

WORDS OF HELP
FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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“Consider Your Ways.”

Haggai i. 5-7.

AT a time like the present, when God is speaking so solemnly to the nations, yea to us all, it is well to pay serious attention to an exhortation such as this.

God had mercifully interposed and delivered a little remnant from the captivity at Babylon, and brought them back to their land; but what condition were they found in? Alas, they were settling down at their ease, thinking of themselves and not of Jehovah, dwelling in ceiled houses whilst His house lay waste.

Has this no voice for us to-day? Do we give the interests of Christ the first place? Do we seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? or has it not often to be said of us, as it was in the apostle's day, “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's?” Let us “consider our ways.”

But, thank God, He is a God of *grace* as well as of justice. He was ready to meet the very first revivings of a true spirit of devotedness to Him, a spirit which answered to His claims, on the part of this remnant of His people; and so He says, “From this day will I bless you.”

May we, then, at the beginning of another year, when God has been, and still is, calling to each of us in so many ways—when sorrow and bereavement have entered so many families—take stock of our position, and see how far we have responded to all that His grace has done for us.

If we look abroad at the state of things in Christendom, we see a giving up of light and truth and a lapse into indifference on the one hand and ritualism on the

other. Even from the pulpits of our land is proclaimed, more or less openly, unbelief in the Bible, unsound views respecting the atonement, the virgin birth of our Lord, His Deity, His resurrection, etc., besides the denial of the ruin of man, and many other fundamental errors.

Then, what is the condition of those who, having learnt that the systems of Christendom are wrong, have met in a more simple and scriptural way? To anyone who has eyes to see, and who knows what the church of God is, as found in His word, is there not much, very much, to call for deep humiliation and confession?

Nor must we suppose that we, any more than others in times past, are safe, if not kept from falling into evil doctrine or practice by the grace and power of God. It is only unbelief or spiritual blindness which can doubt that God's hand has been laid upon us in chastening, albeit in love and for our good. It is well we should give ear to the word of the Lord, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent" (Rev. iii. 19).

It has been truly said (and it is a solemn word), "There is no place which is more likely to generate neutrality than a sound and true position, if there be not self-judgment maintained and godly sincerity. The more you stand in the forefront of the battle, with the responsible testimony of God, the more you have the grace and truth of God brought out before and by you; if the heart and conscience be not governed and animated by the power of the Spirit of God, through the truth and grace that is in Christ, sooner or later there will be, beyond a question, a lapse back into a position of neutrality, if not active enmity. There will be indifference to all that is good; and the only kind

of zeal, if there be zeal, will be for what is bad." Perhaps this explains the lapse, if not open opposition, of some who once stood for the truth of God, and the integrity of His word.

But times of testing and trial are just the times for faith to shine the brighter, and for a more firm and decided testimony to the truth of God. The "man of God" is the man who stands for God in an evil day, and who is not carried away by the current of things around. For this there must be a practical walking with God in separation from the world, a dependence on His word for light and wisdom, an ungrieved Spirit, and a living faith to sustain the soul in the exigencies and trials of the way.

Thank God, there is One who never changes; "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever." Amidst the wreck and ruin of everything in the professing church and in the world, He is the same. What stability for the soul that rests upon Him! The glory of His person as the eternal Word, the Son of God, before and outside all dispensations, stands clearly revealed in the inspired book. And not only so, but He is the risen Head of the Church, which He loved and for which He "gave Himself"—object of His ceaseless care and unwearied service.

May we then—our hearts satisfied with Christ and the heavenly portion we have in Him, and our souls animated with the joy and reality of His love—go forward on our path, looking and waiting for His return! It is only thus that we shall be kept through grace, and enabled to testify for Him, and to meet the difficulties and trials of the coming year, whatever they may be.

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

Acceptance.—If the One who stood charged with *all* my guilt is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then, clearly, there is nothing against me. All that divine justice had against me was laid on the Sin-bearer, and He endured the wrath of a sin-hating God, that I might be freely and for ever pardoned, and accepted in a risen and glorified Saviour.

* * * * *

Obedience and Confidence.—The two great principles in which Jesus walked were obedience to the word without having any will, and perfect confidence in God. We also can reckon upon God, because we are sure to have Him for us.

* * * * *

Hearts Free and Happy.—If we, in our little measure, carried all our exercises, our little troubles, to God, to go fully through all with Him, our hearts would all be free and happy to turn round and care for others.

* * * * *

“Watch and Pray.”—Everything that meets us is either a temptation, or an occasion of obedience. . . . Everything you meet with is a case in which you serve Christ or do your own will, and this latter is entering into temptation.

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Justification.—Scripture speaks in three ways of justification as the need of man naturally unrighteous:—(1) Justified by His grace (Tit. iii. 7), if we speak of the *source*; (2) Justified by His blood (Rom. v. 9), if we speak of the *procuring cause* in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; (3) Justified by faith, if we ask the *way by which* the soul is individually brought into blessing (Rom. v. 1).

“Repent”—“Hold Fast”

AT a time like the present, with a terrific conflict raging almost at our doors, it is surely incumbent upon every Christian to consider seriously in the presence of God, what He is saying to each one who takes the name of “Christian,” whether truly so or not. Moral responsibility towards God is measured by two things, not only by the position we *profess* to enjoy through a knowledge, however partial, of His revelation of Himself, but also by the condition in which we *ought* to be found as measured by that revelation.

The plea of ignorance, so often put forward to cover and excuse disobedience, will be found of no value in the day of inquiry and retribution. At best, even if *sincere*, it may result in some mitigation of the punishment, “few stripes,” instead of the “many” allotted to “the servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will” (Luke xii. 47-48). Let us weigh well those words “prepared not himself”: do we respond to them as we ought? Is there not very generally a tendency to relaxation, and giving up the things that we have heard, and are supposed to know, in order to find a path more congenial, and less exposed to rebuffs in the ordinary avocations and associations of daily life? And do we not then console ourselves in saying, I knew not?

In searching the Holy Scriptures, an attentive reader will discover numerous answers to these questions, by way of both precept and example, which a truly exercised conscience in the presence of God cannot throw off as inapplicable to itself. The Lord says, as to the old world, giddy and utterly regardless of Him, that they “*knew not* until the flood came and took them all away.” And, He adds, “So shall the coming of the

Son of man be" (Matt. xxiv. 35-39). These solemn words are twice repeated in the passage, and He insists upon the fact that the day and hour of His coming are absolutely *unknown*, and in no sense to be revealed until it is declared in fact. "For in such an hour as *ye think not*, the Son of man cometh" (compare also Mark xiii. 32; 1 Thess. v. 3, etc.).

Now this present war, like many others less terrible that have preceded it, especially in European or nominally christian countries, belongs evidently to the series of calamities predicted by the Saviour Himself, and as to which He says, "The end is **not yet**" (Matt. xxiv. 6-8). But we cannot help noting, especially of recent years, that the various calamities spoken of have uniformly increased in intensity. And this is particularly true of earthquakes on the land, and shipwrecks by sea. Surely this fact should weigh upon our hearts.

It serves no good purpose to cast the blame of the present war on those that we may rightly consider responsible for it. The facts, however impartially or wisely stated, do *not* point to its *close*, nor to the issue we most ardently desire. Nor have we far to look for a reason why the chastisement has been allowed, when we consider separately the history of past years in the case of each one of the nations actually suffering from the strife. There can be no doubt whatever that God is speaking to them all; and when He speaks, He looks for a response in humiliation, not outward merely, but *real*, before Him who searches all hearts. So it was at Nineveh in Jonah's time. The king of Assyria, the great and dreaded enemy of God's earthly people of Israel, gave the example, and all in Nineveh, down to the meanest of his subjects, took part in it, when they heard the prophet's announcement of its

overthrow. God took knowledge of their humiliation, and put off the day of judgment. Where do we see, at the present time, anything approaching to this spirit of brokenness and true humiliation? The remedy is, in this sense, in our own hands. May God grant that many hearts may be touched, so that relief may come.

If we read over carefully the addresses to the seven churches in the small province of "Asia," of which Ephesus was the capital and the first church written to, we cannot escape the conclusion that the dominant note is, "**Repent.**" It reminds us of the words of Haggai, the prophet, addressed to the Jews returned to Palestine, who had for some years been forced to discontinue the rebuilding of the temple of God in Jerusalem. There was no sort of appeal to the king of Persia advocated, in any sense whatever. The word was addressed to the *conscience* of those who were responsible to go on with their work for God's glory, and under His eye. They obeyed, without asking for permission or human authorisation; and God took care of all the rest, disposing the heart of King Darius to favour their enterprise (see Ezra v. 5; vi. 1-15; Haggai i. 5, 7, 12-15; ii. 1-5).

If we turn now to Revelation, we notice the word "Repent," four times repeated in the messages sent to the churches of Asia (ii. 5, 16; iii. 3, 19). That is to say, it is definitely addressed to four churches out of the seven; and in the case of another, Thyatira, alluding to the ruling spirit of Jezebel, the idolatrous wife of Ahab, king of Israel, we read, "I gave her space to *repent* of her fornication (that is, of her idolatry), and she repented not" (ii. 21). In the suffering condition of the persecuted saints in Smyrna (ii. 8-11) the word is not found; nor do we notice it in the exceed-

ingly poor and reduced state of the church in Philadelphia. But in these two cases we do find the special injunction to persevere in the truth, notwithstanding all difficulties.

In the case of Smyrna, with terrible persecutions, ten times repeated by the Roman Emperors, we find the words:—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a *crown* of life" (ii. 10, and compare James i. 12). And in the address to Philadelphia, besides the promise of being kept out of the terrible "hour of temptation," yet to come "upon the whole world," we read, "Behold I come quickly; hold fast *that which thou hast*, that no man take thy crown" (iii. 10-11).

Similarly, the first words to Sardis are, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (iii. 2). Surely, such an expression as "ready to die," betokens not only decline, but the last stage of disease, when all true testimony for the Lord on earth is about to cease.

In the final state of lukewarmness, found in Laodicea, which is nauseous to Christ, there is still a hope of recovery in some measure; but the repentance enjoined requires "zeal"; and there must needs be a spiritual awakening in order to answer to this call, "Be *zealous*, therefore, and repent." Do not all these exhortations speak loudly to us at the present time? May the Lord grant to us, each and all, a true and hearty response! For surely we have not far to go to find that which corresponds to the descriptions given in these letters to the seven churches in Asia. They are not only descriptive of what we call national churches; but in all the various sects or bodies of Christians, gathered professedly on scriptural grounds, we find the same evidences of decline, that is, of letting the truth slip

(Continued on p. 9.)

away, so that the exhortation to "hold fast" is much needed, and particularly so in our own land.

We have enjoyed for many years past immunity from persecution, which at one time existed all over England; and this is testified by various monuments or tablets, as may be seen in Smithfield, in memory of three martyrs. But it is more than probable that the last resource for reaching the consciences of worldly-minded Christians may be persecution again, as is set forth in the address to Smyrna. It has often been repeated from time to time in the history of the church, and is even now going on in Persia and elsewhere. Not so very long ago we heard of it in many parts of China, where Christianity had penetrated. Repentance on account of laxity is not enough; there must be "holding fast the faithful word" (Tit. i. 9).

All the later epistles are full of this subject; for even in the apostle's days, the Spirit spoke expressly of the "perilous times" that were coming (1 Tim., iv. 1-3; 2 Tim., iii. 1-5). The prominent note is "departing from the faith"; and the resulting condition is a repetition of the description of the corrupt heathen world, in Romans i. 18-32. No one acquainted with the apostacy fostered in Germany during the last thirty years, and too readily received into this country, can doubt it. The late Mr Spurgeon called it the "down-grade."

The great remedy for it is reading the Scripture, and *watching* for the Lord's coming. How prominent this is in the address to the last four churches of Asia, has often been remarked. May all the saints, who are such in faith and truth, be aroused to "watch" (Mark xiii. 34-37)! May we take heed to the Lord's own words, "**Hold fast** that which thou hast **till I come**" (Rev. ii. 25; iii. 11)!

W. J. L.

Heaven Opened.

(Matt. iii. 13-17 ; Acts vii. 55-56.)

THE first thing to be remarked in the verses we have read (Matt. iii.) is the condescension of Jesus, who associates Himself with us everywhere in such a way that we cannot be in difficulties, in sorrows, in reproaches, without being able to say, "He is there." He even humbled Himself to receive the baptism of repentance in order to be with His people in everything.

It is evident that Jesus himself had no need of this baptism, as the Holy Spirit plainly bears witness by John, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." For Him this baptism was the perfection of righteousness; for love and obedience to His Father were manifested in it. This love and obedience led Him where our sins led us. He fulfilled all righteousness in the very place where we confess sin. . . .

The Lord Jesus went down into the waters of baptism with His people, and then the heaven is opened unto Him, and the Father addresses Him as man, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." He humbled Himself as Son of man to the position which men ought to take, and this was His perfection in the eyes of God and of faith. This was only the beginning of His course, it is true, but the principle runs all through, even to the cross, where all was fulfilled.

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him," etc. Here we see Christ, having fulfilled all righteousness, receive testimony

from God. The heaven is opened to Him in this world, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him.

It is sweet to think that there was, there on the earth, One whom the Father could recognise as the object of all His affection; and to know that this same Jesus is with us, and that He has received this testimony in associating Himself with those that believe. In opening on Him, the heaven is open on us, for now we have been sealed and anointed by the Holy Spirit. Placed in the same position as He, we are fully accepted and set down in the presence of God, not only as being forgiven, but as introduced into the joy of a relationship of love. Jesus had the joy of accomplishing the Father's will and of receiving testimony from God; and so with us, we also possess this joy. . . .

In chapter vii. of the Acts, Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. It is somewhat different from what is said in Matthew iii. Heaven opened over Jesus, over a man perfectly well-pleasing to God on the earth. In the Acts, Stephen, on earth, looked up and saw the glory of God, and the heavens opened above him; it does not say opened "unto him," but that they were opened. Christ having ascended on high, in virtue of the righteousness which He has wrought out for us, heaven is now open, and it remains open to those who have become the righteousness of God in Him. We can always, as Stephen, see by the Spirit heaven opened to us (I do not speak of a vision), and it is ours to abide in relationship with Him who has entered there for us. Christ has fulfilled all righteousness in order that, in spite of everything, we should have the enjoyment of heavenly things.

Be it a question of Jesus humbling Himself to the

baptism of repentance, or of Him as acknowledged and glorified by the Father, it is ever with Him that the Holy Spirit would occupy us. He shows us Christ, with us from beginning to end; condescending to associate Himself with us in all our paths and our difficulties. Be it a question of life or of death, Jesus is there, and we can say that, for us, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Is Christ so present to your hearts that He is nearer to you than anything else? Little matter what we are doing in our ordinary life, provided we are doing it with Him. Even in labouring for Him, what can I do that is good if He does not fill my heart? If He is there, all the attacks of Satan are only a means of enabling me to gain victories.

When you succumb to temptations, do you not know that Christ was not then the nearest object to your heart? Without this nearness you would be powerless to overcome the enemy. Let us ever remember that, from the baptism of repentance to the glory, He is with us; and that, as the apostle says, *nothing* can ever separate us from His love. May God give us to be continually kept near Him!

J. N. D.

(From the French.)

Existence after Death.

THE lecture delivered by Sir Oliver Lodge some time ago at Walworth, before a crowded audience, shows us that the public ear is always open to what seems strange and mysterious. "Psychical research," as it is called now, is in fact another name for spiritualism, and occupies itself with research as to manifestations from the unseen world. They believe

—and Sir O. Lodge says he is confident of it—that they receive communications from the departed. A somewhat similar idea is to be found in Mr R. J. Campbell's recent articles on "God and the War."

Fundamentally, there is nothing new about this kind of investigations and speculations, but they have got a modern name, and are collected, classified, and reduced to a science. The old oracles of the heathen, the wizards, witches, and dealers with familiar spirits, though mixed up with much imposture and fraud, had also communications with the other world.

But the moment men pass outside the limit of what God has permitted us to know, and attempt to investigate what belongs to the world of spirits, they become a prey to a power far superior to themselves both in knowlege and subtlety.

Satan deceives by his "wiles." He can gratify man's curiosity, he can transform himself into an "angel of light" when it suits his purpose. He can be a "lying spirit" in the mouth of a false prophet (1 Kings xxii. 21-23). More than that, when he wishes to please his dupes, who believe they receive communications from persons who have died, he is able to *personate* the departed.

There can be no doubt that many of the supposed communications from the other world are mere fraud or impressions produced on the mind; but some are not. They are the working of spirit beings, Satanic spirits, who personate the departed, and thus gain power over those who have dealings with them.

Satan's aim has always been to displace God and His word. When the world went into idolatry, what it really did was to worship demons: the demon was behind the idol, so to speak. So we read, even of Israel, "They sacrificed to demons, not to God; to

gods whom they knew not, to new gods who came up newly"; and again, of the nations, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God" (Deut. xxxii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 20). The extent to which Satan has succeeded in getting a power over man is a very serious consideration indeed. It shows itself to-day in the "occult science" of the East, in "spiritualism" in the West, and in many other ways.

If we go back to the Old Testament, we find many cases of those who had dealings with familiar spirits. Balaam, the false prophet, was one of such. And in his case it is most remarkable how he took into his mouth the name of the Lord Jehovah. In this way he resembles those in Christendom at the present time, who, while bearing the christian name, have dealings with spiritualism and the spirit-world.

We are told in Num. xxiii. 15 that, in his efforts to curse Israel so as to get a reward of money, he said to Balak, "Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I go and meet . . . yonder." The words "the Lord," put in by our translators in Italic print, should be left out. It was really an evil spirit he desired to meet. But "the LORD met Balaam," and he was made to learn that there "is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." He was also the unwilling instrument to give utterance to one of the finest prophecies we have on record concerning the future blessing of God's people.

