the Israelites—the nation nearest to God—were all under the curse. There were no blessings at all pronounced at that solemn moment; for the Levites, appointed to bless, could only curse; and all the people had to say, “Amen” to every curse uttered, there being twelve in all, according to the number of the twelve tribes. Furthermore, the law itself was written on Ebal, the mountain of the curse (see verses 4 and 13). The final curse is the one quoted by the apostle.

We pass on then to John v., which gives the wonderful discourse of the Lord with the Jews, in connection with the healing of the impotent man on the Sabbath day. It is a sort of corollary to chapter ii. 19, showing how the Son of God will raise those that hear His voice both spiritually at present, and actually when the appointed day shall come for it.

In chapter vi., He is the food of life as well as the life-giver, and we have to “eat His flesh and drink His blood,” both for the *possession* of eternal life, and the enjoyment of that *communion* to which the Christian is called (verses 53-58).

Almost the whole of chapter vii. is taken up with the definite purpose of the Pharisees to put the Lord to death, even as, in viii. 59, they took up stones to cast at Him.

In chap. x. He is pre-eminently the Good Shepherd who "giveth His life for His sheep." Again the Jews took up stones to stone Him (verses 31, 39).

Caiaphas's testimony formulates this settled purpose of theirs in a most remarkable way, "not of himself" but prophetically, "that Jesus should *die* for the nation"; then we read, "and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (xi. 49-52). Such is the divine comment on the "high priest's" words.

This most important part of the "work" given Him by the Father to carry out, could however find no intelligent response or sympathy in the heart of any one of His chosen disciples. In spite of the Lord's repeated assurances, they were no further advanced than the prophet Daniel, who "heard, but understood not" (viii. 27; ix. 26; x. 17; xii. 8). While the Lord was with His disciples on earth, the truth about His death was, as it were, a divine secret shut up in His own bosom; for until He was actually nailed to the cross, none of them believed in the possibility of His dying, and they were "afraid to ask Him" for any explanation (Mark ix. 32). Nor did any of them count upon His rising again from the dead, although the Lord had told them of it at least four times. That is quite clear from the conversation He had with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 21). They did not even believe the testimony of the women who saw Him after He was risen (Mark xvi. 10-14). Their sorrow and anguish of heart at losing Him,

*Continued on page 153.*

as they thought, only served to emphasise their unbelief.

All this may serve to explain one part of that "straitening" to which the Lord refers, when He says, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50; xiii. 32-33). He had many things to say to His disciples, which would have no meaning for them until His death had taken place. How important then is it for us to bear in mind the apostolic exhortation, "Always bearing about in the body the *dying* of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10). We note that it is not here said "the death," which, as an accomplished fact, turns our thoughts rather to all that it has wrought for us; whereas the "dying" expresses more particularly what it was to Him, in all its varied bearings. And that was ever before His soul during the whole course of His patient and blessed ministry.

After the Lord's resurrection, the disciples saw Him on several occasions, but He only once indicated a special rendezvous on a certain mountain in Galilee, thus confirming what He had said on the night in which He was betrayed (Matt. xxvi. 32; xxviii. 7, 10, 16; compare Mark xiv. 28, xvi. 7). With that exception, they never could tell whether they would at any time see Him again. Moreover, when He finally led them out as far as to Bethany on the Mount of Olives, forty days after His resurrection, there was apparently another disappointment reserved for them; for their thoughts were full of the kingdom being even then and there restored to Israel (Acts i. 6). He told them that something better than that was in reserve for them by the coming of the Holy Ghost; . . . and "while they beheld," He was

taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. They had to return to the city and remain ten days in prayer and supplication until the promised blessing came, on the day of Pentecost, and they were enabled to enter into the meaning as well as into the necessity of His death (Acts ii. 23, 24; iii. 17, 18).

On that day they were anointed and sealed by the Holy Ghost, and their night of weeping gave place to a joyous anticipation of a morning without clouds, when faith shall be confirmed by sight in the eternal presence of our living Lord (2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Ps. xxx. 5; Mal. iv. 2). Even that will be anticipated for us, who know Him now as the "bright and morning star" (2 Pet. i. 19; Rev. xxii. 16-17).

But in meditating upon our joy, let us not lose sight of His joy (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). For "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Ps. cxxvi. 6); and "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thess. iv. 14). Jesus is the **Reaper** as well as the **Sower**. Times of affliction are an occasion for unfoldings of future glory, even as the sun rises out of darkness; and the reaper's joy is shared by all that are His.

W. J. L.

## Millennial Dawnism.

### II.

**THE Resurrection.**—The doctrines taught concerning our Lord's resurrection are equally destructive of foundation truth. We almost shrink from quoting what is said, but one has to do so if we are to warn souls against it. It is denied that

the body of Jesus was raised from the dead, and to explain its disappearance from the tomb Mr Russell says, "Our Lord's human body was, however, supernaturally removed from the tomb. . . We know nothing about what became of it, except that it did not decay or corrupt . . . Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows; nor is such knowledge necessary" (vol. ii., 125-130). He also teaches that Jesus, at and after His resurrection, was a spirit, a "spirit being," and no longer a human being in any sense (vol. i. 231).

These profane speculations are worse than the lie of the chief priests, who gave large money to the soldiers, saying, "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept" (Matt. xxviii. 13). Peter said to the Jews, "*This Jesus hath God raised up*" (Acts ii. 32); again, "*The Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead*" (Acts iii. 15); again, "*Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . whom God raised from the dead*" (Acts iv. 10); again, "*Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly*" (Acts x. 40). It was the same Jesus whom they had known all through His ministry, and in the same body and no other.

It was the express purpose of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures to give us the most ample testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and that, too, in the body in which He was laid in Joseph's new tomb. Thus, the risen Saviour said, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have . . . He showed them His hands and His feet" (Luke xxiv. 39-40). To Thomas He said, "Reach hither thy finger,

and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John xx. 27). We find also that He ate and drank with His disciples, after He rose from the dead (Luke xxiv. 43; Acts x. 41), thus showing that He was still truly and really man.

The truth of the resurrection is the pivot, we might say, on which the whole fabric of Christianity turns. See how emphatic the teaching of that great resurrection-chapter, 1 Corinthians xv. is, as to this—"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (ver. 14); "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (ver. 17). Satan knows well that this is a cardinal truth of the gospel and he raises up instruments to invalidate it, as far as he can. Sometimes he uses the more refined and educated scholars to "beguile" souls by enticing words and to "spoil" them by "philosophy and vain deceit"; sometimes he uses the more commonplace and coarse discourses of men like "Pastor" Russell. But His object is always the same, namely, to dishonour Christ and to ruin souls.

If Christ was not truly GOD as well as MAN, then there is no Saviour, and no salvation; for a mere man could not atone for the accumulated guilt of a lost world. If He was not raised from the dead, then there is no gospel, and even the apostolic preaching was in vain. Thank God, the plain teaching of His word, proving that Christ imparted to His glorious work of redemption on the cross all the value and worth of His divine person, is ample and undeniable. And God has demonstrated his perfect satisfaction with that work, by raising His Son from the dead, and crowning Him with glory and honour at His own right hand.



\* \* \* \* \*

**No Hell.**—One of the favourite “catchy” subjects taken up in largely advertised public lectures by Mr Russell and his staff, is that of the future punishment of the wicked. He scoffs at hell, and the punishment of the wicked or the lost. Of course it is a very pleasant idea to the man of the world, to think he can live pretty much as he likes, get another chance in the next world, and escape punishment. Such theories will always find a ready ear amongst the masses.

But one verse of scripture overturns all the “Pastor’s” theories about the gospel being preached to men after they are raised from the dead, and before the millennial reign begins, so that they may get a second chance of accepting it. That verse will be found in Revelation xx. 5, “the rest of the dead” (*i.e.*, the unsaved dead), “lived not until the thousand years were finished” (R.V.). Now if they live not again until after the close of the millennium, it is clear that they are not raised before it in order to get another chance. Mr Russell tries to evade the force of this passage by raising a question as to the reading in the Greek; but we are quite content to take the Revised Version, which was the work of scholars; Mr Russell does not know Greek, not even the alphabet.\*

How awful it is to think of the many who will find out when it is too late, that they have been deceived! It will generally be found that teachers who deny eternal punishment speak much about the *love* of God, but they seem to forget entirely about His *holiness*. They have, indeed, made a god to suit their own imagination. But the Lord Jesus, who was the living

\* See “Facts and More Facts,” C. Cooke, New York, p. 18.

exponent of the love of God, spoke of "the fire that never shall be quenched," "the Gehenna of fire"; and He applied the same word "eternal" to the duration of the punishment of the wicked, and to the blessing of the saved (Matt. xxv. 46).

The true God is a God of love indeed, but He is also a God of infinite holiness, justice, majesty, and truth; who will "by no means clear the guilty," especially those who are guilty of turning their back upon the Saviour He offers them. It is a striking fact that the "lake of fire" is mentioned three times at the close of the Revelation (chaps. xx. 10, and 15; xxi. 8). We make no comment upon these words; they are indeed too solemn and serious when we consider the issues involved, and we simply leave them for the reader's reflection in all their momentous import and meaning.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Prophetic Views.**—Mr Russell's prophetic views are no better than his teaching on other points, but they are largely used as a cover for bringing out, in a subtle way, the more deadly heresies of the system.

His theory respecting the coming of the Lord is, that in 1874 the Lord came (vol. ii. 146), that He has been dwelling on the earth since then; and that since 1878 the risen saints have also been sojourning on the earth (vol. ii. 234, 306). Strange that no one knows anything about it save Mr Russell and the "little flock" (the Dawnists)! The spring of 1878 marked the time when the nominal church systems were "spued out" of Christ's mouth, and 1881 marks the close of special favour to the Gentiles. Such are Mr Russell's vagaries; to state them is to condemn them. Further, he says that he considers

it an "established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of 1914 (vol. ii. 99). But 1914 has come and gone, the events have not taken place, so that Mr Russell is proved to be a false prophet.

Naturally Mr Russell and his apologists had to endeavour to explain away his mistakes, to hedge, and to make it appear that he did not really say what his words plainly conveyed to the reader. The present war was also made to appear in the light of a fulfilment of his predictions. But what he taught was, that the close of 1914 was to see "the final end of the kingdoms of this world," and everyone knows that this has not come to pass. Our Lord has purposely not revealed the time of His return and of His future reign, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man," because He wants His people to be always on the watch, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mark xiii. 37).

We have not attempted to take up a tithe of the errors of this evil system of teaching; to do so would require a volume. The whole tendency of it is to degrade Christ and to exalt man. It misuses and misapplies scripture, denies the truths dearest to the believer's heart, and deceives the unbeliever with the false and fatal delusion that there is no hell and no future punishment for sin. To all who teach it, the Christian who would be true to Christ must say, "NO LIE IS OF THE TRUTH" (1 John ii. 21). F. G. B.

## Work Amongst the Soldiers.

**W**E gladly respond to a request from our brother, Mr U. Goss, that we should ask any of our readers who can do so to help with the circulation of the Scriptures amongst the soldiers. The brother named has opened his house for meetings, visits several of the barracks, and in other ways seeks to bring the gospel before the young men of the army.

The "Active Service" Testaments, which are well printed and bound in a form suitable for the pocket, are the best for distribution, and are much appreciated by the men. Copies of the Gospel of John are also much in request.

It is truly a matter for thankfulness that these young men so gladly receive and value the Word of God, and are so willing to listen to the blessed story of the gospel. Oh that we all might be more earnest in seeking the salvation of souls, and so utilise better than we do the little time left ere the Lord comes or we pass to be for ever with Him! Many of these dear fellows may never return to this country if this terrible war should last for long, which seems likely to be the case.

May we also suggest that individuals and assemblies would make the circulation of the Scriptures amongst the soldiers a subject of earnest supplication and prayer, that God may own and bless His Word by His Spirit.

Those desiring to have practical fellowship with the work, either by sending pocket Testaments or gospels, or by contributing to the cost of purchasing same, will please communicate with Mr U. Goss, 231 High Street, Hounslow, England.