The case of the witch of Endor and king Saul is another instance of one who sought to inquire of a familiar spirit; but God turned the occasion to a purpose very different from what either she or the king had expected. Saul, in the earlier part of his reign, had put away those who dealt in familiar spirits

out of the land. Now, when forsaken of the Lord and not knowing what to do, he turns back to them. But on this particular occasion God so allowed it that the actual Samuel should appear, and not a mere personating spirit; so that the wicked king might hear from him the judgment which was so soon to overtake him. No doubt this witch had often had dealings with familiar spirits, but when she saw that it was Samuel, she was surprised and alarmed no less than the king himself. She had no power to bring up Samuel, but only a false spirit. Moreover, it is well for us to note that one of the reasons for Saul's death given us in 1 Chron. x. 13, is that "Saul died for his transgression . . . and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it."

It is plain from Scripture that no mere man, or Satan himself, has power to bring up the spirits of the departed. They are in God's keeping, whatever their position may be. When the wicked man or the unbeliever dies, the spirit is, as Peter says, "in prison," awaiting the "resurrection of judgment." When the true Christian dies, the spirit is "absent from the body," and "present with the Lord," awaiting the "resurrection of life."

There can be no question that, in a future day, the Antichrist or "man of sin" will do many wonderful signs by Satanic power. We find this plainly taught in 2 Thess. ii. No doubt he will far surpass anything which spiritists or others can accomplish now. And we might quite expect, as the present dispensation draws to a close, that there would be increased workings of the enemy's power in this way.

Finally it will settle down into a "strong delusion" which will overshadow particularly these very so-called Christian countries in which so much light has

been given of God; which, alas, is now being fast given up.

It is noticeable, in the lecture to which we have referred, that no reference whatever is made to the Bible to settle the question as to existence after death. The rationalistic scientists who carry on these investigations have no thought of turning to God and His word as that by which they are to be guided.

But a weighty responsibility rests on us (Christians) to hold fast the truth with purpose of heart. The apostle says, "Try the spirits whether they are of God." Satan works in many ways—in spiritualism, through "mediums"; as also in false doctrine, through false prophets and teachers. The true test, as given in the same passage of Scripture, is (1) confessing Jesus Christ come in flesh, and (2) hearing the divine testimony given in the Scriptures (1 John. v. 1-6).

With these spiritist doings the Christian who is obedient to Scripture can have nothing whatever to do. Of old, God gave the most express command to his people to have no dealings with those who had familiar spirits, soothsayers, wizards, consulters of spirits, etc. (see Lev. xx. 6, 27; Deut. xviii. 10-11, etc.). The same holds good to-day, and perhaps it is even more needed now than ever before.

F. G. B.

Fragment.—One who has faith takes God's estimate—does not look for the evidence of his own senses, but says, Let me hear what *God* says, He must be true. What God says may come into constant collision with what is in myself, but I have to say, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

A Word to Young Christians.

LET us begin with the fact that it is the privilege of every Christian, even the youngest in the faith, to know that every question is settled between our souls and God. We are entitled to have a "purged conscience," and to know that we are "accepted in the Beloved"; we are made the "righteousness of God in Him." Moreover, it is ours to know and enjoy our blessed relationship to God as *Father*; for the Holy Spirit has been given to us for this very purpose, and He teaches us to cry, "Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6).

But when all this is settled, we have to go through the world; to meet its trials, difficulties, and temptations, and how are we to get strength for the road?

In this short article we can only touch on two of those resources which the Christian has, to help and sustain him on his heavenward path, namely, the word of God and prayer.

The Word of God.—Time was when we might have been thrown into prison for reading the Bible, and it was so expensive that very few people could possess a copy. But do *we*, who can purchase it for a small sum, value it as our forefathers did?

Now the soul must be fed on wholesome spiritual food if we are to grow in grace, and be strong to meet the enemy. The Israelite, as he journeyed through the wilderness, needed to go out and gather the manna early in the morning, for the day's supply. God gave it freely, but it needed energy to gather it fresh each day. And so it is with us. We cannot go on aright through the day, if we are not fed by the word of God. It is not a question of reading a quantity, which most people could not accomplish; but what a blessing it is

to ponder over even a few verses before the day's work begins !

Prayer.—How am I, a poor, weak, failing creature in myself, to meet the difficulties and besetments of life, and avoid the snares of the enemy? Prayer is the great secret of strength—prayer *before* the difficulty arises. Prayer keeps the soul in communion with God about everything, and it is the expression of dependence on Him. We find our blessed Lord Himself praying “more earnestly” before He had to meet the awful trial of the cross. What an example for us !

No doubt many of the children of God have to meet special and varied trials at the solemn and serious times we are now passing through. Well, let us “pray without ceasing”; let us “continue instant in prayer.”

How is the young Christian to get strength to confess Christ, and witness for Him before godless, careless fellow-workmen, or others with whom he comes in contact in the workshop, the office, or wherever his lot may be cast? By dependence on God in prayer, and by feeding on His word. This is the only way, and it is sufficient. How is he to be kept from the thousand and one snares and temptations which surround his path? We repeat, it is by the word of God and prayer: by these he is “built up” and “preserved.”

Let us carefully consider the concluding words of the epistle of Jude, where these two things are specially brought in—they are particularly suited to our times—“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” etc.

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

ETERNITY.—If we lived and walked in the light of eternity, we would be much more careful and much more prayerful than we are wont to be.

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Difficulties.—A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God's will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too, that are apparently well founded: they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

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False Gods.—Man cannot sustain himself; and the pride which rejects the true God, must and does make a god for itself, or adopts what its fathers have made, for pride cannot stand in the presence of the supreme God. Man makes a god: this, too, is pride. But he cannot do without one; and after all, the natural heart is the slave of that which it cannot do without.

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The Son of Man.—"What is man?" Creation makes man so little in himself. What is he when we consider this vast and shining universe? But look at Christ, and you see all its glories grow dim before the excellency of Him under whose feet all is put. Yea, they are lighted up again by that glory. Man is indeed great, and above all in Him, the Son of man, set over all things.

Son of God.—"Son of God" is a title that belongs to our Lord both in His divine glory before He became a man, and here (Luke i. 35); for, in this place when He became a man, He did not cease to be Son of God. As incarnate He was still the Son of God. So, again, when He rose from the dead, the same thing was true; He was the Son of God as risen again. It is plain, therefore, that it is a title that appertains to Him in the three conditions in which Scripture represents our Lord. He was the Son of God when He was purely and simply a Divine Person; Son of God when He became a man; Son of God when risen from the dead, and gone out of this world to heaven.

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The Two Advents.—Is there not a measure of analogy between the circumstances connected with the expectation of the Lord at His *first* and *second* coming? At His first coming there were those whom the Spirit of God had prepared, and who were waiting for Him. Truly godly souls they were. To Simeon it was divinely revealed that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ, and he was waiting "for the consolation of Israel." Anna, the prophetess, "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." The mass of the nation were utterly careless and indifferent. And to-day there are those who are looking for Christ's second coming; indeed, there seems to have been some awakening as to this subject of late. May it be greatly increased, as that "blessed hope" comes nearer to its fulfilment!

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

IT is not too much to say that never, in modern times, was there a more imperative call to Christians to search the Scriptures, to verify the fundamental truths which they profess, and to ascertain their relative order and importance, according to the word of God. Service and personal devotedness are the order of the day. They are naturally attractive, especially so to unselfish characters. Indeed, self-sacrifice on the field of battle has been insisted on by many in high places as a sure road to heaven, without any reference to the Son of God, or to faith in Him. It appeals to the innate vanity of the natural man. On this ground the gospel itself would have to be changed. It is no longer "the faithful saying" of the Apostle, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*," or that "Christ died for the *ungodly*" (Rom. v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 15); for it takes for granted that the glory and honour of immortality belong naturally to those who die for their country.

We do not attempt here to dwell upon the awful responsibility of those who ought to know better, in thus trifling with the immortal souls of their fellow-countrymen, and for which they will have to answer to the "Judge of all the earth." We would rather draw attention to the Scriptures which *they* apparently ignore and despise, so that at least the younger generation may be encouraged to search *them*; for, as the Lord said to the unbelieving Jews of His day, "They are they which testify of **Me**" (John v. 39.) As a further example, we find that Peter and John had the courage to withstand the high priest and all the spiritual rulers of the people at Jerusalem, and that at the risk of their own lives, when, "filled with the Holy

Ghost," they said, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

The simple statement in Hebrews xiii., insisting upon the faith of those who, in early days, preached the word of God, the sum and substance of which was "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," is as follows: "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him *without the camp*, bearing His *reproach*, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Those to whom the Apostle wrote knew quite well the meaning of the words "without the camp." It was the unclean place where those who were defiled had to be put (Num. v. 1-4). "Golgotha," the place where malefactors were crucified, meant "the place of a skull" (John xix. 17). "Calvary" is simply the latin form of it, meaning "a bare skull." It is in no sense a place of honour, but a place of "reproach"; and there it was that the vilest sinner, condemned for his crimes to that terrible death, which he himself owned to be *just*, found the Saviour, whom he addressed as "Lord," and he was the first admitted with Him into the paradise of God. (Compare 1 Corinthians xii. 3.)

Let us not forget that crucifixion was the only death that carried the *curse* with it, as the apostle explains in Galatians iii. 13. That particular kind of death was needed to meet the case of those who were rightly under the curse on account of their own sins. The apostle himself takes that place in Galatians ii. 19, 20.

There, in the place of defilement and reproach, it is that the vilest finds the Saviour, through God's righteous appointment; seeing that every claim of His holiness is met by the only sacrifice which could meet them.

Such was the humiliation and the infinite love of Christ. Those who pretend to have a hope of going to heaven on any other ground must necessarily find themselves excluded. Like the foolish virgins of the parable, they will find the door shut irrevocably, and their eternal condemnation sealed by those solemn words, "I know you not," or again, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 10, 12, 41.) The "Living Stone," or the "Rock" which is the foundation of the church of God, ever was and will be "disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God and precious" (Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 3, 4). There never will nor can be, salvation in any other.

Once that fundamental point is settled, the next step is *worship*, such indeed as we find illustrated in the man born blind, who, in obeying the Lord's *order* without having seen Him, found sight. The spiritual rulers of the people "cast him out," because he simply acknowledged the power of the One that he did not know otherwise, but who must, he felt, be "of God." The Pharisees, to gratify their own selfish pride, were quite satisfied that Jesus was "a sinner," because He had performed the miracle "on the Sabbath day"; *they* decided that Jesus was "*not* of God" (John ix. 14-16); but they could not get over the *fact* of the miracle. The same leaders, with one accord, crucified Christ. The issue was thus fairly raised between religious professors and the objects of God's grace, on this one point—"What think ye of Christ? (Matt. xxii. 42). Their inability or refusal to answer the question sealed their condemnation: *they* were "blind," and their sin remained (John ix. 39-41). The Lord, however, would not leave the poor persecuted man alone. He was cast out of the synagogue; but Jesus sought and

found him, and then revealed Himself to him as "the Son of God." His simple affirmative answer to the Lord's question, "Dost thou believe?" made him a *worshipper*. Such it was that God, the Father, sought for,—“worshippers that could worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John iv. 21-26). Does not this very fact show how far from the truth is all worship, so-called, which consists in outward forms or ceremonies, but which in principle never can present the home-thrust to heart and conscience—“What think ye of Christ?”

Is not that one of the reasons why God is now allowing this awful war between so-called Christian nations? Is it not time that numbers who are given over to outward forms, and put all their trust in them, should have their blind eyes opened, ere it be too late?

Returning to our passage in Hebrews xiii. 13-15, we find the same precious sequence. The moment anyone has gone outside the religious “camp” of ceremonial purification, in order to find Christ Himself, the inevitable need awakened in the soul is real worship: “By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

So also in 1 Peter ii. 5. Having come to the “living stone,” Christ, the believer becomes, like Peter, a “living stone,” as his name implied (John i. 42); and his first impulse is “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” He has already become, in company with numbers of others in a like blessed position, “a spiritual house, a *holy* priesthood,” consecrated to God with that intent.

Then follows the third occupation, namely, true Christian *service*, “Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal* priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that

(Continued on p. 25.)

ye should *show forth* the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (ver. 9). The allusion is evidently to the first message given of God to Moses, the moment the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, where they were to "serve God" (compare Exod. iii. 12 with xix. 5-6). In Hebrews xiii., the verse immediately following the one last quoted, which sets forth the *worship*, is, "But to do good and to communicate (that is of your own good things to others in need) forget not; for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."

To this agree the exhortations of both James and John, as to ministering in every possible way to the needs of others. A desire or a prayer for them is not enough. Being ourselves the objects of the love of God, we have, as a bounden duty, to act towards those in need, as God acts towards us (James ii. 14-17; 1 John iii. 16-19). And such devotedness includes the laying down of one's life, not to obtain heaven as a reward, but as a consequence of the fact that our names are already written there, our eternal place being thus assured beforehand (Luke x. 20). We must remember that in Hebrews xii. 23, the word "first-born" is plural, answering to *all* those who were *actually* saved by the blood sprinkled on the door-posts, while the people were still in Egypt. As to these God said, "All the first-born are *Mine*" (Exod. xii. 12, 13; xiii. 2, 12, 15; Num. viii. 16-19).

May the Lord, in His great mercy, establish our souls in the truth, and enable us to carry it out in practice, first in the blessed knowledge of *salvation*, and then both in *worship* and *service*.

W. J. L.

Spiritual Decline—Is there no Remedy?—I.

IT is often a difficulty in the minds of many Christians, especially young believers, how to reconcile the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew xvi. 18—"Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—with the fact that the Church, viewed as the vessel of testimony in the world, has utterly failed.

And this difficulty is increased by the divergence of thought amongst christian preachers and teachers, many of whom seem to regard the spread of nominal Christianity as a sign of advancement and true progress. Now in this, as in all else concerning the truth, the word of God alone must be our guide, and there is no doubt from many scriptures, such as Matthew xiii. 24-28; Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Timothy iii. 1-5; and 1 John ii. 18; 19, that the church, as to its special and proper testimony, is in ruins. The Gentiles have not answered to the grace shown to them in the gospel, any better than the Jews did to their privileges in the former dispensation.

How then are we to understand the words quoted above from Matthew xvi.? Does it not show us the necessity of distinguishing, in all our thoughts as to the Church, between the working of evil in the professing body; and its intrinsic excellence in the eye of the Lord? The former is typified in the parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, which affected the whole mass; or by the mustard seed which grew and became a great tree in which the birds of the air lodge (Matt. xiii.). The latter is typified in the parables of the "treasure hid in a field," and "the pearl of great price." It is well to remember that these parables are called "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

But this is by way of preface only. Our purpose in this short article is not to trace the general history of decline in the church, but to seek some practical help in the present low spiritual condition of things, so generally felt by those Christians who are not blinded by "a fair show in the flesh."

One evidence of this low condition being felt, is seen in the readiness with which many zealous Christians join in seeking what is called fresh Pentecostal blessing. Their thought no doubt is, that the remedy is to be found in the manifested power of the Holy Spirit; but such efforts are often accompanied by much mischievous self-occupation, and by the practical denial of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, in and with the church on earth. Was it not distinctly promised by the Lord Jesus: "The Father shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 16)?

It is true that there have been many revivals in the history of the church, and these were characterised by some remarkable manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power, but they were not repetitions of Pentecost, for that was the descent of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode upon the earth, in distinct fulfilment of the promise of "power from on high," and the words of the Lord Jesus quoted above. Still, no one questions that the Holy Spirit is the only real power for restoration or conversion, in any time or sphere.

But does the Spirit ever occupy believers with Himself and His power? Does He not rather always point, and lead, to Christ?—"He shall testify of Me," Jesus. And a ministry of Christ in freshness and power, to the hearts and consciences of either saints or sinners, is the surest indication that the Spirit is at work.

If Pentecostal visitations, then, be not the means of spiritual revival, what is? And if the Holy Spirit is on the earth, in the believer, and in the church (the assembly of God)—and all the failure and ecclesiastical corruption has not driven Him away—why have we to mourn over weakness and decline?

These are urgent questions, asked by many thoughtful Christians to-day, and they demand our prayerful consideration. First, as to the desire for power, it is well for us to remember what is written about the Lord Jesus and Nazareth, "He *could* there do no mighty work" because of their unbelief (Mark vi. 5, 6). And so of the Spirit, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Eph. iv. 30); "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19). Should not these scriptures teach us that there is a sensitiveness, if we may so say, as to the condition of the people among whom the divine visitants dwell, and that it is not merely a question of exercise of power, although to them all power belongs.

Perhaps some help in answer to our questions can be found in the addresses to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. ii. and iii.).

If we accept what is known as the prophetic or historical view of these seven addresses, there is unmistakable evidence of decline, from the "first love" and "first works" of Ephesus, to the "lukewarmness" of Laodicea. And the gravity of the Lord's threat to the latter, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," is itself a solemn testimony of decline. An important point in the historical review given in the Revelation, is the fact that to each of the last four assemblies the Lord speaks of HIS COMING; an intimation, surely, that they would go on to the end. So that to-day we should find ourselves in the midst of, or shall we say surrounded by, "the rest" of Thyatira, the "few names" (the

undefiled ones) of Sardis, and the remnant overcomers of Philadelphia and Laodicea.

But the address to the church at Ephesus evidently covers a very broad basis, and, we might say, goes down to the end of the history of the seven. The loss of "first love" was the root of all the decline that followed in the church. If Christ Himself has ceased to be the object of the Christian's heart, and other objects are allowed to take the place He should have, then the door is open for all kinds of worldliness, and other things which hinder our testimony for Him. Decline, either in the church or the individual, does not begin from *outside* things (such as persecution) but from the *inside*. Let us then watch the *beginnings of things* which would tend to get between the Lord and our hearts. If He has not the place He should have in our hearts and affections, it matters little how zealous we may be in "works, labour, and patience;" we are called to "repent."

Philadelphia is unquestionably a church which, though having but little strength, receives from the Lord special commendation and encouragement, and if the Philadelphian condition answers to the revival of about ninety years ago, when the heavenly calling of the church, and its proper hope in the return of the Lord Jesus to take His people to Himself, were restored to their true place in the faith of Christians, then it behoves us to consider whether this, as a characterising condition, is in danger of being lost. These truths were always in the Bible, of course, and they were there for all that had ears to hear at any time.