**"The night cometh, when no man can work."**

## Our Responsibility.

### A WORD FOR THE PRESENT TIME.

**B**ELOVED, how different is our lot from that of the world, which is going on to judgment! Judgment is behind us, and the cross of Christ is the eternal witness that it is past. The glory of Christ is about to receive us, and it will shine upon us for ever, when we shall be in the Father's house.

Christ is coming to bring us there; but, in His absence, He leaves us here below for a little while, it may be for a day, desiring that we should make Him known to the world during His absence by the reproduction of those traits and features which were seen in Him. The offering up of Himself to God, whether in His life or His death, was "salted with salt," as it is said, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." The salt was, in His case, that practical holiness and the entire separation of His whole being to God, which marked His path through the world.

He said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13). The action and the presence of the Holy Spirit, acting in the hearts of believers, in *order to produce practical sanctification*, is now the only hindrance to the final development of evil in the world. This is why He says to us, "Have salt in yourselves" (Mark ix. 50): "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. v. 13.)

Without a life of practical holiness, without having our hearts separated from the world and its desires, can we be of any use for Christ, and can we represent

Him here below during His absence? If we accommodate ourselves to the world, we take away the savour from the name of Christ, and we draw down a serious judgment upon ourselves. Have we not proved that this is so during the year which has just passed?

The Lord says to us also, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14). What a privilege! He says *of Himself*: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5). He was *the* light whilst He walked amongst men, and this light shone forth from Him to lighten all things. And now He causes us to be this light, for we are "light in the Lord" (Eph. v. 8).

We are left here to continue His testimony before men—for, as the "salt" is *in* ourselves, the "light" shines *out* from us. Have we put our witness under a bushel or on a lamp-stand? Has our light shone before men, as a city situated on a hill which cannot be hid? With what humiliation must we not recognise that we have failed in practical holiness—that we have failed as a witness for the Lord!

But there is still time. If the light is under a bushel, it is not yet put out; and He will not extinguish the smoking wick. Let us diligently put our lamp, on a candlestick which will cause it to be seen by "all who are in the house." We shall soon be in the Father's house, where we shall shine as the sun (Matt. xiii. 43); *then* the light will be perfect, but we are the light of the world now before men. Let us walk as children of light.

When the assembly shall have been taken to be with the Lord, the world will be plunged into profound darkness. "The night cometh when no man can work," and men stumble when they walk in the night.

May we take to heart our responsibility to maintain

in the world the heavenly character of Christ, and to answer to our calling whilst there is still time; "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting the coming of the *day of God*." H. R.

*(From the French.)*

### Christ's Reign.

THIS world is not to remain for ever the sporting-place and playground of the devil. That will not be allowed for ever. The Son of David will yet have His place in it, and His glory too, as its ruler, and the world will then be altered. "None shall hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain." There is a time coming when Christ will be the Prince of Peace. He has declared positively that this is not at the present time. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division," etc. That is, this is the time when the bringing in the light awakens the passions of men; and until Christ's second coming puts them down, they continue their raging.

And Christians now have to take up the cross and follow Him. Do you think if Christ were reigning, His followers would only have the cross? Why, they would have the crown. We are positively told that our part is the cross. We must now take it up every day. But, when Christ reigns, that will not be the part of His people. He will "come to be glorified in His saints"; and a glorious place they will get, when He comes to reign. J. N. D.

## Sower and Reaper.

*(Continued from page 154.)*

**T**HE Lord's work as a **Sower** serves to bring into marked prominence the opposition of the "enemy," as we shall see in following the parables of Matthew xiii. When the Lord was on the way to the cross, He gave him the title of "Prince of this world," first at the close of His public ministry (John xii. 31-36), and then twice to His disciples in the quiet of the upper chamber (xiv. 30; xvi. 11). What a terrible exchange the "princes of this world" made in their ignorance, when they crucified the Lord of glory (see 1 Cor. ii. 5-10). They thought at the time they were able to carry out their own wills; but in reality they were putting out the Light of the world, and accepting the rulers of its darkness, with whom we have to wrestle (Eph. vi. 11-13). How all that is passing around us at the present time serves to illustrate this solemn fact.

Let us not, however, forget what we find particularly set forth in Mark's Gospel, that the Lord will be the **Reaper** of all that He has sown and that has brought forth fruit to His glory (chap. iv. 26-29). He is far more anxious about the result than we can ever be. More than that, the harvest, for which He is patiently waiting, will show that the "kingdom" is God's, not man's. And many "Alleluias" will celebrate it, beginning with the rapture of the saints to heaven, and the casting out of the "great dragon" which deceives the whole world (Rev. xii. 5-11; xix; xx. 1-6). Matthew refers to it briefly in a single verse of the second parable (ver. 30), with the explanation in verse 43. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun."

In fact these two things, the Lord's work of grace



and the enemy's persistent opposition, are brought out in a remarkable way by Matthew, who, as usual, gives a very brief, but connected and complete, summary of the Lord's purpose and work, in seven parables, the first of them being that of the **Sower**, introductory to the six similitudes of the "kingdom of heaven" which follow.

Our readers are no doubt acquainted with the fact that the expression "kingdom of heaven" is only found in Matthew. Elsewhere in the New Testament we find "kingdom of God," which gives its moral character. But the form found in Matthew is simpler, and enables us to enter more intelligently into what we may call its component parts. The source of all real power is in *heaven*, and *there* will be found also the rewards reserved for those who have, at the present time, a share in Christ's sufferings here. Peter shows how the glory is everywhere in scripture the counterpart of present suffering, even as in the case of the Lord Himself (1 Pet. i. 9-13; iv. 13; v. 10; and so Paul in Rom. viii. 17-18; 2 Cor. iv. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12).

Matthew, as often remarked, gathers up the scriptures of the Old Testament in their reference to Christ, and that is an immense help for the better understanding of the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a remarkable example of this. To those who read attentively the book of Daniel, such passages as iv. 25-26, 37, and vii. 14, 18, 22, 27, must make the expression "kingdom of heaven" quite familiar. All power on earth was only power delegated by God. At the first it was in the hand of Adam. Eventually God chose the children of Israel in such a way as that they might know His direct government over them; but they had not faith for this, and at length a king was granted them. After a long trial, led away by

their kings chiefly, they turned to idolatry, and God gave them up; His throne at Jerusalem was put an end to, and universal power was granted to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Since the break-up of the Roman kingdom it has gradually resolved itself into the state of things with which we are familiar, all tending to increasing departure from God.

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn in his own experience that the heavens did rule, notwithstanding the power, seemingly universal, which was in his hands; and to Daniel it was made known that there is a time coming when the rule will be taken by the Son of man, who, in sovereign grace, will associate His saints with Himself in wielding it. This was communicated first to Enoch, in the most ancient of all prophecies, quoted in Jude 14. Daniel also speaks of the Son of man coming "with the clouds of heaven," and Zechariah says that the saints will be with Him (Dan. vii. 13; Zech. xiv. 5). The Lord refers to it when He stood before the Jewish sanhedrim (Matt. xxvi. 64). See also Revelation xix. 11-16.

In reading Matthew xiii., we notice that the parable of the "Sower" was spoken to the people in Galilee gathered in large numbers, but *after* the testimony given through the Lord's miracles had been refused. It was given in that form so that they might understand that only those who came to Him with a real desire to learn—*i.e.*, in answer to His call, "Come unto Me," could possibly enter into the hidden meaning of His words; otherwise it was judgment upon those who had no ears to hear. To His disciples He explained it.

The first parable was to set forth the spoken "*word* of the kingdom," which, when received, set apart those to whom it was given, as the depositaries of the testimony of God in an unsympathetic world. The

following six show in different ways what the kingdom of heaven is at the present time, not in outward manifestation and power, but, notwithstanding, in divine reality; and they are in two sections, the first three in the presence of the multitude; the remaining three, together with the interpretation of the "tares of the field," in the privacy of the house when the Lord was with the disciples alone.

The first effort of the enemy is to catch away the word sown in the heart. There are other things which hinder growth and render it unfruitful, as lack of conscience exercise, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches; but the Sower's desire is to see it produce a "hundred-fold" (needing much patience, as we see in Luke viii. 8, 15). But He does not despise sixty or even thirty-fold. There always will be differences in the effects produced by the preaching of the word of the kingdom.

The Lord then proceeds to show what the kingdom is, and the actual portion which He has in the *world* at this present time, notwithstanding all the wickedness that goes on in it. His "field" is where the word is sown. The enemy cannot prevent His work going on, nor the seed falling into good ground; but he sows tares, "his children," amongst the good seed, so as to spoil the crop. Again, he puts his evil birds in the "great tree" which results from the sowing of a very small seed; or more insidiously still, puts leaven into the "three measures of meal" until it permeates the whole.

Do we realise that this process of evil is now going on, and that the result will be universal, as far as outward testimony goes? *Leaven* is always in scripture a type of evil malignantly working (Lev. ii. 11; 1 Cor. v. 8). When it gets so bad that the true believers will

be unable to maintain themselves in it, the Lord will in "mercy" take His saints out of it as Jude shows (ver. 21).

The last three similitudes of the kingdom of heaven, given to the disciples alone, testify to the Lord's own work in the midst of the world which cast Him out of it. The "field" is the world, as in verse 38. The "treasure" in it, is the sons of men who are the objects of His constant care, yet "hidden," unknown, and uncared for by the great majority. But He sold all He had, laying down His precious life, in order to have them as His own "peculiar treasure" for ever (Heb. ii. 13-18; 1 Pet. ii. 9-10).

And that is not limited to the natural children of Abraham, or to the land of Canaan especially given to them; His thoughts go out to the nations, regularly represented by "the sea," as we have seen already; and the "pearl of great price" is drawn out from thence. Thus it may represent a single soul, the object of the Lord's love, or the church in its completeness which He will present to Himself "glorious" (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 27). In both cases we have His *love* in full measure, and the gift of Himself, selling "*all* that He had."

Finally, we find an indication of the work begun by the Lord, and still carried on by the fishermen, of which Peter was an example (Luke v. 10); they are occupied with "the *good*," which have to be put into vessels. The Lord will use *angelic* power to deal with the evil when the time for that shall come (vers. 39-42).

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of **their Father**" (ver. 43). May the Lord give us all ears to hear!

W. J. L.

## Opened Eyes.

"Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings vi. 17).

"**T**HE hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them," says Proverbs xx. 12; and it is as much the work of God to open the one as the other. When, as the anointed of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus enters upon His blessed service to man, we read in Luke iv. 18 that one of His works of goodness and grace was to open the eyes of the blind. His words in John ix. 39-41 make it quite clear that physical blindness was not the only thing contemplated in that wondrous service, nor indeed the main thing, for He came into this world "that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

The beautiful incident recorded in 2 Kings vi., from which we quote the short direct prayer that stands at the head of this paper, has a most important lesson for us who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. How often do we feel ready to say, like the servant of the man of God, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

The king of Syria had wondered how his plans should so frequently become known to the king of Israel, with whom he was at war, but it was the work of no treacherous spy. One of his own servants let out the secret of "the prophet that is in Israel," that "tellethe the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

The Syrian king's next move, therefore, is to take the prophet, and accordingly he attempts to cut off all escape by surrounding the prophet's house with his army. What a sight met the astonished gaze of

Elisha's servant on that early morning as he found the prophet's house compassed on all sides by the great host of Syrian horses and chariots! What could two defenceless men do in the face of such a mighty company? Yet Elisha answers with perfect calmness, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And he prays: not for deliverance, for that, with the opened eyes of faith, he already saw was amply provided; but that the eyes of his servant might be opened to see what God could do for those that trust in Him (Ps. xxxi. 19, 20).

How often we find these words, "Fear not," on the lips of our blessed Master and Lord in the days of His sojourn here on earth. With them He heals the grief of Jairus, when he thought death had closed the door of hope as to the life of his beloved daughter (Luke viii. 50); and with the same words He comforts the hearts of His disciples, in view of apparent loss in this world through following Him (Luke xii. 42). Again, "Fear not" is upon His lips when He lays His right hand of power upon the prostrate apostle John in lonely Patmos, who, overcome by the awful majesty of His appearance, "fell at His feet as dead."