It reminds us of the wells that were unstopped in the days of Isaac. The Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham, and Isaac's servants dug them

again, calling them by the same names. They find others too, wells of springing water, in that "land of hills and valleys, that drinketh water of the rain of heaven" (Deut. xi. 11), which God had reserved for His beloved people.

Another feature of this revival, not less important, was the return to the gathering together to the name of the Lord Jesus alone, in simple dependence on the Holy Spirit, as the all-sufficient power for prayer, worship, and ministry. We might ask—Have these precious things ceased, or is it not rather that we have ceased to hold them in faith, and as blessed living realities, as well as in doctrine?

T. R.

A Word to Gospel Workers.

WOULDST thou be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed?

Study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth. Preach the Word. The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

Philip, the Evangelist, went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. He and others went "everywhere preaching the word" (Acts viii. 4, 5, and 35).

The "C.S." tracts, so well-known and so continuously owned of God to the salvation of sinners and the establishing of souls in the gospel of God, were written by Mr Charles Stanley, who was a highly honoured "servant of Jesus Christ." For many years he was wise in winning souls, as throughout England he went forth and preached everywhere.

In the introduction to his notes on the epistle to the Romans (an exposition of worth to gospel workers),

he states, "Well do I remember the benefit I derived for nearly two years in . . . studying this epistle, with a few others, when young."

"We cannot," he says, "be surprised that it should contain such solid foundation truth, when we bear in mind that it was written to the assembly in the then metropolis of the whole world. . . . It is important, and really helpful, in reading any of the precious epistles or books of holy Scripture, to observe the character and design of each book, and also the order and divisions in the same. The object the Spirit had in this epistle, then, was evidently to reveal the relationship of God to man, and man to God—the way God could be righteous in justifying man. Thus it is the foundation of all truth."

"And," he says, "I would strongly recommend a close, prayerful study of this epistle as the groundwork of all scripture knowledge."

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

HELPER.

Extracts from a Soldier's Letters.

"**B**EING human, we fail here just as much as when at home—we find it just as difficult to bear witness and stand for the Lord. One would think that in times of great danger we would find our consolation and stronghold come automatically from above; but it is with us as with nations, we prepare for war in time of peace, for storm in time of calm. A soldier's life is very rough, and tends to coarsen and blunt the finer feelings. There is but little time for

reading, and then one is often so tired, that a few minutes is all one is able to do. So you see, we have to draw on reserve stores. The greatest comfort I have is the fact that I am being borne up by a chain of prayer that extends from Canada to Switzerland, and all that without asking! . . .

“Thank you for all you say about prayer; it is often the sole resource of the soldier. Military life at once coarsens and deepens. To hear the conversation one would be sometimes disgusted, yet there is really much more seriousness; that is, fellows do not scoff at hymn-singing and reading, though their tongues may be coarser. . . .

“We have been through a very thick time, right in the very forefront of everything. I am quite well, after four days and nights without sleep, and a hundred times escaping death as by miracle; two nights, in pouring rain, without greatcoat, waterproof, cardigan, or vest. My work has been attending to the wounded all the time. . . . We could only move the men at night, as in the daytime we were always fired on. All the time we were working, the village was being steadily smashed to pieces by guns of every calibre, yet not one of the houses where our wounded were, were hit. Once a shell dropped about two feet away from where the doctor and I were attending to a wounded man, but it did not burst. Another one *did* burst about three yards from us, and blew us into the house; we were covered with dust, but, through God's mercy, unhurt! The doctor was a simple Christian man, who had never been under fire before; but his quiet courage under the most terrific shell and machine-gun fire, was beyond all praise. I could have hugged him when we said good-bye. He, like myself, went through everything without a scratch. . . .

“The Trial of Your Faith.”

THERE can be no doubt that there are moments in the history of the Church of God as well as of each individual Christian, when there is a special trial of faith. We believe that this is so for many at the present time.

Now why does God allow our faith to be tried? Is it not that “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”?

What a comfort to know that, even if He puts us into the crucible, even if He allows us to be tried and tested, it is for our good and His glory, it is to purge away the dross, so that faith should shine the brighter, to His praise and honour in the day of manifested glory.

Faith ever leans on the living God, and finds its stay in Him and His unchanging word. Faith believes that “**God is**”; that He is always true to His word, whatever appearances may be, and He is ever to be counted on. Faith rests on **God**, not on human props and resources. Its foundation is outside this world, namely, in God Himself. And we can say with fullest confidence, “If **God** be for us, who can be against us?”

It is true that, at times, we may find ourselves in circumstances somewhat like the disciples of old on the tempest-tossed lake of Galilee, while Jesus was asleep on a pillow. Apparently He was taking no notice of their trying and precarious position. But it is just at such times that it is the privilege of the saint to count upon his Lord and to know that, *when He is*

with us, all must be well. In one moment, when He so wills it, and at His command, the "great tempest" is changed into a "great calm."

May we, then, learn the lesson of simple and unwavering dependence, and never forget **Who** it is we have to trust. In times of trial we are made to find out our own weakness; but oh, what a strong arm we have to lean upon—what a loving heart we have to count upon—and this not only in the sunshine, but in the dark days as well as in the bright! F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

PEA**C**E.—"Peace with God" (Rom. v. 1). This is a very full expression. Peace with God, is with God *such as He is*. If there were a thing that disturbed His holy nature morally, or if our conscience had got anything on it, we had not peace with God; but there is not. Our justification is absolutely by God Himself, known by faith; so that no spot, no cloud remains. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has made it, and it is perfect.

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Take Heed.—"Take heed unto *thyself*, and unto the *doctrine*" (1 Tim. iv. 16). We must never for a moment lose sight of the weighty moral fact, that the teacher ought to *live* the truth which he teaches. It is morally dangerous in the extreme for a man to teach in public what he does not live in private—dangerous for himself, most damaging to the testimony, and injurious to those with whom he has to do. What can be more deplorable or humiliating than for a man to be characterised, by contradicting in his personal history and in his domestic life, the truth which he

utters in the public assembly? It is simply fearful, and must inevitably lead to the most disastrous results.

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Down-grade.—A writer on church history says, “During the transition from the second to the third centuries, the Christians were ceasing to be sojourners in the world, looking daily for the coming of the Lord. They were settling down as citizens of the empire, and in the peace thereof they had their peace.” Again, “In times of conflict and trial from within or without the church, when this conflict continues for long, the spirit begins to get wearied and sighs for rest, looking perhaps for rest in circumstances or surroundings instead of in Christ alone.” How easy it is to forget the word of the Lord, “These things I have spoken unto you, that *in Me* ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”!

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Higher Criticism.—Many gifted men, who believed the Bible to be an inspired revelation from God, have preached a full and free salvation founded upon the truths which it declares, and have been largely owned and used of God. They preached what they believed, and they believed that what they preached was indeed a message from God. Thousands hearing it, also believed and found rest, peace, and joy. How many have been converted and brought into peace through the preaching of the sceptics and “Higher Critics”? Not one.

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

(See p. 25.)

IN a former article, referring especially to Hebrews xiii. 12-16, and 1 Peter ii. 3-10, we called attention to the *order* uniformly prevailing in scripture, as to God's work in souls which have been reached and won for Him by His life-giving Word. The subject is, however, of such importance, that we feel the necessity for reminding the young particularly that this is by no means confined to a few isolated passages, or drawn from illustrations which might be variously interpreted: it is the universal teaching of the Word of God. The first thing needed is divine assurance of blessing received and to be permanently enjoyed, as being directly *from* God for time and for eternity; secondly, the present result of such assurance must be presented *to* Him in *worship*; in other words, worship in the Spirit is the first *effect of salvation* known and enjoyed; thirdly, its fruit is *service*, for which every vessel has individually to be formed and fitted, while patiently learning what the service is or should be, and how it is to be carried out. But it must be in imitation of the blessed Master, who calls His servants "friends" (Matt. xx. 27-28; Mark x. 42-45; John xv. 13-16).

We have only to refer to the remarkable chap. xxvi. of Deuteronomy to prove, if proof be needed, that such is the divine *order*. Let us each one read, re-read, and ponder it in the Lord's presence. We can only take up a few points now. Each reader will fill in, for himself or herself, the details of the blessed picture, so vivid and practical.

The figure or type,—the canvas, so to speak, on which the portrait is worked,—is Israel in the promised

land, in personal enjoyment of the *effects* of God's *call* to Abraham in Genesis xii. 1-3. The call itself is illustrated in the fishermen of Galilee, as given in Mark i. 14-20, when Jesus began preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is intensely individual.

Abraham was "called" to leave country and kindred, *and* also his father's house" (Heb. xi. 8). In like manner, Simon and Andrew, the two first disciples *called*, "forsook their *nets*" to follow Jesus, whereas the two brothers, James and John, "left their *father* Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him." Matthew relates the incident in the same way practically. We can all understand that the wrench in the latter case was greater than in the former. That is clearly seen in the history of Abraham, who, as it were, transferred the call to his father Terah, so that in fact he followed Terah's leading, and could only go as far as Terah pleased. Consequently, he had to remain in Mesopotamia, half-way to Canaan, until his father died (Acts vii. 4). His age was not registered in God's book until he left *Haran* (Gen. xii. 4).

Spiritually, this is very important. God cannot be satisfied with a half-hearted answer to His call. Once the *heart* is gained, and thrown upon God's direct guidance, progress may be looked for towards the land that God alone can "show" (Gen. xii. 1). Abraham's subsequent history throws much light on the effects of the first half-hearted answer to God's call. Into this we cannot enter now.

Over four hundred years passed away before the Israelites were brought into the land (Gen. xv. 13-16; Ex. xii. 40-42). They had to learn "to meet with God" and worship Him, at Mount Sinai, soon after leaving Egypt; but they did not actually get into the

land for another forty years, and the promise made on oath to Abraham was not fulfilled until they got there (Ex. iii. 14-17; vi. 2-8; xix. 17). The condition of blessing and spiritual prosperity, when they did enjoy the land, was consequent upon obedience and constant dependence upon the God of Israel, who cared both for the land and for His people when they were in it (Deut. viii. 6-11; xi. 10-17).

All this part of the history illustrates the importance of being in the enjoyment of "**Peace with God,**" as set forth in Romans v. 1-2, and which follows upon a whole-hearted surrender to the *call*. There can neither be worship, nor true service acceptable to God, until this first point is settled. Numbers seek to obtain rest of soul through outward devotedness, which may have every appearance of sincerity, but sooner or later this will end in disappointment and sorrow, until we learn that peace comes, not from anything within us, or produced from us, but simply and only through Christ's sufferings upon the cross (Rom. iv. 23-25, and see Gal. ii. 20-21). It is the language of the dying thief, prepared beforehand in the Scriptures (Ps. xxv. 7, following immediately after Ps. xxii. and xxiv., 1, 9-10). Paul takes it up as to himself, not glorying in his devoted life, but starting just where the thief's life closed,—"*crucified* with Christ."

All that followed was the Spirit's work, occupying his heart with **Christ**,—Christ *in* his heart expressed the hope of glory to come (Rom. xv. 13; Col. i. 27).

The dying thief had no opportunity of showing his faith by a life of service in this world, however unselfish and devoted it might be; but, cut short in a career of continual wickedness, despised and hated by all that knew him, he surrendered himself to the Saviour, calling Him "Lord," Who bore his judgment

beside him, and though individually the same man, he passed with a renewed life, instantaneously, **with** Christ, into the paradise of God.

To return for a moment to the Old Testament history, let us not lose sight of the fact, that God's revelation of Himself to Moses at the "burning bush," was based on the fact that he was "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob."

Abraham and Isaac walked and lived in the land of Canaan; Jacob passed nearly a quarter of his life outside of it, first in Syria, then in Egypt; for he gave it up definitely in the time of the great famine (Gen. xlv. 1). At that time he felt the seriousness of the step he was taking, and touchingly appealed to "the God of his father Isaac" who had *never left* it; and God answered him in the most gracious way, assuring him of His presence and protection, and practically promising him a place in the sepulchre at Macpelah, which assured their final possession of Canaan. That sacred hold which they had on the promised land was then closed and sealed for ever (see Gen. xxiii. 17-20; xlv. 4; xlv. 29-31; xlv. 21; l. 5, 13).

Apart from this, decline and failure, in various ways, marked the family history; all Jacob's children, except Benjamin, were born outside the promised land, and had very little personal interest in it. The departure from the land, already referred to, could not fail to increase their indifference, so that, in Moses' time, all spiritual interest had to be awakened afresh.

However sorrowful this fact is in itself, it served to emphasise the truth that salvation is wholly and only God's work, the sinner, like the thief on the cross, being merely the *object* of His grace. It was God who, at the first, said, "Let there be light," when only

darkness reigned; and even now, He continues to act in the same way, causing to shine in our hearts "the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

The enemy, "god of this world," prince of the rulers of its darkness, ever seeks to oppose God's word and work (Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12). Sooner or later this conflict must be felt, if the work in the soul is real.

A kind of mechanical gospel, which ignores this, is often preached; and it leaves young souls worldly in principle, so that they indulge in all kinds of frivolous reading, which occupies their spare time, and leaves but very little opportunity for benefiting from the pure "milk of the word," of which Peter speaks, so as "to grow thereby" (1 Pet. ii. 2-3). How is it possible that true spiritual life can be developed in such conditions? It is no wonder that the "down-grade" is seen everywhere; and we have not far to look for the cause, nor, thank God, for the remedy which is at hand, "the living and incorruptible *word* of God" (1 Pet. i. 22-25).

Here again it is that the history of Israel in the past is of such value to us at the present time. When God brought the Israelites into the land of Canaan, it was His own doing, in the accomplishment of the oath given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Consequently, the acknowledgement of this fact was the first duty of the faithful Israelite, whose beautiful crops testified to God's care. The basket of first-fruits which he had to present was a proof of God's faithfulness, as well as of the enjoyment of the promised blessing. This was the key-note of true worship, and gave point to his profession, "*I am come* unto the country which the **Lord** sware unto our fathers to give us" (Deut. xxvi. 3).

W. J. L.

Spiritual Decline—Is there no Remedy?—II.

THE question is often asked, Is there no way of return to the "first love" found in the church at Ephesus? If we speak of the condition which characterises the Church of God *as a whole*, we believe there is not. We are now nearing the close of the history of the professing church on earth, and, as we might expect, the state of things is, in great measure, that described in the address to Laodicea. That state is boastfulness and self-satisfaction, but heartless indifference as to Christ, allied with that lukewarmness which is nauseous to Him. But is there no relief, no resource for the true-hearted saint? Yes! and as ever, it is to be found in the Lord Himself.

Look at the address to Laodicea. Where is the Lord? Outside, truly, but not content to be outside. He knocks, and waits admittance, seeking intercourse with anyone who will open to Him. How touchingly this is expressed in the well-known words, "I will sup with him, and he with Me." What can exceed the grace of the Lord, in giving to any who will open to Him the enjoyment of this intimacy of His divine love?

But it has been often pointed out that this is an *individual* promise. True, but if all who come to a meeting on the Lord's day were living in the enjoyment of such individual communion with Him during the week, what blessed seasons we should have. And would not the collective condition of such a meeting approach somewhat to the "first love" and "first works" of Ephesus?

It is well to remember, too, that when there is dependence on the Lord, by His Spirit, for the exercise of worship and ministry, and Christians have not relegated

their proper priestly functions to one or more persons who are expected to do all that is done as to these things, the true spiritual condition of an assembly of believers will be more manifest. Human arrangements may conceal the real spiritual state for a long time, but "where no wood is, there the fire goeth out" (Prov. xxvi. 20).

Another has beautifully said, "We must, while ourselves feeding upon Christ—and He gives us to feed on Him without stint—cause others to breathe a new atmosphere, where Christ is; and if souls are exercised before God there, they are transformed into His likeness, so that their affections flow out, even as His flowed out in this world."

The pressure of present-day business, and the bustle of modern life (much of which is spurious), make increased demands upon the Lord's people; but these things are just as much the spirit of the age, to be watched against, as other forms of earthly-mindedness. The necessary cares and anxieties of life are often burdensome; but if only the legitimate and necessary cares, does not the Lord know all about these things? And the heart set free mounts up to Him, as a flower turns to the sun. For example, does not the Lord know that many of His beloved people have to count on Saturday's trade to make up a week's return, sufficient to "provide things honest in the sight of all men?" He surely does, but His presence chases away the care and the weariness, and we prove that "while the king sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof" (Canticles i. 12).

It is another thing when the world occupies our hearts, and all seek their own; or the feast is kept with anything but "unleavened bread." It is then that gatherings languish, and no wonder that young

believers complain that they get no help or food. Nothing grieves a parent's heart like a child that does not physically and mentally grow, yet how many of God's children remain in a stunted condition year after year. And this is by no means confined to young believers. The power of the world over the hearts of God's people is a snare always to be watched against, and "the pride of life" is as much "of the world" and "not of the Father," as "the lust of the eye," and "the lust of the flesh."

Our Lord's words in John xv. 4-5 are full of import here, "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself"; "without me ye can do nothing." Our spiritual perception is often unconsciously dulled. The "way" on a vessel will take her a considerable distance after the steam is shut off, but sooner or later she stops. And so with the individual, or a company of Christians; they may continue to run in a groove for a time, but sooner or later it becomes manifest that present and living connection with the only source of power and blessing has been lost; and prayer and praise, lacking in unction and freshness, are the result.

It has been said that Spirit-filled men and women is the great need of the church to-day. This may be true, but Spirit-filled saints will surely have Christ as both object and subject, and it is as true now as in the the days of Haggai, "I am with you, saith the Lord . . . My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not."

In a word, then, the remedy for a low spiritual condition is *Christ*. It is as if one heard the Apostle John saying again, "And now, dear children, abide in Him" (1 John ii. 28). Let not young believers be discouraged because they sometimes hear "that the former days were better than these." If "we inquire wisely concerning this" (Eccles. vii. 10), we shall find that the

Holy Spirit will show us that the riches of Christ are unsearchable, and His resources inexhaustible.

The special needs of this our day, with its new experiences for so many, and its great trials for others, do not take the Lord by surprise, nor exhaust His resources.

He can give us not only the needed grace for our path, whatever its ruggedness may be, but spiritual energy, to "hold forth the word of life," in the increasing darkness.

We hear some high-sounding prophecies of what lessons the nations will learn from the terrible experiences of the great War, and one has no doubt that Satan will be ready with his panacea for the world's ills, which may, for a time, attract the hearts of the tried and suffering. But the only real remedy for this world's woes is the coming of God's rightful King. May God graciously grant that many may turn to Him from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His son from heaven, even Jesus our deliverer from wrath to come.

T. R.

"Not of the World."

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16).

FROM what one sees and hears to-day, it is much to be feared that many true believers do not realise the Lord's own words to the Father quoted above. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish true believers from mere professors, or the "Christian world," so-called. And where, through grace, one is found walking quietly in the path of real separation from the world—its objects and ways—such a one is looked upon as a peculiar person, not doing their duty, hardly fit to be

here. It is the *religious world* who are the first to proclaim this; although the word of God plainly says, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself *unspotted from the world*" (James i. 27. New trans.).

Undoubtedly, much of this state of things is owing to the fact that believers do not realise what the calling of God really is. In Hebrews iii. 1 we learn that it is a *heavenly calling, not an earthly one*, "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14. New trans.). It is "a holy calling," not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time (2 Tim. i. 9; Rom. viii. 28-30).

God would have us know what is the "hope of His calling" (Eph. i. 18). He has called us "out of darkness to His wonderful light"; "unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. ii. 9; v. 10). In Romans i. 7 we read, "called saints," *i.e.*, saints by the call of God.

Now this calling of God has for ever separated His people from the world. The Father has given us to His Son, who has sent us into the world to witness for Him, as He ever did of the Father (John vi. 37-40; xvii. 18). We pass through the world on our way to the Father's house, as the Israelites of old passed through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. It is not the home, nor the resting-place of God's people: it is stained with the blood of His Son; and God has a controversy with the world which murdered Him.

Shall we join hands with this world, or have friendship with them? Shall we, whose conversation, or citizenship (*i.e.* "associations of life") is in heaven, have part in its politics (Phil. iii. 20)? Shall we, whom God has called to peace, join in the strife around?

Shall we, whom He hath called to His kingdom and glory, and who receive a kingdom which cannot be moved, be alarmed at the overturning of present kingdoms (1 Thess. ii. 12; Heb. xii. 26-28)? Are they not like "potsherds covered with silver dross" (Prov. xxvi. 23)? yet to be "dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 9). Did not He of whom it could be said, "Never man spoke like this man"; and, "He hath done all things well," say, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight"? The Father has "delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 9-14).

What has the Christian to do with taking part in the wars of nations? The apostle says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 10-20). Here we have true Christian warfare; also the fitting and needed armour given us of God. On the other hand, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. xxvi. 52).

Have God's people forgotten this? Alas! it is to be feared that too many amongst those who have known the truth of separation and professedly walked therein have forgotten it.

Suffer me to ask you: Has God changed? Has His word changed? Is the world not the world still, whether religious or pagan? Why do they suffer you, nay, praise you? Have you, like Lot, "pitched your tent towards Sodom" (Gen. xiii. 12), thus giving up your pilgrim character and becoming like one of the world as to outward appearance, while vexing your righteous soul from day to day? God's Word declares that those who walk the path of faith as strangers and pilgrims

on earth, declare plainly that they *seek* a country. Having left the earthly, at the call of God, they desire a better, that is, an heavenly (Heb. xi. 13-16). The pathway for God's people, according to His unchanging word, is *outside* the course of this world.

Moreover, however much man has forgotten, God has not forgotten the sins of the nations. Has not this nation, for many years, been fast giving up God and His word, and becoming "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 1-9)? Has not France been drifting into atheism, and been intoxicated with the pleasures of sin, and the lusts of the flesh? Then, further, God has not forgotten the horrible cruelties of Belgium in the Congo; nor Serbia's murder of their King and Queen in 1903; nor Russia's fearful persecutions of many of His people who sought to worship Him in spirit and truth, as far as they were enlightened by His word; also of the Jews, beloved for the fathers' sakes.

But the sins of the nations—whether of the Prussian or others—and their ambitious designs will surely find them out in God's own appointed way. It is not for you or me to leave the path of truth, and to put forth our puny strength in vainly endeavouring to use the rod in our own way.

We are exhorted to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, for kings and all that are in authority, *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life*, in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. ii. 1-6). This is of all importance, especially at the present time.

But when man took the Lord Jesus in the garden, He plainly indicated the character of the moment, saying, "This is *your hour* and the power of darkness"

(Luke xxii. 53); and "man's day" has continued up to the present. But the "Lord's" day will come, and in His times He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Tim. vi. 15).

In view of our failures and lack of separation from the world, let us take our true place before our gracious God and Father, each confessing *my sin*, as well as the sins of His people. If we do not, God will allow something more terrible than this War to teach us what true Nazariteship is. Yet we know that in the path of faith we can reckon on God, even if brought into the position in which Daniel and his three friends found themselves in their day; and the end thereof must be blessing (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xii. 2; Dan. iii. 25).

R. G.

A Contrast.

THE WORLDLING'S PORTION.

A LITTLE pomp, a little sway,
A sunbeam in a winter's day,
Is all the great and mighty have
Between the cradle and the grave!

(*Wesley's Journal.*)

THE CHRISTIAN'S PORTION.

A FOUNT of joy, a well of love,
A light of glory from above,
This, and much more, along the road,
Whilst waiting to be with the Lord.

“Behold the Bridegroom!”

THE midnight cry, which awoke the sleeping virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13), has, we believe, gone forth. The truth of the coming of the Lord, so long lost to the church, has been recovered from the rubbish of ages by which it was overlaid. We live, doubtless, in the interval of time between the going out of the cry and the actual coming of the bridegroom. Everything now seems to point to the nearness of that event and the realisation of that “blessed hope.”

There are two things which we may notice in connection with the midnight cry. First, the *One* who is coming; and secondly, the *fact* of His coming.

We may have our minds filled with theology, and even be well versed in Christian doctrine and in prophecy (a very good thing in its place), but all the time pay very little attention to the midnight cry. What is wanted is that the soul, the heart, the affections, should be so drawn out to Christ Himself, that we give a ready and joyous response to His last words to His church, “Surely, I come quickly,” and say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

This is what the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit would ever lead to. He it is who would create these true and bridal affections within the hearts of the saints. For we read in Revelations xxii. 17, “The Spirit *and* the bride say, Come.” How could it be otherwise? If He “loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father,” should we not say, with our whole hearts, “COME?”

But the coming of the Lord has its solemn aspect as well as its blessed one.

Let us remark that the sounding of the midnight cry is connected with the very same things as marked the original calling of the church. There was, at the first, a GOING OUT—from the world, from Judaism, etc.—to meet the coming Bridegroom. And the recovery of the hope has the same character of separation, as it is said, “Go ye out to meet Him.”

Are our ways, our walk, our practical life and conduct, such as we should like them to be if we were quite certain that the Lord were coming to-morrow? Are we walking in separation from the world as those who have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom? Are we seeking to serve the Lord as those who “love His appearing”?

These are serious and practical questions which we do well to take to heart, especially in days like the present.

“Oh, may this hope our spirits cheer,
While waiting for our Saviour here,
He'll quickly come again!
Oh, may our hearts expect that day,
And to His Word responsive, say,
Come, Jesus Lord, Amen!”

F. G. B.

Christ's Coming, Pre-Millennial and Pre-Tribulation.

ONLY let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapours that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millenium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which

dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner.

If you bring in a great "tribulation" first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its shade of desolation.

They are mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that the church must go through so dreadful a crisis.

Be assured, my brethren, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our own hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian.

When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well; for why does the great tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those that ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ, will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the "abomination" to be put into the sanctuary of God.

W. K.

Widows and Orphans.

“Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in Me” (Jer. xlix. 11).

THIS touching little verse comes in most remarkably in a passage speaking of the judgment pronounced by God, through the prophet, upon Edom. Edom was a particularly bitter and relentless enemy of the people of God. But, nevertheless, in the midst of the judgment which the nation drew upon itself by its ways, we find this touching manifestation of God’s care for the poor dependent and afflicted ones amongst them.

Is He not the same to-day, and much more, for those who trust Him? There are many widows and orphans as the result of the terrible war now devastating Europe, and the numbers are increasing daily.

It is indeed the privilege of all such to take comfort from these words. God Himself makes Himself responsible, so to speak, for the care of the widow and the orphan, and he says, “Let them trust in **Me.**”

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

EVERY attentive reader of the Epistles, especially of Paul’s, cannot but have noticed that in Abraham, the “father of the faithful” (Rom. iv. 11), we find set forth for the first time the great principles of a believer’s life and walk with God. He is emphatically called the “friend of God” (2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; James ii. 23). And the blessed Lord gives the same title to those whom He had specially gathered around Himself (John xv. 15). He calls them “friends,” as distinguished from menial servants, because they are

supposed to "know" what their Lord is *doing*. And that surely is the secret and characteristic of all service which He stamps with the mark of His approval. Would we, or, rather, should we, as Christians, desire service of another character? Is the service sought for to be "of faith," which is "by grace," and which *works* "by love," in the power of God's Spirit, having Christ as the object before the soul (Rom. iv. 16; Gal. v. 6, 22)? Or is it to be the offspring of human energy and devotedness, admired by the world which knows not God? Surely these are primary and stirring questions for every redeemed soul.

We are fallen upon days in which devoted service of various kinds, involving self-sacrifice, is called for from both old and young, while at the same time the pressure of work leaves but little leisure for reading carefully the Scriptures, so as to derive real profit from exhortations on this important subject. Needs are very varied in kind, and are everywhere great. We cannot remain indifferent spectators of them. They have to be met, but the first question that has to be answered by every child of God, as to any and every sacrifice heartily made, is, For whom is it, in the first place, made, so as to be "well-pleasing to God" (Hebrews xiii. 16)? In other words, has the service, in the sight of God, the stamp and character which befits the "royal priesthood" of which Peter speaks, whose business is "to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light"? (1 Pet. ii. 9).

If our attention be confined to any particular need and the best way of meeting it, human intelligence may have its full play, and the wordling may prove himself to be "wiser" in his own sphere and generation than the children of light (Luke xvi. 8). A true be-

liever in the Lord Jesus Christ finds himself before God on another ground, and for him the whole question is initially changed, seeing that the Lord is jealous of the affections and devotion of those whom He has redeemed at so great a cost. The searching question of the prophet surely has here its application to the Christian heart and conscience: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month (during the 'seventy years' of the captivity in Babylon), did ye at all fast unto Me, *even to Me?*" (Zach. vii. 5). Or again, have not the Lord's own words of commendation a special value for every one that loves Him, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, *My brethren*, ye have done it unto *Me*" (Matt. xxv. 40, 45)? Is it not evident that He does not look at these things, or judge of them, from the standpoint of a philanthropic world?

We do not of course hint, or mean to suggest, that service should be confined to meeting the needs of real Christians; the Lord's service was not so restricted. On the contrary, the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done remained spiritually untouched: they "repented not" (Matt. xi. 20). Moreover, we read in Galatians vi. 10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto *all* men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

All this has its value and importance, and is incontestably a Christian *duty*; and we can thank God that many are fervent in it; and they are worthy of imitation in this respect. Who has not heard of the self-sacrifice of the Romish priest who devoted himself to serving lepers, lived with them, and finally caught the infection himself?

But this is not our point now. We are considering, not the works in themselves, however blessed, but the

motive in the soul from which all outward results spring: Is it the natural outcome of what we *have received* from the Lord, which He sets before His appointed servants, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 8)? And is it our one desire that, as weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, it should be reckoned as done to Him, from whom all blessing comes, and done in its own proper divine order? The encouragements given by the Apostle in 2 Corinthians ix. refer especially to ministry on behalf of the saints.

Prayer, in this respect, has been much insisted on, and we thank God for it; but to be effectual, that also must be according to God's order in the written word. Otherwise James's warning applies, "Ye ask and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss" (iv. 3). Unconsciously perhaps, the principle of friendship with the world has an abnormal place in the soul.

Then, again, there is a *set time* in the sanctuary of God, both for asking and receiving from Him. As an instance, referring to the blessed Lord Himself, it was written nearly three thousand years ago, "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). And He is still waiting, and has not yet prayed that prayer. In His closing intercession for His saints, He says, "I pray *not* for the world" (John xvii. 9). When the proper time comes, He will take His appointed place over the world in subjection to His Father's will, but *now* He intercedes for those whom the Father has given to Him. And is it not remarkable that before that time comes, all living Christians will have been taken out of the world, and no one left to respond to the apostolic exhortation to pray for those who are in it, and very especially for all that are in authority over it (1 Tim. ii. 1-6)?

Let us then turn afresh to Scripture, to consider God's claims on every soul that He owns as His, and the way in which those claims are to be met. This we must reserve for another chapter; but we would close this with a reminder with which we closed the last (see p. 40), namely, that all true service is in itself an act of worship, as being an expressed proof of God's faithful care and goodness, in a position and relationship known and enjoyed, in dependence upon Himself. It is to this that the Israelite's basket of first-fruits bore such unequivocal testimony in Deuteronomy xxvi.

There is no shade of uncertainty in the blessed fact admitted. It was no question of hoping to be there at some future time, or on certain hoped-for future conditions; it was an uncontrovertible fact, because God's promise and faithfulness were *realised*, and had become the basis of this worship; secondly, the felt need and duty of a soul thus blessed was to express it to Him. Then the basket of first-fruits, received and set down before Jehovah's altar, became the basis of the happy confession, which was in fact the history—all of grace and divine faithfulness—gone over in detail. It was wholly of God, in spite of their own unfaithfulness and failure, and the consequent joy in the Lord's presence was very real.

In worship of this order the soul enters more deeply into a lively sense of God's *salvation*. Let us consider it, and test our worship by it: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to *all* the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Rom. iv. 16). To that may we each and all be enabled to say, "Amen!"

W. J. L.

(*To be continued.*)

The Liberty which is in Christ.—I.

THE liberty with which Christ has made His people free is a very real and most blessed deliverance.

We have been set free from the **guilt** and **penalty** of sin, and from its power over our lives (i. Thess. 1-10). No wonder that Christian, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," gave three leaps for joy when he came to the cross where his terrible burden rolled off his back into the sepulchre. The load on the conscience is gone; the sense of God's displeasure no longer oppresses the soul; and the future is not now a dismal gulf into which we dread to fall, but is bright with thoughts of heaven and home. The ransom has been paid, and we have been bought out and set free. A dying servant of God said, "I have no accounts to settle; I owe nothing to man, and *my Saviour has paid all my debts to God.*"

Christ breaks the **power** of cancelled sin (Rom. vi. 14). When forgiven, the soul receives the life of God and is enabled to do His will. Some can say, "My chains *fell off* when I was saved." Others testify, "My chains *wore off.*" But whether evil habits are at once and fully forsaken, or whether they gradually loosen their hold, sin has no longer supreme lordship over the soul. It is no longer a tyrant reigning with undisputed sway.

The believer has been delivered from his former standing under sin and condemnation (Rom. vi. 6, 7). He is now "dead to sin." Many dear children of God are more distressed over the presence of indwelling sin, "the flesh," than over sins actually committed. The distressed soul argues to itself, "I carry about with me this hateful thing. I feel it is part of myself, and

surely God must condemn me on account of its presence within me." What a lift it gives the soul to see that, as a matter of fact, God *has* condemned it already. At the cross Christ was "made sin"; He made Himself answerable not only for our actual sins, but for our position as sinners by nature. He "died unto sin" once for all (Rom. vi. 10). At Calvary God "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3).

Now we, as identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, have also died to sin, and have been re-started, so to speak, with another and quite different standing before God. We are no longer "in Adam," but "in Christ" (an expression that sums up the believer's status in the epistles). We belong to the new race of which the last Adam is the Head. Our old standing under condemnation has come to an end. The judgment of indwelling sin is over already. We have done with it, as to our standing and position. God has settled with it. The "old nature" has no longer any part in our NEW STANDING before God in Christ risen, which is as perfect now, in this world of sin and temptation, as it will be when we reach the glory and are perfect within and without, having no spot or blemish or any such thing.

What is the effect of seeing what God has done in regard to our old standing and the flesh? If we see that the old standing has come to an end, judicially, at the cross, and that the old nature has no place whatever in our new and perfect standing in Christ, we shall be free to walk with God and maintain a sense of perfect confidence and security, in spite of the presence within of the old evil root (sin in the flesh) which is ever clamouring to be heard, but which needs ever to be kept in check. A glorious liberty this, indeed!

Connected with the above is the fact that we have

been emancipated from the law (Rom. vii. 6). "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). The Galatian converts were rebuked in stern language by the apostle for allowing themselves to be carried away by teachers who denied the all-sufficiency of the grace of God. It was true they realised they had been saved by grace, but now they thought that they had to strive and wrestle and strain every nerve to keep the law in order to maintain their salvation. Having begun in the Spirit, they were now seeking to be made perfect in the flesh.

But the blessed, emancipating fact is that we are "dead to the law" as well as to sin. The law has nothing more to say to us who are "in Christ." The law threatens death against those who transgress it. We have suffered that death in the person of our Substitute. Not only has Christ died *for* us, but we have died *with* him. We are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ," and being in Christ risen, we are now beyond the reach of condemnation. The claims of the law upon us have ceased as a means of obtaining life; and as to our having to keep its precepts to maintain or improve our title to heaven, this is out of the question, for we are "complete" in Christ (Col. ii. 19). Moreover, as to his duty towards God and to his fellow-men, the responsibility of the Christian is higher than that set forth by the law.