In each case, too, there is the same call for the faith that brings in God and His unfailing resources.

Elisha has no concern for himself, no fear of the Syrian hosts. It is delightful to think of that short prayer uttered in such simple faith, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." And how immediate the answer!—"And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw." Saw what? A very early forecast of the truth of the word repeated, or rather reproduced, in Romans viii. 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us."

But again Elisha prays, and this time it is a very

great contrast, "Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness," which is also immediately answered. But it is not for judgment on his enemies that he prays thus; the prophet leads them to Samaria, and then once more the prayer is uttered—"Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see"; and with what consternation must the Syrians have found themselves "in the midst of Samaria."

But no thought of revenge or punishment is in the prophet's mind. To the question of the king of Israel, "Shall I smite?" comes the wonderful answer, "Thou shalt not smite; set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." What a lesson for us, dear fellow-Christian, as to the power of grace; and what a lesson to the so-called Christian nations to-day engaged in the great European War, is the blessed result of this manifestation of grace—"So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." What conquest could have effected such a result as that?

There are two spheres in which we may get a salutary lesson from these striking incidents—one as to our individual path and prospects, and the other as to the Church's need and state to-day. How often for ourselves in our family cares, business experiences, every day trials and infirmities, we need to have our eyes opened as to who is for us, to remind ourselves of that love that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and in faith to all, "how shall He not with Him freely give us all things" (Rom. viii. 32). Yet in times of pressure and loneliness, have we not to watch against the inclination to say, "Alas! what shall we do?"

But this is even more felt, perhaps, when we are exercised as to the state of the Lord's people, the

condition of Christian testimony generally, and the many signs of rapidly approaching apostacy. Little by little evil seems to be gaining ground, and the power of truth to be weakened over the lives of those who profess to hold it. Notwithstanding the fact that scripture declares the darkness to be passing, and "the true light now shineth" (1 John ii. 8), we sometimes fear that the darkness increases. Many apparently earnest persons, whom we would fain hope had been delivered from the blindness wherewith "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. iv. 4), seem still to be groping in a semi-darkened state. They remind us of our childish days, when we rubbed our eyes in the dark, and talked of the optical illusions thus produced as if it were light.

Here we may well learn something from Balaam's history. Hired by Balak to curse Israel, he is powerless so to do, notwithstanding his own will and love of gain; and we find he repeats, again and again, that he speaks as the man "who had his eyes shut, but now opened" (Num. xxiv. 3, margin).

Can we think what he would have said had his eyes not been opened? But what a commentary all he says is on the words of the prophet Elisha, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." From the top of the rocks he is made to bear an unwilling testimony to God's view of His earthly people, Israel. They are to Him a called, justified, and glory-destined people.

And, dear fellow-Christain, have we not an equal call to rise up to the thoughts of God about His people to-day? To think of what they are to the heart of Him, who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and waits expectantly for the moment when He shall "present it to Himself."



The first charge, too, in the mission of the Apostle Paul (Acts xxvi. 18) was “to *open their eyes*, and to turn them from darkness to light.” From whence, then, comes all this mist and fog in the minds of so many dear Christians? It is true that the first effect of light from God shining in to our darkened hearts, only reveals the appalling darkness of our natural condition; but God’s purpose is not to drive us to despair, it is only the necessary preparation for the revelation He makes of the light of the knowledge of His glory, “as now seen by opened eyes in the face of Jesus Christ.”

And what a revelation it is, imperfect as our conception is, and must be, when the Holy Spirit illuminates our souls with something of the scope of “the mystery of God’s will” (Eph. i. 9), and gives some idea, poor at best, no doubt, of what Christianity really is, as unfolded in “the unsearchable riches of Christ!” What a joy to have “the eyes of our hearts enlightened” (Eph. i. 18, R.V.) as to our calling, and the purpose of God concerning His church; and so to get a glimpse of what is embraced in the Apostle’s desire, “that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. iii. 19)!

With such desires filling our hearts, how often we shall be led to pray with David, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. cxix. 18).

T. R.

### Dependence.

THE only true attitude for the Christian is that of dependence. The moment we get off the ground of dependence on God we are sure to come to grief. This is true both individually and collectively.

Peter got off the ground of dependence when, in self-confidence, he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Alas, he had soon to learn by bitter experience that he had no strength to stand when the hour of trial came. So with us; if we think we are strong and able to meet the enemy, it is just then we are in the most dangerous position of all. God has to allow some sifting to come, to show us that we are nothing, and that all our strength is in Him.

For a servant of God, even success in the Lord's work has its dangers. He is apt to accredit himself with what God has done through or by him, and to think that *he* has accomplished something. In this connection it is interesting to note that the apostles, after returning from a most blessed missionary work, reported—not what *they* had done, but all that *God* had done with them" (see Acts xiv. 27; xv. 4, 12; xxi. 19).

But it is only in the Lord's presence and in nearness to Him that there can be that absence of self, and constant dependence upon Him, so needed for the christian life and walk and service.

The same fact of the need of dependence is true collectively. The moment an assembly of Christians begin to say (or to *think*, if they do not say it), "*We are the people, the testimony,*" failure has come in, they are off the ground of dependence. Self, and not Christ, has become the object of attention. They have, in fact, taken the first step on the inclined plane of self-occupation, which is sure to end in disaster if not repented of.

Our blessed Lord was the true example of dependence. He never deviated from the path of absolute dependence on the Father, not even for a moment. The last Adam

stood where the first Adam had failed. No subtle allurements of Satan could induce Him to set up an independent will, or leave the ground of simple obedience.

Thus, He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me"; "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"; "I do always those things that please Him," etc. And He could answer Satan by "It is written." He *lived* by the Father, and by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. His was a path of perfect obedience, perfect dependence, perfect submission to the Father's will; and therefore of perfect light and inward joy, whatever sorrows may have pressed upon Him from without.