Thus we have not only done with the law as a means of obtaining righteousness, but we have done with the "religion" of the flesh (Col. ii. 16-23). Thousands are the slaves of religious observances. In countries where the Greek and Roman Churches hold sway, vast multitudes are fettered by the "traditions of men," by ritualistic practices, by asceticism. And in some quarters even God's people are held in a measure of

bondage by what they would call their "religious duties" and self-imposed rules and observances. Now the second chapter of Colossians warns us against subjection to these things, and exhorts us to enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. The God-given types, set forth in the Old Testament, have had their fulfilment in Christ, through whom we now approach to God with boldness and confidence, and worship in spirit and in truth.

E. A.

An Ancient Chorus.

SINGING is a great relief to the human heart, and, where the grace of God is known and enjoyed, singing is often the most appropriate vehicle to express the feelings of joy produced thereby. Scripture is full of the most beautiful examples of both the grace and the song.

The first, and in many ways the most moving song of the Bible, is that of Moses and the children of Israel after crossing the Red Sea. This song would repay studying in its details, but we must limit our notice of it here to its first experimental note as recorded in Exodus xv., and repeated in Psalm cxviii. and Isaiah xii.

"The Lord (Jah)* is my Strength and Song, and He is become my Salvation."

These few words are unique, in that they not only announce wonderful facts, but are sung on three different occasions, in three different epochs, in the history of God's people. Let us briefly notice them in their rotation as to time.

* The name JAH, translated here "Lord," is used for the first time in Scripture in this song, and is the word used also in Psalm lxviii. 4; cxviii. 14; Isaiah xii. 2; and some other places.

(1) Israel had suffered the cruelties of Egypt. As a weak people oppressed by a powerful nation they had sunken into slavery and idolatry. After many years God's power is exercised on their behalf, delivering them from Pharaoh's tyranny. Egypt's hold on them is completely broken, and even physical obstacles to their freedom, such as the sandy desert, the placed called Migdol, and the Red Sea are overcome by a miracle. From the other side of the sea they saw the enemy host dead on the shore.

Hitherto life and liberty—the most valued heritage of any nation—were to them a hopeless dream. But for God's mercy, Egypt and the wilderness would deprive them of both. Yet now, at last, both are realised in divine abundance. No wonder then that they sang spontaneously, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation."

These words form what we may rightly call the most ancient chorus sung by redeemed lips. They do not say, the Lord has *given me* strength and a song and salvation; but their chorus rang out a new and vastly different thing, namely, that the Lord Jehovah Himself, had, in Person, become their strength, their song, and their salvation. Everything needed they had in having Him. Their highest glory consisted in having Himself as their portion thenceforth; as in centuries afterwards their deepest curse consisted of losing—not merely their land or their liberty—but Him, as He says, "Ye have forsaken me" (Jer. ii. 13).

May it not be said that the present terrible sufferings of Europe are largely the outcome of the nations having turned away from God?

(2) In Psalm cxviii. 14, Israel, Aaron, and *those that feared the Lord* (already exhorted in Psalm cxv. to *trust in the Lord*) are summoned to give thanks, and celebrate

His mercy. The keynote for the Psalmist is, "The Lord is on my side" (ver. 6). This, for him, transcends having "man, princes, or nations" on his side, and makes him superior, even to their opposition. He faced them all, knowing that he had Jehovah; and nothing befitted his experience better than to sing, in the words of the ancient chorus, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (ver. 14).

This also sufficiently explains why, in ver. 15, "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Not simply now, with the nation at large, or with the king alone, but in the individual dwellings of the righteous, they had the sense of the Lord Himself being with them and were glad.

This Psalm cxviii. covers, in a remarkable way, David's contemporaries who *feared the Lord*, and those who emulate them in the present epoch of time. He who "fears the Lord" to-day can also say, "The Lord is on my side"—for me—"and is become my salvation" (ver. 21), and this even more fully than Israel, Aaron, or David. For he sees his sins taken into the fullest account by God at the cross, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar" (ver. 27). This sacrifice has so put the believer's sins away that not even God Himself can bring a charge against him. Christ is also on high interceding for him; and soon he himself will be on high, like Him, and with the "many brethren."

It is no surprise, then, that the great Apostle, in speaking of these things, should give expression to the triumphant challenge, "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. viii. 28-39). After this, nothing can separate us from God's love; neither tribulation nor distress, nor peril, nor sword, nor death—from whatever cause—nor life, however tranquil and enchanting—nor

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature—whether of heaven, or earth, or hell—shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ has also become, through His death and resurrection, “the head-stone of the corner” (Ps. cxviii. 22). Upon Him every believer is built as a “living stone,” as well as the church collectively, which is the dwelling place of God.

What believer, then, but can say with the greatest confidence, “GOD IS FOR ME,” whether he considers the question of his sins or his circumstances? This panorama of grace is all *of* God and *for* God; and what words can be found more becoming to sum up the results to us than these, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.” We may often feel weak, sad, and depressed as we behold what occurs around us; but if we remember that we have *Himself* abidingly as our strength, and cheer, and deliverer, our hearts must be lighter and our faces brighter.

(3) We are introduced in Isaiah, chapter xii., into the third epoch of time already mentioned—the day of the Lord, which is yet future, when the church will be in heavenly glory. That will be “The day that the Lord shall set His hand *the second time* to recover the remnant of His people (Israel and Judah) from the four corners of the earth” (Isa. xi. 10-16), and not from Egypt simply as at the *first*. Then the earth will be full of the knowledge and the glory of the Lord (Isa. xi. 9, Hab. ii. 14, Num. xiv. 21). The desert shall blossom as the rose for them. Their oppression, whether by Russia or any other adversary, will be over for ever. Their sin and uncleanness will be washed away; and each one will prosper again in Canaan,

under his own vine and fig tree. Morally and physically everything will be changed, more even than at the first deliverance. Jehovah will be again in their midst; none will be weak and feeble, for "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord." They will learn war no more; and all will be of God, the fruit of His sovereign will, and power, and grace.

They, too, fail to find any more appropriate means to tell their great joy than the ancient chorus their forefathers had first learnt to sing so many centuries before, on the shore of the Red Sea—"The Lord Jehovah is my strength and song. He also is become my salvation" (Isa. xii. 2).

May the blessed fact that we now have Himself with us here so permeate our hearts and minds, that in the face of everything we too may sing out of a full experience the words of this ancient chorus.

W. M. R.

My Object.

"I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer"
(Isa. xlix. 26).

JESUS, evermore the same,
All my hope is in Thy name;
Object of my heart and soul,
While the endless ages roll.
Blessed One, Thy voice I own,
Calling me from yonder throne,
To be with Thee where Thou art,
Object of my soul and heart.

B. T. C.

Evangelisation.

GEORGE WHITFIELD once said, "I had rather wear out than rust out. No nestling, no nestling on this side of eternity." Again, "Oh that I had a hundred tongues and lives; they should be all employed for my dear Lord Jesus!" May we, in our little measure, be filled with the same earnest desire for souls!

Time is quickly passing; souls are perishing around; Christ is coming, and then our opportunities will be over.

Thank God there are many earnest workers in the gospel field, but, after all, what is done only touches the fringe of the work to be done even in our own land.

As the summer season is now at hand, there is opportunity for open-air preaching, for the distribution of gospel books and papers, and for other means of bringing the blessed gospel of Christ before the unsaved.

There is surely much to do around us if we are prayerful and diligent in seeking it out. Let us not be satisfied to go on in a groove, but seek out new places and fresh open doors for the spread of the truth. The sphere of the gospel is mainly *outside*—not in meeting rooms only, but in the lanes and streets of our cities, in the market-places, in the country villages, and wherever we can get access to the people.

Many have suffered bereavement through this terrible War; this gives an opening for seeking out such and bringing to them a message of peace and comfort.

Above all, let us be earnest and persevering in prayer that God may revive His work and use every effort, however weak it may be, for the glory of His Son in the blessing and conversion of souls.

Serving the Lord.

“**A**LL Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

There is a desire amongst many believers to serve the Lord, and an endeavour in some quarters is being made to arouse an interest in what is called “Missionary work.”

The fields are ripe unto harvest, the labourers are few. “Occupy till I come,” said the Lord in the parable; and we find “Till He come” in connection with remembering the Lord in His death; and again, “Till He come” connected with serving the Lord in His harvest field (Phil. i. 5-7; Luke xix. 13).

“If any man serve Me, let him follow Me: and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour.” Here are the Lord’s own terms for His service, as well as His own and His Father’s reward to those who serve and follow Him. Serving Him and following Him the Lord has Himself inseparably linked together; may we be kept from in any way seeking to cut them asunder.

Here, there, and everywhere there is need; within arm’s length, there is plenty of work. The lambs and sheep of the flock of God are bleating for the green pastures and still waters of the Holy Scriptures, while all around men, women, and children are without a Saviour and His salvation. The War, sad as it is, in God’s abounding grace, is being used by Him to awaken civilians, sailors, and soldiers to His claims and their eternal destiny.

May the love of Christ constrain many to hold forth the word of life, thus to “throw out the life line,” as

empowered by the Spirit of God, and to be wise in winning souls, as vessels sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

U. G.

German Rationalism and the Bible.

IT is nothing but the miserable narrowness of mind of those who can see nothing of God's ways out of their own petty circle of ideas, which could make the objections which German sceptics and their imitators do. They comment on a book of which they know nothing, the object and import of which they have not even studied—an immense scope of connected thought and system, reaching from Genesis to the melting away of time into eternity—all its parts hanging together, and developing every form of relationship between God and man, historically pursued, yet morally and individually realised. It is a system in which each part fits into the other, like the pieces of a dissected map, proving the perfectness and completeness of the whole. All this system, I say, making a complete whole, in absolute unity, yet written (for written it was, as the best testimony proves) at long intervals over a space of some fifteen hundred years, pursued through every various condition in which man can be placed, of ignorance, darkness, and light, with principles brought out into intended contrast, as the law and the gospel, yet never losing its perfect and absolute unity or the relationship of its parts—all this is passed over by the sceptics. They are not conscious of the existence of it. They have about as much knowledge of the Bible as a babe who took the dissected map and would put together two parts from the antipodes, because they were coloured red and would look pretty.

J. N. D. (1853).

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

(See p. 56.)

KEEPING in mind the subject before us, we would now glance rapidly over the gradual unfolding of God's mind, in bringing man into relation with Himself, after the fall, as recorded in Genesis. We need to remember that this book is naturally divided into two parts—the first eleven chapters showing the end of the old world, and the dispersion of Noah's family, whereas the remainder of the book, beginning with the call of Abraham, sets forth in detail the walk of faith in answer to God's call.

With that general division corresponds the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the second section, treating of the **call** of God and consequent *trial* and *choice* of **faith** beginning at verse 8. It is one of those little indications which show that all Scripture proves its divine origin, and it will serve as a guide for considering the main points.

Our attention is thus at once arrested by three remarkable characters—Abel, Enoch and Noah—setting forth the **sacrifice** on which *salvation* is based, in Abel; **communion** with God in isolation, in Enoch; and, lastly, the **service** ordered of God to be carried out by Noah. Communion and worship necessarily go together.

Abel's sacrifice was based upon the recognition of the sentence of *death* which weighed upon the whole race through Adam's sin. Enoch's walk, in separation from a godless world, testifies to the character of the worshippers the Father seeks for, as the Lord told the woman of Samaria (John iv. 23). Finally, Noah's service was in view of the coming judgment announced

beforehand, even as it is again foretold to be awaiting the world in which we live (2 Pet. iii., 5-7).

With Exodus, a fresh chapter in divine instruction is opened. At the moment when God was going to have not individuals only, as in Genesis, but a whole people in relation with Himself, we find the blood introduced for the first time as the means of sheltering them from the judgment which fell on the world, and the added truth that all so sheltered were God's own peculiar inheritance. As a matter of fact, the judgment attained only the firstborn in each house, but the sprinkled blood guaranteed them from death, and the consequent word was, "All the firstborn are mine" (Exod. xii., 12-13, xiii., 2, 12).

All those so saved were represented, man for man, by the Levites, and thus set apart for the service of the tabernacle and the whole congregation of Israel. It was their life-duty. Their *first* duty was in connection with God's dwelling place, answering somewhat to the *assembly* now. (Compare Isaiah xii., 2, 3, 6, with Matthew xviii., 20).

The principle is the same. It is practically what we should understand by collective worship. But how much do we see of it in Christendom, where the constant tendency is to drop down to outward forms, which appeal to the senses and to the imagination, while *God's portion* in the worship is lost sight of and ignored? And at the same time the free action of the Spirit of God amongst His gathered saints is almost unknown.

For the ordering of the Levitical Service, we must look at the book of **Numbers**. And then we shall find a remarkable confirmation of that which has already occupied our attention. In chapter iii. we find, in the detailed numbering of all the firstborn of

the children of Israel "from a month old and upward," that they corresponded to the number of the Levites who were, as a whole, taken to represent them, 22,000 in all. There was a small excess of 273 of the first-born, and these had to be specially redeemed according to instructions given in the last chapter of Leviticus (compare Num. iii. 47 with Lev. xxvii. 6). Five shekels a head was the smallest amount indicated. The principle set forth is of the first importance, namely, that the redeemed are the Lord's own property devoted to the service of His dwelling place amongst His people.

Next we find special personal consecration to the Lord, according to the vow of a "Nazarite," applicable to either man or woman. This is in chapter vi. which closes with a special blessing, putting Jehovah's name on the children of Israel, concluding with the words, "And I will bless them."—Balaam, in spite of his desire to please the king of Moab, had to own it, saying, "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it" (Num. xxiii. 20). It was the characteristic mark of God's salvation, summed up, as it were, at the *end* of their wilderness journey, "According to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" (ver. 23). Such is, in principle, the **salvation** of every redeemed soul.*

Chapter vii. follows, giving the prescribed order of the voluntary offerings or **worship** of the twelve tribes, both individual and collective, "for the dedication of the altar of burnt offering after it had been anointed"

* The text hardly seems to emphasise sufficiently God's way and order as to the *principle* of His salvation, which was set forth in Israel. Every redeemed soul is His personal property, a vessel to be used, not as *we* think advisable, but as *He* ordains for His glory and our blessing: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians vi. 19-20).

(vers. 84, 88). The closing verse of the chapter is the most remarkable expression of *communion* between God and Moses, the appointed leader of the people, confirming Exodus xxxiii. 7-11.

Lastly, in chapter viii., in connection with the "candlestick," we find how the Levites were "offered" in order to "execute the **service** of Jehovah" (ver. 11). This is all the more remarkable, since we find the same thing repeated, with certain characteristic modifications, in Zechariah, chapter iv. But the main thought is preserved, setting forth God's thoughts as to all true service done in His name, that it must be to show forth the *light*—His light—of which Christ is the only true and adequate expression. While here, He, and He alone, was the light of the world; and now that He is gone on high, His saints are left to walk in His footsteps, and thus be, as far as possible, in principle, a setting forth of what the "true light" was and is (see *firstly*, John i. 4; viii. 12; ix. 5; xii. 35, 36; *secondly*, as to Christians, Matthew v. 14; Philippians ii. 15). In other words, it must be a testimony such as **God** can own and bless.

This is made clear by the Lord's last words to His disciples at the Passover supper. As to Himself, He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). Then as to them, "By this shall all men know that ye are *my disciples*, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). In as far as that is true, the light, as He manifested it, goes on shining, and the "darkness is *passing*."* The message is "that ye love one another *as* I have loved you." . . . But we must reserve our remarks on Zechariah for a future occasion.

W. J. L.

* Such is the true rendering of 1 John ii. 8, "The darkness will only be 'past' when we see Jesus as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

Military Service.

THE following letter has been received from a correspondent in reference to the article "Not of the world" in our March Number.

"I have read with interest the paper in March number of the 'Words of Help' entitled 'Not of the World,' and welcome anything that brings home to us in a practical way the true character of the Christian calling. I think, however, that in so far as the writer seeks to furnish help and guidance for action in a time like this, the paper is misleading in that it presents only one side of the truth; and we want the whole of the written Word as well as the 'whole armour of God.'

"It has been rightly said, You can test doctrine by its results. Clearly the result—if every Christian acted upon the lines suggested in this paper—would be that in this country the king (as representing 'the powers that be') would be left entirely unsupported by any save unbelievers; and, in the act of declaration of war in fulfilment of a solemn treaty entered into—although I conceive no upright man could have done otherwise in the position in which he found himself—the Christian would maintain an attitude of indifference.

"The paper is, too, a little out of touch with actual facts, for I suppose, there is scarcely a gathering throughout the land where some of our brethren or our sons have not found it their duty to do the very thing that R. G. discourages.

"Does not this divergence arise from the fact that the paper takes no account of the Christian's duty to 'the powers that are ordained of God'? The man who holds the sword of government is 'the minister of God' (Rom. xiii., 4). Therefore, government in the world to-day is of God. The Christian is exhorted to be subject and to honour the king, therefore to assist him when his authority is in danger of being overthrown. It is only thus that a Christian can properly be found in the Army—fearing God and honouring the king. He is indeed called to peace but, if asked by the king to assist in the maintenance of his authority, he is bound to do so (1 Pet. ii. 13), but only in such a case.

(Continued on p. 73.)

“No doubt God is using the War for the chastening of the nations—England included—and it is the part of the Christian to be in the mind of God, and in such a state as to be used of Him in the carrying out of His own gracious purpose.

“There is much danger for those who have responded to the call and joined the Army; but the Lord can keep them, and use them for *His* glory, if they set Him before them. The prayer of Jabez (1 Chron. iv. 10) would be heard to-day, and God will keep His people, who commit themselves to Him, and preserve them from the grief of much that is happening.

“I trust that I have not written anything contrary to the truth, but I desired, although necessarily imperfectly, to put forth the other side of the subject, as it is of the utmost importance that we should give all the help we can to our younger brethren who are more immediately affected.
J. M. W.”

The question of what should be the attitude of Christians with respect to military service, seems to us somewhat analogous to other questions of the day, such, for example, as important political matters which sometimes involve serious issues for the country. In such cases it is often urged that Christians should take part in them in order to support the right. But, what will help us in deciding our relation to these matters is, we believe, to consider, What is the place and calling of the Christian as found in the New Testament? As to this, each must act before God according to the light he has from His word.

It was pointed out in our March number, and frequently before that, that the Christian is “not of the world,” even as Christ was not of it; that “our citizenship is in heaven”; that our Lord has said, “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence”; that the calling of

the Church is *heavenly*, not an earthly one, as was the case with Israel.

We cannot but think that, if the Christian descends from this position *voluntarily*, and goes down into the arena of the world's politics, its strife, etc., he has in so far forgotten his place as a pilgrim and a stranger who *seeks* a better country, that is, an heavenly. To take the path of separation may entail many trials of faith and patience, but surely it is the right one, and the one in which we can count on God for grace and strength, however feebly we may walk in it.

At the same time, we have to meet the practical difficulties of the times in which we live, and to seek to help one another, especially those young in the faith, at the present serious crisis.

Then, again, military service is not always voluntary but, even in this country now, compulsory in many cases. And scripture, as our correspondent points out, is very clear as to our responsibility to obey the king, rulers and authorities as representing God in government. All this we need to carefully maintain.

But while this is so, the question arises: Am I to obey the power, if asked to do an act contrary to the spirit of the gospel and of grace; as, for example, to kill my fellowman, be it a brother in Christ or a poor sinner? Peter, when called to account before the Jewish Sanhedrim said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The first part of this sentence, "We ought to obey," gives us the principle of obedience; the second part, "God rather than men," shows us that if commanded to act contrary to God, and to conscience, His claims must have the first place. We find instances of some who acted in accordance with this in Daniel i. 8; iii. 17-18; vi. 10 and elsewhere. We believe it to be quite true that England's

taking part in the present War was justifiable and unavoidable nationally, but this does not change the principle which should govern the believer's path *as a Christian*.

We ought, however, to be thankful that our Government has itself recognised the claims of conscience, and acted so considerately in allowing exemption to those who can prove that they have a conscientious objection to take life, and in permitting them to take up duties which do not involve this. This, no doubt, is a mercy from God to many.

Moreover, the case of the many young brothers who have been called up under this Act, whether as non-combatants or otherwise, is one which calls for our earnest prayers and sympathy. May they be strengthened and enabled to confess Christ, and witness for Him in the new and, it may be, trying circumstances in which they may be placed!—ED.

“How Wilt Thou do in the Swelling of Jordan?”

(Jeremiah xii. 5.)

IT has been thought by some that “the swelling of Jordan,” which in this passage is contrasted with dwelling in security and peace, may refer to what is spoken of in the forty-ninth and fiftieth chapters of this same book: that lions, hiding in the thicket on the river's banks, were sometimes driven by the swollen waters into the adjacent country, and ravaged the flocks. But whether that be so or not, the inference is not difficult to gather, that contending with horses is contrasted with running with footmen, and times of peace with the swelling of Jordan.

As to the latter, it may be, on the other hand, that if

one had only just strength to ford the river under normal conditions, the question arises, How would one do in the times of flood? and herein lies a valuable lesson for the present time of distress.

Hitherto, we have been only running, so to speak, with the footmen; mercy and goodness have smoothed the way for us, and we have trusted too implicitly, perhaps, in the land of peace. Now the troubles of the way increase; loved ones are called away to bear their part in the great War, and anxious wives, parents, and friends await with troubled hearts and many forebodings the next news. Plans and hopes for the future are frustrated, business becomes daily more difficult to manage, and, compared with the times of quiet and peace we have so long enjoyed, we may well feel as if we had horses to contend with, instead of footmen.

But, we who believe the word "that shineth as a light in a dark place," ("whereunto ye do well that ye take heed"), know that darker days still are in store for the world. The day of the swelling of Jordan is yet to come; but, thank God, not for those that are Christ's. The promise to the keeper of His word in patience, is, "I also will keep thee from [or, out of] the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10).

We (Christians) may have to see darker days yet, something perhaps approaching the flood-tide of evil, but shall it be said, We know not what to do? Let us remember what is written in another scripture about the swelling of Jordan (Joshua iii. 15). On that memorable day when Israel passed dry shod through the river's bed, it is recorded that "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest . . . and the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord,

stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan . . . until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

We need to remind ourselves of that place of death and darkness, in which our blessed Saviour stood firm, when enduring for us all the concentrated powers of the swollen waters of death and judgment. Did He not say immediately before His death, "This is your hour and the power of darkness"; and, when there, in the waters of death, "They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion"?

Yes, dear fellow-believer, all the powers of evil—man's enmity, and Satan's malice, in all their varied forms and intensity,—with that which was deeper still, the waves and the billows of God's judgment of sin, were pressed upon Jesus, our Lord, in the hour of death; and, we can add, were exhausted by Him.

But He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

"By weakness and defeat, He won the meed and crown,
Trode all our foes beneath His feet, by being trodden
down."

His word to His own now, is—"I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

There is no remedy for depression and anxiety like looking off unto Jesus, where He is in the glory above. And it is our privilege to walk in the light of that glory, through the restless scenes of this world, however dark the days may be.

Twice over in Hebrews xii. we are exhorted not to faint, lest the "contradictions of sinners," or "the chastening of the Lord," should cause us so to do. And we are reminded that we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," although we may

sometimes feel as if the powers of evil had the upper hand. Our victorious Lord says, "**Fear not**"; and it is when reviewing such-like circumstances, that the great Apostle says, "Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

One word more. It is our privilege, as the children of "the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation," to be able to "comfort them that are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." We have been reminded of late, of two ministries we have the privilege of exercising now—intercession, and evangelisation—and surely we may add to these, the ministry of comfort, to the distressed and sorrowing ones around us, "in heaviness, through manifold trials" (1 Peter i. 6).

But, for this ministry, we must ourselves be "comforted of God," and walk in the power of that **unchanging love**, from which "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," shall be able to separate us,—the love of God—*which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. May the Lord grant us this grace!

T. R.

The Liberty which is in Christ—II.

GALATIANS i. 4. tells us that Christ died that He might deliver us from this present evil world. The principles by which unconverted men govern their lives no longer dominate the child of God. He breathes a higher atmosphere, for the life of God has entered his soul. To him the things that are real are the things that are unseen, spiritual, eternal. He is no longer a slave to the fashions, the points of view, the ideals, the ambitions of the world of

the unregenerate. Christ is now the centre of a new world, where his heart finds its true rest and satisfaction. The cross of his Saviour is the mighty power that has broken his fetters.

Moreover, the child of God has been released from the captivity of Satan, whom the worldling is faithfully, albeit unconsciously, serving, and has no reason to fear death. It is true that many believers are afraid of death up to the very moment of passing across the dark river. Then, however, they receive dying grace, and the crossing is accomplished with far greater ease than they had ever thought possible. But although we cannot truthfully say that all believers are delivered from the fear of death, the Word of God makes it clear that we have no reason to be afraid of the "king of terrors." And why? Because death has spent its power on Christ as our Substitute. Death left its sting in Christ our Substitute, so that, though we feel the shock of death, we do not feel its sting. "The sting of death is sin," but our blessed Surety has removed the monster's sting for all His people. There is now no necessity for any believer to pass through the gates of death. In fact, it may well be that the present generation of God's children will be alive and remain until the coming of the Lord. This, indeed, is the firm conviction of many.

What we need is liberty—the liberty of the Spirit. There are many things that keep the spirit of the saint bound—ignorance, prejudice, unsound judgment, fears and doubts of various kinds, laziness, pride. Each individual knows what are his own fetters; so often is the spirit burdened or half asleep. If the spirit is not oppressed, it is often in a state of torpor. We need to have our spirit set free from pressure on the one hand, and from passivity on the other. We read

that those who returned to Jerusalem after the captivity to re-build the temple were "men whose spirits God had stirred up." God grant us all this quickening in the "inner man" and enable us to say, "I will walk at liberty!"

At the day of manifestation, we shall enter into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." Body, soul and spirit will enjoy complete freedom. No civil war or inward struggle will burden the soul. The body will no longer be a weight and encumbrance, and the spirit will be perpetually quickened by the Holy Ghost. We shall do what we wish, and what we wish will be God's will. Then there will be perfect freedom, for there will be complete harmony between desire and accomplishment. E. A.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

Faith.—God *never* disappoints faith—He may *prove* it.

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Faith.—No rule can be laid down for another's faith: the saints are cast on their responsibility to God.

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Communion.—Communion with God maintains two things—the sense of blessedness in His presence, and separation from the world.

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Christ, Head of the Church.—Never allow yourself to be in any association, dear young saint, where you will have to give this up. Hold the Head at all costs. And if you hold the Head, you can consistantly own but one body; for one head with many bodies is unthinkable.

Is Christianity a Failure?

THE Great War, with all its terrible consequences to poor suffering humanity, has led some people to ask the question stated above. Here are Christian nations, contending in deadly conflict with each other, and that in this advanced twentieth century! Then, again, we read of barbarities and atrocities perpetrated by some of them, which could hardly be surpassed by savage or heathen races. Is Christianity a failure?

The answer is, *No*; but the failure is, in not distinguishing between Christianity and Christendom. Indeed, it is surprising how little the difference between a true Christian and a professing Christian is understood by people in general. The question is asked, Is not every one who has been baptized and confirmed, and goes to a christian place of worship, a Christian?

The truth of new birth, which lies at the root of all true Christianity, and which was needed by every son of fallen Adam at any time, before such could have to do with God, is not understood.

The *true* Christian is one who has been "born again," who is "born of God," and he has received from God a new life and nature; he is "made partaker of the divine nature." The *professing* Christian—and Christendom includes all such—is one who adopts Christianity as his religion. It is just the difference between that which is *inward* and real, and that which is *outward* and nominal.

Christianity, too, is the religion of Christ; it is the revelation of God in the person of His own Son. It is founded on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now these are *facts*, facts declared by God in His Word, in which there is no failure, nor can there be. True, those who profess them may fail, and they do, even though they be true Christians ; but Christianity remains unchanged.

There are two fatal errors which arise from not seeing the distinction between true Christianity and mere profession. First, that of the Romanist and the Ritualist, who would attribute to the professing body of the baptized those blessings and privileges of which Scripture speaks ; but which really belong only to true believers, and not to the professing body at all ; and secondly, that of those who are of a more sceptical turn of mind, and who would fasten upon Christianity the blame for the wickedness and evil doings of men who happen to belong to a "Christian" nation, and therefore bear the Christian name.

No, thank God, Christianity is not a failure, however dark the history of Christendom may be. But it is a very solemn consideration that God will hold Christendom responsible for the place they took, and the light and privileges they have enjoyed. We might almost apply to Christendom that which our Lord said of Capernaum of old in Matthew xi., and read it thus:—"And thou, Christendom, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell ; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." They will have to bear a far severer judgment than that of poor heathens who never heard the name of Christ, and never had the privileges *they* have had. F. G. B.

Sunday-School Service.

A WORD WITH ITS WORKERS.

“According to your faith be it unto you.”

“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flock, and look well to thy herds. Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”

MAY this Scripture ABC be learned and leaned upon by all serving the Lord, especially in the harvest field of Sunday-School service, which is a sphere of increasing importance to-day.

Sad and serious is the fact that the number of Sunday-School scholars is decreasing in the British Isles, according to the reports from various quarters.

Satan is using Secularism and Socialism to entice parents and children from the reverence due to God and His Word, and regard for the Lord's Day; thus respect for the Sunday is waning fast, the multitude becoming “lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.”

The servants of the Lord need to be aroused and energised so that with more dependence and devotedness they may be more and more constrained by the love of Christ to win the young for Him, that they may remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and know that their Maker is their Redeemer, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; confessing Him as their Saviour, knowing Him as their Shepherd, and following Him as their Lord.

The Lord Jesus, in His pathway of love up to the cross, was ever ready to invite the children to come unto Him. No one was to forbid their approach. Jesus Himself was once a child. It is written “the child Jesus,” and in one chapter, Matthew ii., nine times “the young child” is mentioned of Him who is Emmanuel—God with us.

Matthew xix. 13-15; Mark x. 13-16; and Luke

xviii. 15-17, prove a source of great strength to every worker amongst the young, encouraging each, as grace is bestowed, to be privileged in bringing the children to the Saviour, for Him to bless them, to touch them, to take them up in His arms of love and power, never to let them down until safely landed in the home above.

As in days of old, some disciples are not much in sympathy with the Sunday-School service to-day. But what does the Lord say? "When Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God"; "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"; "*And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.*"

Let the love of Christ constrain each Sunday-School worker to persevere, counting on God for blessing on His Word:—

"Come, labour on!
Claim the high calling angels cannot share,
To young and old the gospel gladness bear,
Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly,
The night draws nigh."

Helper.

The Inspiration of the Holy Scripture—i.

AMONGST many passages in the Old Testament, which are found again in the New, I would like to refer to some which show in what a decisive manner the Lord and the apostles speak of "the Scriptures."

Let us begin with the words of the apostles. We read in Matthew i. 22, "Now all this was done, that it

might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet"; not merely, "In order that what the prophet said might be fulfilled," but "*what the Lord said.*" Matthew, therefore, recognised that Isaiah was divinely inspired. When Matthew wrote, the Holy Spirit guided him; he was not, therefore, speaking as a Jew filled with prejudices. We find the same thing in verse 15 of the following chapter. Matthew recognised that Isaiah wrote as inspired of God.

Mark begins his gospel with the words, "As it is written in the prophets," and quotes the words of Malachi and Isaiah.

Luke tells us in chapter i. 55, that Mary said, "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever," referring to what is said in Genesis. Further on, Zacharias, *filled with the Holy Ghost*, prophesied and said, amongst other things, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." In chapter iii. we have the testimony of a man *filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth*, and of whom the Lord said, "Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." We read of him, "*The Word of God* came unto John." And what was that Word of God? "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet."

In the gospel of John, John the Baptist said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, *as saith the prophet Esaias.*" And he cites this passage as having full authority; John himself being a man *full of the Holy Ghost*.

In the first chapter of Acts, Peter says that according to Psalms lxix. and cix., another should be chosen instead of Judas. His words show clearly that he recognised the book of Psalms as inspired. And he

says to others, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas" (ver. 16).

In Acts ii., Peter and the others have made spiritual progress, for the Holy Ghost had come down and has taken up His abode in them, in such a way that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," fitted for service and receiving gifts that they had never had previously. What was the first thing they did? Peter rose up and spoke, beginning *by a quotation from Joel*, in order to explain that what produced their joy was the work of the Holy Ghost. Then he showed from Psalms xvi. and cx. that the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ, were a fulfilment of what was written of Him many hundreds of years before. And we know the blessed effect that this preaching of Peter had; that is to say, the writings of the Old Testament, inspired by the Holy Ghost, explained and applied by a man filled with the Holy Ghost.

In Acts iii., Peter declares to the Jews that, if they would repent then, God would send Jesus from heaven to bring in the times of the restitution of all things, of which *God had spoken* by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (vers. 19-22). At Cæsarea, Peter said to those around him, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). Remark that it is here *all* the prophets. He recognises, then, the whole of the Old Testament. He quotes in His epistles passages from Genesis, Exodus, the Psalms, Hosea, and other scriptures. He desires that his readers should remember what was said *by the holy prophets* (2 Pet. iii. 2).

J. N. V.

Great Men.

THE Pharisees and Scribes, the great men of Jerusalem, were still a value in the eyes of the disciples (Mark vii. 1-13), just as you find the vulgar crowd gaping after the sounding titles of the religious world. How little are the mass of God's children emancipated from the delusion that there is something in these names that guarantees or presupposes real intelligence!

Never was it so, and never less than now. Can you point out a time since Christendom began when there was such a complete giving up of the mind of God in the places of highest pretension? There have been seasons when the world was more hostile, and the form of hatred more formidable as far as persecution goes, but never was there an hour when Christendom—aye, Protestant Christendom—had so many swamps of indifference to God's authority, with here and there a standard of rebellion against the truth of Christ.

This may seem strong, no doubt, but I have made the assertion according to God's Word, and, as far as that may go, with a closer study of Christendom in its various phases than many persons.

I am not afraid, then, to reassert my conviction that there never has been a display of man's evil heart of unbelief in the shape of indifference on one side, and, on the other, of enmity against the truth, equal to the present aspect of the age. Even when Christendom mumbled over their devotions, saturated with religious fable, and thoroughly subject to a crafty and ignorant priesthood, the Word of God was less known and less slighted than now. The dungeon wall of superstition is partially fallen, the light of God's testimony has been seen enough to provoke the malice of men.

People are energetic enough in these days, but their energy is against the gospel.

It is not so with all, thank God! but the peculiar feature of the present age is that the active aggression is against Scripture, an organised rebellion proceeding from professors in the high seats of human learning. Not only daring individuals here and there attack Scripture, but the nominal teachers and heads of the clergy combine to do it with comparative impunity, as if they were determined to concentrate the whole weight of their personal and official influence.

This has a voice for us; if we have understanding of the times, let us take care that we stand firmly, conscientiously, and uncompromisingly, though humbly, on the foundation of Divine truth, caring for nothing else. We shall be counted harsh: this is always the portion of faithfulness. But the name of the Lord is our tower of strength for the last days, as from the beginning. So Paul warns Timothy in his last epistle, as he looked at the perils of these days (which are still more emphatically true now than they were then). And what is the resource for them? Not tradition, but the written Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," etc. It is not teachers, nor godly men raised up, however precious both may be—nothing but Scripture can be a permanent standard of truth. W. K.

Dependence. — If, in the circumstances of our Christian life, we act in *entire dependence on God*, He will make our way plain, and will even soften our enemies, on account of this dependence on Him in which we live. All the wheels of God's providence go in the way of *His will*, which it is ours to carry out.

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

(See page 71.)

WE now turn to the three consecutive chapters, ii., iii., iv., in Zechariah, which in principle correspond to Numbers vi., vii., and viii.; where we noticed the Nazarite's personal consecration to God, of his own desire, leading to blessing upon the whole redeemed people; secondly, the worship of the twelve tribes in the prescribed order; and finally, the appointed service of those who had been sheltered from destruction by the sprinkled blood.