Oh to learn more of His grace! Just to dwell upon the path of the lowly, humble man, Jesus, who could say in the depth of His self-abnegation, "Thou [my soul] hast said to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord: my goodness [extendeth] not to Thee; To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent [Thou has said], In them is all my delight" (Ps. xvi. 2-3, new trans.). What a place of perfect submission and dependence!

And was not our Lord Jesus truly and really "God over all blessed for evermore?" Surely He was, but He does not take that place in the Psalm just quoted. Nowhere, indeed, does He show Himself to be God more truly than in the act of taking, voluntarily and in divine love, the lowly form of a bondservant. And how blessedly He has marked out the way for us, and manifested the true features of the divine life in man, in His lowly path of dependence on God.

Blessed Saviour, may we learn of Thee and be occupied with Thee! And thus may that wretched self, which so clings to us, be displaced and forgotten in

presence of Thy lowly grace, perfect devotedness, and humble submission to the Father's will in everything!

F. G. B.

### Soul-Winning.

**W**E learn from 2 Corinthians v. that two motives impelled the Apostle Paul to preach the gospel. One was, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." If he thought of the solemn and awful reality of judgment to come, it urged him to go out to "persuade men." Do *we* feel the weight of this serious and solemn fact, that souls are perishing around us, standing, as it were, on the brink of a lost eternity?

But another motive acted on the apostle also. He says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." That love had shone like a sunbeam into Paul's heart, and produced a revolution in his whole life and thoughts. It had changed the bitter persecutor of the church, Saul, into the earnest servant of God, Paul.

What a change the love of Christ can bring about. It can melt the hardest heart and break down the most stubborn will. And the knowledge of this can give strength and courage to make it known to others.

Lord Jesus, so fill the hearts of Thy people with the joy and blessedness of Thy love, that they cannot but tell, out of full hearts, the story of Thy wondrous grace to the poor perishing sinners around!

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**Look.**—The story from beginning to end is "Look and live." As a sinner, I looked to Him and lived. And now, as a saint, I still look on; and every look brings back to me the light, and character, and beauty, and impress of the blessed One I look at.      w. w.

## A Retrospect.

**W**E have now nearly arrived at the close of a year, fraught with some of the most momentous issues and events in the history of the world. Everything is being shaken, and everything is in a state of transition and uncertainty. This is true, both religiously and politically.

A terrible war still devastates a great part of Europe, bringing in its train untold suffering and misery. Many people cannot understand why these things should be, and some even ask the question, "If there is a God, why does He permit these terrible events?"

To the Christian, whose privilege it is to look at things in the sanctuary, apart from the strife of tongues, and in the light of God's word, there is no difficulty or reason to question His ways. It is only a hardness of heart and a lack of consciousness of what the world is, and of the sins of the nations, which causes surprise at the fact that God permits this war.

The truth is, the root of the whole matter is to be found in *the condition of man's heart*. His pride, his unbounded ambition, his cruelty to his fellow-man, his deceit, his lying, and many other evil things are but the outcome of a heart which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

But if we want to know what man really is, in the inmost springs of his being, we must see him as put to the proof by the presence of Christ, who was the true and final test for the heart. When He came into the world in perfect goodness, showing forth grace and love and compassion, what place had He in it? Only a manger to begin with, because there was no room for Him; a cross and a grave at the end. Such is man's

estimate of God, come down in perfect grace. Jesus has to say at the close, "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father"; "They hated Me without a cause."

"But," says someone, "that was long ago; see what advances men have made since then." This present war has taught us otherwise, and has opened the eyes of many as to the falsity of all such ideas. The efforts of civilisation and culture have broken down, and have been plainly shown to be but a thin veneer to hide the utter depravity of the human heart. Moreover, if we know what man's heart is, as seen in the Word of God, we shall not be surprised at what is taking place in the world to-day.

Can we wonder that God's hand is heavy on the nations in chastisement? We may blame one nation for its cruelty and brutality, but have not our national sins and our growing forgetfulness of God called for His chastening? We have only to look back in history to see how God used one nation to chasten another in times past; though in the end the nation which He used as His rod, was itself broken in His hand. His own people Israel, as well as Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, and many others, are witnesses of this amongst the smaller nations. So also with the great world powers—Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. And we all know how the great Roman Empire, grown old in sin and vice, and divided in its strength into east and west, fell under the sword of the barbarian hordes from the north. The same thing is taking place to-day, and will take place again, as the prophetic word so plainly shows.

At the same time God has His own purposes to accomplish, and it must not be forgotten, that in His governmental dealings, He takes full account of the

actings of nations and their responsible rulers. We find a striking instance of this in the case of king Zedekiah, who had taken an oath of submission to the king of Babylon, but who broke it by carrying on intrigues with the king of Egypt. The prophet Ezekiel says, "Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? . . . As I live, saith the Lord God, surely Mine oath that he hath despised, and My covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head" (xvii. 11-21). His evil ways drew down upon him the judgment and chastening of God; and the principle is equally true in His government now, for God is ever a God of righteousness and truth. The nation which acts with deceit, and cruelty, and violence will surely suffer under God's discipline in the long run.

But, let us inquire, what is the Christian's true place and attitude in view of the solemn times in which we live? As to this, Scripture must be our true and only guide. It shows us that we have to go *through* this world, to do our daily work *in* the world, to witness for Christ *to* the world; but we are not *of* the world, even as Christ was not of it (John xvii. 14-16).

It is instructive to see that when our Lord was on earth He never interfered in the affairs of this world or sought to set things right. To one who thought himself wronged, He said, "Man, who made me a judge and a divider over you?" To another, who sought to entrap Him by asking if it were lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, He said, in effect, "How did you come to be under the Roman yoke?" It was God's punishment upon them for their sin and folly. When Peter would interfere by taking the sword in

the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." He might have asked for twelve legions of angels, but He would not.

In a future day it will be otherwise. Then Christ will interfere in judgment. He will take the sword, and He will come again, surrounded by myriads of His saints (Jude 14; Rev. xix.).

To-day Christ is in the place of dependence on the Father's will, not claiming or asserting His rights. He has taken His seat—not yet upon His own throne, but on His Father's throne, patiently waiting "until" Jehovah sets His enemies as the footstool of His feet. Hence the cry in many of the Psalms (in which, indeed, He enters in spirit into the sorrows of the godly remnant of Israel in a future day) is, "How long?"

When the "until" and the "how long?" shall have expired; when the moment of the Father's will shall have arrived, Christ will come in warrior judgment, a sword proceeding out of His mouth, to execute vengeance on His enemies, and *then* He will "break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Rev. xix.; Zech. xiv.; Ps. ii.).

Let us, then, carefully consider the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may seek grace to follow His steps. This is the time of the "kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ," not of the kingdom and *power*. Our true attitude towards the world is one of *grace*; seeking to make known the love of God to lost sinners. God Himself is now acting in *grace* towards this poor world lying in the wicked one.

Then, also, we are responsible to obey rulers and governors (Rom. xiii. 1-7; 1 Peter ii. 13-15), to pray for the king and for all in authority (1 Tim. ii. 2), and



this is all the more important at the present serious time.

But in heart and spirit the Christian's true place is outside the course of this world, which is fast going on to judgment. "Our citizenship (or politics) is in heaven," says the apostle. The Christian, according to the scriptural conception of that word, is one whose place and portion is *in Christ above*. He is already "seated in heavenly places *in Christ*" (Eph. ii. 6); and he waits for the coming of Jesus, when he shall be there, *with Christ*, not only in spirit as now, but in *fact*; changed in a moment to be like Him in glory (1 John iii. 2).

Shall we lower the standard and say that these things are unpractical or visionary ideas? Certainly not. Faith takes its stand on God's Word, and counts on Him for strength to carry it out. We may feel and deplore our shortcomings and failures, but we dare not lower the standard set before us in the Word of God.

F. G. B.

## Sower and Reaper.

(Concluded from page 168.)

WE have noticed how the last parable in Matthew xiii. clearly indicates a continuation of the Lord's personal work as the *Sower*, *after* He had gone back to heaven. His last words to His disciples before He was taken up confirm this: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses to Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8-9; iii. 18-21). Paul's closing word to "his son" Timothy was, "Preach the *word* . . . do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy

ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 1-8). There was to be a spiritual accomplishment of Psalm lxxviii. 11: "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it."

To return then to the figure of the parable, these "fishermen" were "the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," appointed to continue the work which the Lord Himself had begun (Luke i. 2; John xv. 26, 27). And what a blessed ministry it was, "gathering fruit unto life eternal, so that both he that *soweth* and he that *reapeth* may rejoice together" (John iv. 36). Consequently, we must not forget the two sides of the work indicated by the Lord, to which we will presently refer: first, the "casting of the net," and secondly, the "putting of the good into vessels" (Matt. xiii. 47, 48).

The Lord's first call of four disciples set forth in principle these two things, seeing that the one purpose of the fishermen was to secure without fail all the fishes they could reach; for two of them were "*mending their nets*," whilst the other two were "*casting the net* into the sea." That is clear from Matthew. iv. 18 and 21; Mark i. 16 and 19; Andrew and Peter are pointedly called "fishers." In Luke's account, which is more detailed, especially in the case of Peter, we may notice first the main feature of successful work, which is that the Lord Himself "*works with them*" (see Mark xvi. 20); and secondly, the deep exercise of conscience in one so blessed, while feeling all the more acutely his own wretchedness as a *sinner*. But the Lord's assurance blessedly met these exercises, while He confirmed the "call," saying, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke v. 1-11). "They brought their ships to land," but they "forsook all and followed Him." The remarkable conscience-work here set forth is

(Continued on p. 183.)

characteristic of the third gospel, and illustrative of Paul's epistles.

And was it not most suitable in Peter's case, considering the prominent place he was destined to fill, as Paul indeed owns (Gal. ii. 7, 8)? The "keys" of the kingdom of heaven had been specifically committed to Peter; but his humility prevented any mention of them at the time of his decease, when he wrote his second epistle (Matt. xvi. 19). The history, as given by Luke in the Acts, serves to show his spiritual power and authority both for binding and loosing (Acts iii. 6-8; v. 1-10; ix. 36-42; x. 34-44). He had his part in suffering too, though not so much as Paul (John xxi. 18-19; Acts ix. 16). The verse in the Psalm speaks of the sower's *weeping*" (cxxxvi. 6).

In John's Gospel we find in another way how the blessed Lord associates His disciples with Himself in His twofold work of sowing and reaping. At the time of His meeting the woman of Samaria, He said, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." He then foresaw fields "white already to harvest," and He did not fail to point out Samaria especially to the apostles, after His resurrection (John iv. 35-38; Acts i. 8). During His three years' ministry in Galilee, He forbade His disciples to go there, as the first work that lay before them was "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6). Nor is Samaria mentioned in Mark iii. 7, 8. The exception in Luke xviii. 16-18, during the Lord's last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, is very touching, but Jesus calls him a "stranger." Philip, the deacon, was the first to carry out the Lord's commission to the apostles in favour of Samaria, and was greatly honoured of the Lord, not only himself, but in his family (Acts viii. 1, 5, 14, 40; xxi. 8, 9).

Through God's grace towards His Christ-rejecting

people, however, both sowing and reaping went on after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. First of all it was in Jerusalem itself, "where our Lord was crucified" (Rev. xi. 8); and then the testimony spread over Palestine by those who were scattered abroad through the first persecution after Stephen's martyrdom (Acts viii.; ix. 31; xi. 19-26). Finally Paul, who had never seen the Lord on earth, was the chosen vessel to carry the word of grace and forgiveness to the Gentiles. In all these cases the "sowing" was through the *Word* regarding **Christ**, first set forth by the twelve apostles insisting on the *facts* of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, together with the subsequent sending of the Holy Ghost. That laid the foundation, especially amongst the Jews for whom He had specially come, according to the promise made to Abraham, and confirmed by the prophets (Acts iii. 26; x. 34-43). Finally Paul, having seen the Lord in glory and heard His voice, insisted especially upon what He was in His own *person*, "the **Son of God**" (Acts ix. 20). Here we find the true key to the spiritual understanding of John's Gospel, in which also the Lord's death, as we have seen, has such a prominent place.