The careful reader will perceive how this clenches, so to speak, the divine order, noticeable in so many parts of holy Scripture, as we have already seen. That is to say, that there can be no true *worship*, acceptable to God, in the holiness which His presence demands, except by a redeemed people, who have tasted personally of the completeness of His *salvation*, of which they are individually the objects. Then also *service*, truly acceptable to a Saviour God, follows as a natural consequence of worship rendered to Him.

In Zechariah's time things had greatly changed outwardly; but the God of Israel remains ever the same: there is no change in Him (Mal. iii. 6). The first lesson Moses had to learn at Horeb, in Exodus iii. 2, is thus preserved, and emphatically repeated at the end of the Old Testament. "The bush burned with fire," and yet it was "not consumed"—Righteousness and salvation are inseparable. See Isaiah xlv. 8, 21-23; lxiii. 1; Romans i. 16-17. God is "a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29); but the "sons of Jacob"—objects of His grace—are "*not* consumed."

When the Israelites went out of Egypt, and remained

for forty years in the wilderness, God went before them in the cloudy pillar by day, which at night was seen as a pillar of fire over the Tabernacle, His movable dwelling - place for the time being. There was no repetition of that guidance when they reached the promised land, nor indeed for the captives who returned from Babylon. But God watched over them. Solomon's temple had been built and destroyed, after which the ark was never heard of again. The Jews had been taken captive to Babylon in three successive batches; and the land had remained desolate for seventy years. Then a feeble remnant was allowed by Cyrus, the first King of Persia, to return to the ruined city of Jerusalem, and rebuild a small temple where they might again offer sacrifices to the God of Israel.

Contrary to the prevailing idea that divine worship can only take place in a building specially prepared for it—they began with an *altar*, without any temple at all (Ezra iii. 2-6). God owned it, and blessed them; and they kept the feast of tabernacles, the appointed memorial of their forty years wandering in the wilderness when they first went forth out of Egypt (Lev. xxiii. 34, 43; Deut. xvi. 13-15). What an encouragement this has been amidst all the ruin of Christendom, when any faithful souls, freed from the bondage of ecclesiastical corruption, have sought to worship God simply "in spirit and in truth," as the Lord said to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 24)!

Finally, they set about building the second temple, according to the limited means in their power. But when the foundations of it were laid, the old men who, before their captivity, had seen the former glorious building erected by Solomon, wept at the contrast (Ezra iii. 12). Nevertheless, God was minded to bless

His people in their weakness. They were indeed interrupted by the schemes of their enemies for some seventeen years, chiefly through successive changes in the Persian Government; for Cyrus did not long survive his triumph. Two or three others rapidly succeeded; among them, a usurper, who ordered the building to cease; and the Jews got discouraged.

Then it was that God raised up two prophets to get them to resume their work—first Haggai to stir them up, and then Zechariah to unfold divine principles in connection therewith. In about four years the work was completed. The people set to work in simple obedience to the prophets, and when the matter was referred to Darius, the King of Persia, the Lord disposed his heart to confirm it, and thus strengthen the hands of the builders.

We may add that God used Zechariah to unfold His purpose as to the temple of the Lord, still future, which will be the centre of worship during the Lord's own kingdom, which is to last for a thousand years. It will be built by Him whose name is "the Branch" (chap. vi. 12-15). Ezekiel gives the description of it in the last nine chapters of his prophecy. It is in view of this that the three chapters, ii., iii., iv., to which we now refer, were written. We find in them the three truths we have been considering, and in the order with which we are now familiar, salvation, worship, service.

In chapter ii., we read of a "young man," whose name is not given, really interested in the city of God's choice. He seeks to have a definite conception of its extent, although it is in ruins, and, to that end, has "a measuring line" in his hand. Is not this simple fact particularly encouraging for young people, when once their consciences have been reached by the grace

of God? Let us lay it to heart, and ask ourselves if we have a similar interest in all that concerns the glory of our blessed Saviour, and a real desire to apprehend more definitely and clearly that which He has made known.

In the case before us, the desires of the young man cause quite a commotion among the angels; and one of them is charged to "run," and make known to him the extent and character of God's purposes of blessing. The first thing he learns is that the old limits of the city are to be exceeded, even "as towns without walls," and then, that the necessary protection afforded by the old walls (which used continually to be strengthened and raised higher by the kings of Judah) will now be undertaken by the God of Israel Himself, who will be "a wall of fire" round about the city. And not only so, but He will be "the glory in the midst of her"! The Lord Himself was about to make His dwelling in the midst of His people; and that would be far better than the ark of the covenant made by Moses.

Does not this remind us of the apostle's prayer on behalf of the Christians who, in his days, had received the gospel? His desire for them was that they should be "strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they should be filled with all the fulness of God." And he concludes with the doxology, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. iii. 16-21).

Christ Himself is the Centre, the Object, and the Head of all God's counsels, and the Church, in God's conception of it, is Christ in the midst, in answer to

His own blessed call, "Come unto me" (Matt. xi. 28; xviii. 20). It is the very principle of God's salvation as the result of Christ's death, to "gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (John xi. 51, 52). Consequently we read that, in apostolic days, He "added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47). All must be for the present and eternal glory of the Lord Jesus.

In chapter iii., which follows, we learn in the person of the high priest himself, how he is to be fitted for the **worship** which becomes the presence of the Lord in the temple they were then building. According to the Levitical directions, he was the only one who had access into the holy of holies. But when in the presence of the angel of the Lord, Satan is allowed to test Him by outward appearances, and then we find that the holy garments, especially prepared for the high priest, could not bear the light of the Lord's presence. What was to be done? Joshua had no others to replace them: they must be taken from him; and the Lord Himself undertakes not only to clothe him, but to take away his iniquity, beginning at the heart, which no human eye could see. He has, as it were, to accept, in company with the dying thief, to be "a brand plucked from the burning." As such, Satan lost his prey, and had no more power over Joshua. But even then, the high priest's attention must be absorbed by the perfect "Servant," who is no other than the Lord Himself. It is only as following Him, and learning of Him, that he can duly carry out the charge committed to him, as God would have it done.

Finally, in chapter iv., Zerubbabel comes before us as the leader of the people in the *work* that Haggai had stirred them up to do. And here, as in Numbers viii. 2-4 (see page 71), we find the candlestick again. It has

seven lamps as of old, but no longer needs Aaron's daily care to keep them burning in the ordered way. The oil is supplied direct from living olive trees, which set forth vividly the unceasing work of the Spirit of God, by means of the testimony (shown in the number "two," indicative for us of the written Word of God). It is complete, and all in perfect harmony which admits of no divergence of thought. The oil flows continually into *one* bowl, and from that, to each one of the *seven* lamps. The resultant witness in its divine sufficiency, is thus indicated in perfection. Zerubbabel has to learn that it cannot be in his own strength, nor by the number of workmen at his disposal, that the temple can be built; but, "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." That is the secret of the **service** of God, wholly opposed to the world's methods of combination, and fleshly wisdom of every sort and kind. See as to this Isaiah viii. 9-14.

W. J. L.

The Meeting for Breaking of Bread.

1 CORINTHIANS xi. 20-34.

THERE can be no occasion of meeting together which should be more blessed to the Christian's soul than that of partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is also, we may surely say, the highest and chiefest occasion of true Christian worship.

The question was once asked of a well-known servant of God, who was deeply taught in the Scriptures, What do you think should characterise a meeting for the breaking of bread? His reply was, "Simplicity."

This, we believe, is true; at the same time it may not be out of place to say a few practical words on the subject.

Do we always remember the *purpose* for which we come together? It is not merely to sing hymns, to pray, to read, or to hear an address; but to answer to the Lord's own request, "This do in remembrance of Me." It is sometimes the case that the giving of thanks for the bread and the cup is deferred till late in the meeting. Perhaps there are a number of hymns, prayers, scriptures read—all very good in themselves—and then the breaking of bread. When this is the case, it must produce a painful impression on anyone who is conscious of what is really suitable to such an occasion.

Not that we need go to the opposite extreme and give thanks at the very opening of the meeting; but there is a suited moment for it, which ought to be discernible to any spiritual mind.

It is quite granted that no rule can be laid down for such a meeting; we should wait on the guidance and leading of the Spirit: but surely we ought to remember what we come for, namely, to partake of the Lord's Supper, counting on His presence where two or three are gathered to His name.

If we are walking in happy communion with God during the week, and if Christ and the sense of His great love fills our souls when we come together, there must be an overflow of praise, worship, and thanksgiving, going up to Him when we meet together on the morning of His—the Lord's—Day. Then, too, let us not forget that, "*The Father seeketh such to worship Him.*" The worship of "the Father" is characteristic of Christianity; and He it is who *gave* His only begotten Son. And all true worship is by *the Spirit*;

as it necessarily also takes in, at least in the outgoing of our affections and desires, *all saints*.

True, there may be weakness; but this, if owned and acknowledged, need not hinder worship. The honest confession of weakness is far better than an empty pretension to power, which only ends in the display of the flesh.

Oh, to come on the first day of the week with hearts overflowing with a sense of *grace*,—that wonderful grace which has brought such as we are into such a place of nearness, “taken us into favour in the Beloved!” But then, what we have to dwell upon, is, not so much *our* blessings, wonderful as they are, but the Blessor—the magnitude of the grace, the love, of that Saviour who laid down His life for the sheep. Jesus Himself desires and values our remembrance; what infinite grace!

And then, when we consider the glory of His person, imparting, as it does, all its value to His glorious work upon the cross, that burnt-offering which went up as an infinite sweet savour to God—what a theme for our wonder, worship and praise!

In taking the bread and the cup, we announce the Lord's death “*till He come*.” It is a song of praise, begun down here in weakness, it is true, but which will vibrate for ever in the courts of glory above, where we shall not need the supper to recall Him to mind; but, in the presence of the once slain Lamb, and with all the redeemed, we shall praise Him worthily as we would.

F. G. B.

Work Amongst Soldiers.

A CORRESPONDENT has written saying that as the War is prolonged and compulsory service is introduced, more men are being continually called to the colours. He desires that we should again call attention to the need for the circulation of the Scriptures.

The "Active Service" New Testaments are greatly appreciated and gratefully received. The men carry them with them, and read them both at home and abroad. Many have written saying how they value their Testaments and are comforted by them.

"The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple": "My word . . . shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." These are encouraging promises.

Sometimes God is pleased to work by His Word in the most remarkable manner, bringing it back to the memory after years of neglect. We have before us just now the case of a soldier, which took place some few years ago. Utterly careless and godless as he then was, he was confined for ten days in a military prison at Lucknow for a serious misdemeanour. Walking up and down his cell on the fourth day of his punishment, his whole life came up before him as a panorama, and he cursed as he recalled lost opportunities. Then, whilst in this condition, hymns he had heard sung in gospel meetings were brought afresh to his mind, and he heard a voice, in clear, distinct tones, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He listened, and a strange feeling overtook him; again the same

voice said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." The result was that he left that cell a changed man, and a new creature in Christ Jesus. This was the manner of his conversion.

After witnessing brightly for Christ to his fellow-soldiers in the present War, and being used of God to lead many others to the Saviour, he fell mortally wounded by machine-gun fire, and his ransomed spirit departed to be with the Saviour he loved; "absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

Such is the wonder-working power of grace, and of God's Word as applied by the Holy Spirit.

Gospel booklets are also useful to give to the soldiers, and of these we can strongly recommend "Two Bullets and their Messages," see notice inside back cover of this magazine.

The needs are urgent and the sowing-time for the Word is *to-day*. Any wishing to contribute to this work can please communicate with our brother, Mr. U. Goss, 231 High Street, Hounslow, England. Earnest, believing prayer for God's blessing on the circulation of His Word will not pass unheeded with Him who is the hearer and answerer of prayer. F. G. B.

"That Disciple whom Jesus Loved."

WHAT the Apostle John had in his heart (John xiii. 23) was that *Jesus loved him*, and that was the reason why he was "leaning on Jesus' bosom." It was not his love to Jesus, but he knew that *Jesus loved him*; and it is always so—the sense of His love to us keeps us near Him.

In chapter xix. 26, we read, "When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple standing by *whom He loved*, He saith unto His mother, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and

from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." He was *obedient* to the Lord; and it is always so—the certainty that we are loved of Jesus enables us to *obey Him*.

In chapter xxi. 4, we read "Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciple knew not that it was Jesus." Again in ver. 7, "That disciple whom *Jesus loved* saith unto Peter, '*It is the Lord.*'" He *knew Him*. It is always so—the sense of the love of Jesus gives us to know His person, gives us intelligence as to His dignity and glory.

In verse 20, we read "Then Peter . . . seeth the disciple *whom Jesus loved, following.*" Jesus had said, "*Follow Me,*" and John *followed Him*.

We are each loved by Jesus—let us delight to be *near Him*, to *obey Him*, to grow in the *knowledge* of Him, and to *follow Him*.

The Inspiration of the Holy Scripture—ii.

PAUL gives a similar testimony to that of Peter. In the first of his discourses which has been preserved for us, spoken at Antioch (Acts xiii.), he recounts the history of Israel, beginning from Egypt up to his own time, and he recognises also the books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, up to David, and from these he passes on to Jesus. Speaking of the death of Jesus, he says, "And when they had fulfilled *all that was written of Him*, they took Him down from the tree." Then he quotes Psalm ii. which shows how God sent His only-begotten Son, who was rejected by men. Then he quotes Psalm xvi. in order to prove that He did not see corruption.

Paul builds his discourse entirely on the writings of the Old Testament. He does not make use of human

ideas; he does not merely take certain texts to console his hearers, he uses the whole of Scripture because it had authority as the Word of God. We read in verse 44, "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear *the Word of God.*" And in chapter xiv. 3, "Speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the *Word of His grace.*"

In Acts xvii., Paul preaches in the synagogue of the Jews, and, according to his custom, "*reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.*" He did not speak of the "probable or improbable authenticity" of the Scripture. If he did, not a soul would have been edified by it. But he reasoned out of the Scriptures themselves; he examined them with his hearers, explaining and showing that Christ must suffer, etc. What was the result of it? Some believed. And in 1 Thessalonians we find that this same apostle wrote to these believers: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, *when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God*" (chap. ii. 13). Could we have a clearer and more decisive testimony rendered to the divine inspiration of the Old Testament?

Then Paul goes to Berea. Now these latter "were more noble than those in Thessalonica." Why? Because they believed that the Scripture was the sole test for all doctrine and teaching. They did not put the Scripture to the proof, but rather the word which was brought to them. "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Oh that everyone did so in our day also! If that were done, we would not hear so often the sad language of so many preachers, students, and other young people who follow the "new" doctrine which is brought to them, without knowing the Scriptures themselves!

In Acts xxvi. 22, 23, we find Paul before Agrippa, "saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come," etc. And in Acts xxviii. 23-25, he gives testimony at Rome, "persuading them (the Jews) concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the Prophets. . . . And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.*" It is remarkable that it should be said so often, "*The Holy Ghost has spoken,*" and not as it might have easily been expressed, "Isaiah has spoken."

If we go on to the apostolic epistles, we shall find that they recognise all the Scriptures, quoting them as decisive, and as closing all contradiction.

Romans iii. shows us the lost condition of man, his sins, his transgressions, his sinful state, proved by texts from the Old Testament. Chapter iv. speaks of justification by works, and the apostle adds, "For what saith the Scripture?" The testimony of Moses decides the question. The words of Habbakuk, of Isaiah, and of the other prophets, of Moses and the Psalms, are quoted; and all in such a way as to show clearly that they are considered as a divine and indisputable testimony, not only by the writer, but also by those to whom the epistle was addressed.

In 1 Corinthians ix. 9-11, we read, "For it is written in the law of Moses, etc. . . . Doth God take care of oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? *For our sakes, no doubt, this is written.*" And in chapter x. we read about the cloud, the sea, Moses, the manna, the rock, etc., and all these things "happened unto them for ensamples: and *they are written for our admonition.*"

So also in Galatians iii. 22, Paul says, "*The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.*" In the epistle to the

Hebrews, “*God, who spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.*” The writer of this epistle frequently speaks of the tabernacle, the sacrifices, etc., and quotes in chapters iii., viii., and x. passages from the Psalms and Jeremiah; then he adds, “*The Holy Ghost has said.*” In chapter xi. the writer gives a *résumé* of a large part of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Daniel.

James also refers to the Scriptures as closing all contradiction. He speaks also of the Lord's prophets, and quotes passages in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and 1 Kings.

John and Jude speak in their epistles of the books of Moses and other parts of Scripture, in which they fully recognise divine authority. John points out to us in his first epistle how we can distinguish truth and error. He says, “*We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*” Only *those who are of God* can recognise whether the words of the apostles are of God or not. But *one thing is certain* also—he who knows God, he who is of God, hears the apostles.

J. N. V.

Salvation, Worship, and Service.

(See page 94.)

IN a very rapid review of Old Testament scriptures, both early and late, the maintenance of the divine order in these essential matters cannot but engrave itself on our hearts and minds; and may it be increasingly the case with us all! In these days of scientific reasoning, when the pride of man satisfies itself with putting, as it were, into the crucible all that God gave of old to holy men who were “*moved by the Holy Ghost,*” it is more than ever important for each one of us

to inquire more attentively into what has been written for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the *Scriptures*, may not only abound in hope as to the future, but may be enabled to walk in peace, quietly and steadily in the path that the Lord, in grace, has marked out for us. Paul felt that exceedingly when he wrote the epistle to the Romans (chap. xv. 4-6, 13, 33); and more ardently than ever in his second epistle to Timothy (chap. iii. 14-17). So Peter, in his closing words to the Church, knowing that his tabernacle was shortly to be "put off," insists upon the value of the Old Testament, confirmed¹ as it had been by our blessed Lord Himself at His transfiguration (2 Pet. i. 13-21).