At the same time, we must remember that there is a great difference between the two ministries: Paul, having seen the Lord in glory, began with the intimation of the unity of the "Body" of Christ, and the *heavenly* relationships into which the saints are brought, and in which they are maintained by the Holy Ghost; whereas John sets forth the revelation of the **Father** in the person of the **Son**, down here on earth, "seen, heard, and handled" (John xiv. 9-11; 1 John i. 1, 2). "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And consequently, as soon as the

Lord's death and resurrection made it possible, the *first* message He sent to the disciples by Mary Magdalene contained the expression of the blessed relationship with the **Father** into which the disciples were brought: "*My Father and your Father, my God and your God*" (John i. 18; xii. 24; xx. 17). We do not find that He ever definitely called the disciples "brethren" till after His resurrection. So it is in Matthew xxviii. 10. To this the Holy Ghost bears witness in the heart of the believer (John xv. 26; xvi. 15; Rom. viii. 15, 16).

It is God's word, simply received into the heart, that produces the effect in its own creative power, as the apostle shows in 2 Corinthians iv. 6, even as God said at the beginning, "Let there be light, and light there was" (Gen. i. 3). Learned men reason about faith in all sorts of ways, but God's statement, majestic in its own simplicity, as Cowper says, outweighs all their reasonings: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). It is now in principle as when the Lord was on earth: "The Sower sows the **word**" (Isa. lv. 10, 11; Mark iv. 14).

From this point of view, the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel are of the greatest value as illustrating this great truth from different points of view. Isaiah speaks of the word in its life-giving power, Ezekiel in its cleansing effects, using "water" as the figure of it; in both the action of the Holy Ghost is prominent (see Isa. lix. 21, and Ezek. xi. 19, 20; xxxvi. 24-27). Both truths are gathered up by the Lord into the one expression of "new birth," which Nicodemus, the doctor, or teacher of Israel, ought to have known. But the peculiar turn He gave it brought in other Scriptures, as the "sowing" of Hosea ii. 23, and what He Himself was personally as the "Son" (Ps. ii. 7; Hos. i. 10). Both passages of Hosea are referred to by Paul in

Romans ix. 25, 26, and by Peter in his first epistle, ii. 10, as the result of *faith* (ii. 6, 7). This is very instructive.

Now if there is this association with the Lord as to *life* through the reception of His *word*, there must of necessity be the same as to every detail of *service*, if it is to be acceptable in God's sight. The Lord definitely takes this ground with the disciples in His discourse at the last supper (John xv. 13-27). Those whom He had called and loved were to be partakers of His joy at the time of the great ingathering of the harvest (Matt. xxv. 21, 23); they were also to receive the Holy Ghost in anticipation of it, and as the earnest of the inheritance (Eph. i. 9-14; 2 Cor. iv. 17). In this sense, again, it will be true that those that *sow* in tears shall *reap* in joy (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6).

But, as hinted at above, there must be the "gathering into *vessels*" besides the "casting of the net." If the evangelist does not himself do it, as Paul did, others who have tasted of the blessedness of salvation should feel their responsibility to follow up the work, nurturing and leading on the souls saved. The reaper can be satisfied with nothing less than the full result of the sowing. And the care that this involves is set forth graphically in Isaiah xxviii. 24-29.

W. J. L.

### "What is Man?"

"**T**HOU art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22). We might have asked, as the record of dying men passes before us, "What is *man*?" But now my eye rests on Jesus: I find the Lord from Heaven a *man*. All is to begin again (1 Cor. xv. 47).

Do I ask again, What is man? At once Christ comes out. Do I look at myself? At all around? What do I see? Enough to break my heart, if there is a heart to be broken. The only thing which prevents people being utterly broken down is that they have not a heart to feel things as they are.

But a rest is *here*! I have got a Man now who satisfied God—this blessed Man on earth in the presence of God, looking to God, and an object to God! Not Messiah purging His floor, but Him in whom God's thoughts and purposes are all folded up. Not man perishing before the moth, but Jesus the Son of Man, not merely coming down from Abraham and David, but traced up, "which was son of Adam, which was son of God"—the second man, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit (Matt. i.; Luke iii.; 1 Cor. xv. 45-49).

What a relief! For what is man? What one's self when the heart's sin is known—giving up God for an apple from the beginning hitherto? But now a man, a blessed Man, appears, "and praying." We are not told this elsewhere; and why here? Because Luke presents man in his perfection—the *dependent* man: for dependence is the essence of a perfect man.

Truly we see *God* shining all through, but yet in Jesus the dependent man, in the place and condition of perfectness as man. The root of sin in us is self-will, independence. But here my heart has rest—a dependent man in the midst of sorrow, but perfectly with God in it all!

J. N. D.

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**Work amongst Soldiers.**—In reference to the note in our October number: our brother, Mr Goss, desires to thank those who have contributed towards this work.

## Things which Can, and which Cannot, be Shaken.

"Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of Hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger" (Isaiah xiii. 13).

"For thus saith the LORD of Hosts ; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations " (Haggai ii. 6).

"But now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," etc. (Heb. xii. 26-28).

**A** MIDST the shaking of all things that are seen, God's purposes of blessing will surely be carried out. His house shall yet stand in its ordered place in this very world, in restored Jerusalem. It shall yet be filled with His glory, and the latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former. What a blessed day for Israel and for the world that will be !

Meantime we (Christians) have a kingdom which cannot be shaken, amidst the shaking of all things here. What stability this gives to the soul that rests on God's word, and yet what gravity also ! We are come to the true Mount Zion, the place where grace triumphed over all man's failure. It is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem above.

Seeing, then, that we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us never forget that our God is a God of holiness and truth as well as of grace. How important this is in the present unbelieving and irreverent age !

Let us remember the "reverence and godly fear" which alone becomes the service of God, for our God (*i.e.*, the Christian's God) is a consuming fire. He is ready to burn up everything in us which is contrary to Himself.