The more we compare the New Testament with the Old, the more we are forced to admit that one Master-mind pervades it all, and difficulties, or even apparent discrepancies to our feeble apprehension, gradually disappear as we wait patiently upon the Lord to open it up to us, through constantly reading it simply as He has given it. The New is always based upon the Old, while it sheds fresh light upon the words of prophecy, which often appear enigmatical to our minds. Instead of judging it, we find out more acutely in practice that it judges us; so that we are impelled to have recourse to

¹Such is the true meaning of 2 Peter i. 19, weakened in the Authorised Version, where instead of "a more sure word of prophecy," we should read as in the Revised Version, "We have the word of prophecy *made* more sure." That is to say that the promises of the future glory of Christ, which abound in the Old Testament were made more real and certain to the three apostles by that wonderful vision on the mount, where they were given to see, for a moment, the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings, accompanied by the double testimony of Moses and Elijah on Mount Horeb. (Compare Ex. iii. 1-8, 14 and 1 Kings xix. 8-18 with Mal. iv. 2, 4-6.) In Matthew's account (xvii. 1-8), we read that "His face did shine as the sun."

the fountain of all grace, saying with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts" (Ps. cxxxix. 23-24).

To return now to the special subject with which we have been occupied, is it not of the deepest interest to note how very closely the order of truth unfolded in Numbers v., vi., vii., given at the moment when God redeemed His earthly people Israel, is maintained, and practically repeated, at the very end of Old Testament prophecy? The keynote at the beginning, in the *first* message given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai for His people, was "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you *unto myself*" (Ex. xix. 1-4). And that, in principle, is surely just as true at the present day, characterising His intervention on behalf of every redeemed soul. Unless we accept it in principle, our apprehension of what His salvation involves, must necessarily remain incomplete.

It is a great help to us to see, in God's ways with His earthly people, how He maintains His thoughts and care of them throughout their long history. Those ways abundantly prove that their failures did not change His forbearance and grace towards them. Peter, in his first epistle, as we shall see in a moment, refers to Hosea's prophecy, insisting upon the fact that the people were *God's sowing* or planting, which is the meaning of the name Jezreel (Hos. ii. 22, 23). Paul does the same in Romans ix. 23-26. Every one of God's redeemed is definitely constituted His personal property for time and for eternity.

Now we can all understand that when the captives returned from Babylon, profiting by King Cyrus' proclamation on their behalf, it was for the express purpose of building the house of God at Jerusalem.

(Continued on page 105.)

(Ezra i. 1-4). Surrounded by enemies as they then were, they needed the encouragement given by the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah to deepen on the one hand their sense of responsibility to the claims of the God of Israel, and on the other, to remind them of His unchanging grace (Ezra vi. 14). But God made use of the opportunity for unfolding His purposes as to Christ and the future day of glory, as we may see by the apostle's quotation of Haggai at the end of Hebrews xii., reminding us of the danger of turning away from "Him who speaks from heaven" (see ver. 22-29). The principles of God's ways remain the same, although circumstances may differ. That explains the great value for us of the types and figures used so constantly in the Old Testament.

The people were God's people redeemed by His power, saved by His grace: so are we as Christians, only with the additional privilege and responsibility of knowing what accomplished redemption means, in a way that those of old never could know before Christ came to carry it out in His own blessed person.

That is the chief point in Peter's presentation of God's *salvation* in his first chapter. But we must also remember that all believers are "priests" in God's account (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9), and that for any service in detail there must be personal self-surrender to the Master. Then for any true "going forth," special appointment is needed in order to be "sent" by Him. So Isaiah says, "Here am I, *send* me" (chap. vi. 8). The apostle speaks of those who in the first place "gave their own selves *to the Lord*" (2 Cor. viii. 5). May we learn to imitate them!

To resume then what has been before us, the elementary principle in God's **salvation**, is that we are "not our own," but, being "bought with a price," we have to glorify God in our body, and are God's building

(1 Cor. iii. 9-17 ; vi. 19, 20). Secondly, every redeemed soul is of necessity a **worshipper**, such as the Father seeks for, to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John iv. 23, 24). Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, we are "built up a spiritual house" on the foundation rock, which is Christ (Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 3-6); and consequently have become a "holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5).

Then follows the **service** appointed beforehand, and arranged in all its details, the main object being "to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9).

The order is everywhere the same; yet it is not a mere question of order, but rather of divine operation and spiritual growth, characterised by love divine received into the soul, operative in fruitful worship towards its heavenly source, and outwardly in blessing towards all its surroundings here on earth.

W. J. L.

The Assembly as the Body of Christ.

AT the time of his conversion, on the road to Damascus, the germ of a great truth was revealed to Paul, which later became the chiefest in the galaxy of doctrines which it was his mission, as an apostle, to make known "for the obedience of faith." It was involved in the challenge of the Lord of Glory; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" For the first time it was then declared that Christ and His saints of this age of grace are one. To touch the feeblest of them is to touch Him; for they are all members of one body of which He is the glorified Head in heaven.

But this doctrine of the one body is never referred

to by any other apostle than Paul. He calls it "the dispensation of the mystery" which he had especially been entrusted with. Indeed, it was the characteristic truth of his large and varied ministry.

It is this that he is speaking of in Romans xvi. 25-27 : "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets (or, by prophetic writings, *i.e.*, his own), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen."

The nature of this mystery is unfolded in Ephesians iii. 1-12. There he writes of the dispensation of the grace of God given him towards the Gentiles, and he adds: "How that by revelation (not through studying the Bible) He made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

It is a passage of wondrous scope and blessedness, and I cannot attempt to expound it here; but what I would have the young believer note is that the truth of Jew and Gentile being formed by the Spirit into one body, upon being born of God, and by that same Spirit

linked up to Christ as Head, in heaven, was a truth never before made known. The Old Testament will be searched in vain for it. It is not there, because it was "hid in God." It was the secret purpose of His heart, only to be revealed after the rejection of His Son. It actually became a fact when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. To this Paul refers when he writes: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is [the] Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

To this one body every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ belongs. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all saved people, makes us one with every other Christian on the face of the earth. This is the only true "Catholic and Apostolic Church." At the beginning there was none other. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47). There was no thought of any other membership, though until the special revelation given to Paul, it was not seen that this involved membership of the body of Christ.

The fact existed prior to the knowledge of it. Now, every saint should have clear light as to it, because it is everywhere declared, or taken for granted, in Paul's epistles.

Ephesians is largely occupied with it; setting forth the purpose of God to head up all things in Christ, and, preparatory to this, the formation of the one body. Then Colossians gives us the other side, magnifying Christ as Head, and pressing upon Christians their responsibility to own no other Head, but to be in all things subject to Him. 1 Corinthians takes all this up in a practical way, showing what the outcome should be.

in our daily walk as members, one of another, and members of Christ.

Now, in what sense is this great truth "made known for the obedience of faith?" Manifestly it can only mean that it is a truth each believer is expected to hold in a particular way, and this surely involves the recognition of but one body and one Head, which necessarily leaves one outside of all human systems, and apart from all recognition of human heads. "The church must have a head!" was the Romanist's challenge to Luther, as he began to set forth the claims of the Papacy. "Yes," replied the mighty champion of the Reformation, "and that Head is Christ!"

Never allow yourself in any association, dear young saint, where you will have to give this up. Hold the Head at all costs. And if you hold the Head, you can consistently own but one body; for one head with many bodies is unthinkable.

"To which of the various bodies of Christ do you belong?" I was once asked by a clergyman. I could only reply, "There is one body, and I know no other."

Nor does this result in unkind feelings or hard, critical thoughts concerning others equally dear to Christ, who may not be enlightened upon this great mystery. The very fact that we are all members, one of another, should hinder this. All may not see alike, and will not till the Lord Jesus comes; but that need not prevent fervent love going out to every member of Christ's body on earth.

"What church do you belong to?" an evangelist was once asked by a well-meaning lady.

"I am a Christian," was the reply, "I belong to the body of Christ."

"Oh, of course," was the retort, "I know that, so am I, and I am also a member of the —— Church."

“Ah, my sister,” he answered, “that is just the difference between us. You are a Christian, *and*. I am only a Christian. Once I too was a Christian, *and*; but when I learned that “there is one body and one Spirit,” I ceased to be a Christian, *and*. I have ever since been simply a Christian.”

“But,” she exclaimed in evident astonishment, “in that case I do not see how you distinguish yourself from other Christians.”

“Why, you see,” was the quiet reply, “I have no desire to distinguish myself from fellow-Christians. I am one with them all; and I desire them all to see in me a fellow-member of Christ’s body.”

This is what I would commend to you. When God saved you He put you in the body of Christ. What other membership do you need or desire? You are a member of the Church of God, the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven. What more would you have?

Before the confusion and sectarianism came in, “all that believed were together,” and it was said of them on an ever-memorable occasion that “those who received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them—[that is, unto those already baptized by the Spirit into the one body]—about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts ii. 41, 42).

Nothing else is needed for faith to-day. God’s Word remains, and it is for each believer to act upon it, regardless of the ever-increasing apostasy. If only two or three do so, there is fellowship, and Christ will be enjoyed, as He cannot be when His place as Head is forgotten and the truth is ignored that “there is one body.”

H. A. I.

Moses Smiting the Rock.

Exodus xvii. 5-7 ; Numbers xx. 7-12.

WE have the authority of the New Testament for saying, "For they (Israel) drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4).

Moses smote the rock twice and in this he disobeyed God's command, and was not allowed to enter the land of promise. Christ could not be smitten twice; He died once for all, and this never can be repeated.

In the first instance (Exod. xvii.), God graciously met the need of the people, in spite of their murmurings, and told Moses to take his rod—the one with which he smote the river of Egypt, the rod of authority—and to smite the rock, so that the water might come forth.

How blessedly and how simply all this represents, in figure, the true Rock—Christ—stricken and transpierced by death upon the cross; bringing life, blessing, and salvation to all who believe! How fully He meets our soul's need!

But in Numbers xx. we find something quite different, yet a blessed lesson also. There Moses—faithful servant of God, though he was, wearied with the murmurings and unbelief of the people—"spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. cvi. 33).

He was commanded of God to take *the* rod and to *speak* to the rock, and it would give forth water. This was the rod "from before the Lord," the one referred to in chapter xvii. "which budded and brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." It was the rod of priesthood, not the rod of authority.

But Moses, impatient with the constant unbelief and murmurings of the people, said, "Hear, now ye rebels;

must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" How could *he* do so? If Jehovah did not supply their needs, who could? Then instead of taking *the* rod and *speaking* to the rock; he, with *his* rod (the rod of authority) *smote* the rock. God again graciously met the people's need, but Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan.

What can carry a weak, and erring, and failing people through the wilderness of this world? Certainly nothing but the exercise of priestly grace. The rod of authority cannot do it. The rod of priesthood, with its beautiful fruits and blossoms, has no thought of "smiting" about it.

True it was necessary that the Rock should be smitten, but once this is done, what is wanted for our wilderness path, with its difficulties, trials, etc., is *grace*, priestly grace. This is ever available for us; for our High Priest never fails, never grows tired, and He is able to carry us through. May we learn more of His unwearied love, and lean more constantly on His arm of almighty grace.

FRAGMENTS.

If you want to be miserable, look within. If you want to be distracted, look around. If you want to be happy, look up.

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The virgin's Son, Immanuel, God with us (Isa. vii. 10-14). What thoughts, feelings and facts cluster here together! What grace and truth, God and man united in one person! The security of David's royal line, the truth of truths, GOD WITH US.

“Looking unto Jesus.”

FOLLOWING upon the cloud of witnesses to the power of faith, whose achievements the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews delights to record in chapter xi., he turns the eye to Jesus, the Author and Completer of faith.

Others had run the course in the midst of trials and difficulties *in part*; and the Holy Spirit selects from their lives certain episodes or points where the contest in that path was fought and the victory won. These He records for our blessing and encouragement.

But it is not so when He comes to speak of Jesus. He—blessed be His name!—ran the *whole course* of faith from beginning to end without a single faltering step; and so He says, “Looking off unto Jesus.”

If we look *within*, we find much to deplore. If we look *around*, we see a world lying in the arms of the wicked one, who urges men on in avarice and pride, raising up nation against nation in cruel and deadly warfare. And, coming nearer still, we see the Church of God, which ought to be a united witness for Christ in the world, broken up into sects and parties, and sadly scattered and divided.

Christian reader! let us—while we bear on our hearts before God in prayer and humiliation the weight of these things—**look off unto Jesus**. He never fails us. He ever bowed in perfect submission to the Father’s will, took every trial from the Father’s hand, and therefore always experienced the perfect light and sunshine of the Father’s love, however rough or trying the path might be. What a perfect example for us!

Let us therefore “consider well Him” who has marked out the path before us, for the strength and encouragement of our souls in a day of increasing difficulty and trial like the present.

The Assembly in its Local Aspect.

SIDE by side with the truth of the Assembly as the body of Christ, to which we referred in last month's number, is the counter-truth of the local assembly, the company of believers in any given locality, acting on the ground of the one body.

Perhaps it might be said that, strictly speaking, there is no declared doctrine of the local assembly, but both the Acts and the Epistles give us many illustrative incidents and historical notices which enable us clearly to see the divine method of ordering these companies of believers gathered to the peerless name of the Lord Jesus Christ. For His own words, “Where two or three are gathered in (or unto) My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20), clearly apply to all scriptural assemblings of His people. He will ever be the centre and recognised Head, who will lead the praises and worship of His saints, as it is also written, “In the midst of the church (assembly) will I sing praise unto Thee” (Heb. ii. 12).

In the beginning, the local assembly at Jerusalem and the Assembly of the body of Christ were one. Every member of that body was, for a brief season at least, a part of the local assembly in that city. Then as these believers were scattered abroad, as Pentecostal visitors returned to their homes, or others were driven from Jerusalem by persecution—as the gospel also was carried to Samaria, and then to the Gentiles—where-

ever a company of members of Christ's body was found, there was another local assembly. This was the only way in which separate gatherings were formed. "Two or three" in any given locality were drawn together by the Spirit to the name of the Lord Jesus, and thus a local assembly sprang into existence. To this little company others were added, as grace revealed Christ to their souls, and they in turn became partakers of the blessings of the Spirit's baptism, owning the rejected Jesus as Lord.

Thus all was simple. There was no human organisation, no cumbrous ecclesiastical machinery, no sectional membership. He who was recognised as a member of Christ's body in Jerusalem, travelling or going elsewhere, upon making himself known there as one subject to Christ the Head, was at once accounted as one of them. He had found his own company.

From an early period letters of commendation were given to such brethren, that they might be, at once, accredited in places where they were personally unknown (Rom. xvi. 1, 2; 2 Cor. iii. 1; Acts xviii. 27). But this was all. There was no dismissing a "member" from the church in Ephesus that he might "join" the church in Philippi. If a known member of Christ's body in Ephesus, he was gladly acknowledged as such in Philippi when his claim was properly attested.

As one goes over all this, how the conviction is forced upon the soul that Christendom has got far indeed from the simplicity of early days! And that very fact leads us to inquire: Is it possible now to act just as they did then, when love was warm, and ere evil and pernicious doctrines had honeycombed what should have ever been in an outward way "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15)?

The answer is that all this declension and failure was foreseen by the Holy Spirit, and directions clearly given how to proceed when such unhappy ruin should have come in. In Acts xx., where Paul delivered his farewell address to the elder brethren of the Ephesian assembly, he warned them of the very things we have been considering; but at the close he simply says, "I commend you *to God and the word of His grace.*" God's Word, therefore, is all-sufficient whatever the cold-heartedness and backsliding that may be prevalent.

What course, then, are we directed to take when such evil days have come? Build sects and systems, walled about with iron-clad creeds and buttressed by human regulations? Not at all. What then? Go back to "that which was from the beginning." Find out how things were at the first, and act on what the Word of God makes known.

But shall we not then be literally swamped by unholy errorists of every description? This does not necessarily follow; for the same Word clearly tells us who are to be accepted to communion, and who refused Christian fellowship. We are called to receive all whose doctrines and ways give evidence that they are members of Christ, subject to Him as Lord and Head. If a man is not sound in his teaching, he *may* be a member of Christ, but he is not subject to Him, and is not to be received till the evil is judged. And the same applies to moral questions. One who has fallen into unholy ways, may, after all, be a believer whose failure is but temporary, still we dare not receive him in that state. We must wait till we see the evidence of his subjection to Christ in the judgment of his sin.

This is largely ignored in Christendom generally which has become like a great house in which valuable and common vessels are all mixed up together. If a

man would be a "vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use," he is called to purge himself out from this mixture, by separating himself from it. He is then to find fellowship amongst similar separated ones, and to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii. 19-22); and so walking together, the ground of the one body is maintained. If companies in different places are similarly gathered, they occupy the same position, and thus, in principle, go back to "that which was from the beginning."

To do so involves no pretension. It is not "rebuilding the Church." It is owning the ruin of the Church, and, in simplicity, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). Difficulties may and will arise. Troubles will come up. Sorrows will have to be faced. But if there be a cleaving to Christ and His truth, the Word of God will be found all-sufficient to meet every case that appears.

Owing to the broken and defiled conditions in Christendom, more care will need to be exercised as to whom fellowship is to be extended. But the heart should ever be open to all whose ways and doctrine give good evidence that they are of the one body, and subject to the one Lord. Special discernment will be needed, lest by association with the unholy, such become partakers of other men's sins; for to go on with one who is in an evil course, even to the extent of greeting him in a brotherly way, is to make oneself "partaker of his evil deeds" (see 2 John).

But if the Scriptures are allowed to be judge, every difficulty will vanish. In the beginning what applied to one assembly applied to all, as all were one; and if the same principle is recognised by believers gathering in the simple way indicated above, it will solve many

perplexities and keep from isolation and independency, which are the twin enemies of practical fellowship between local companies of believers. H. A. I.

“ All These Things are Against Me.”

GENESIS xlii. 36.

POOR old Jacob! little did he think, as he uttered these words, that the turning point in his chequered history had come. Hitherto his path had been anything but smooth, though the blessing of God was undoubtedly upon it; but, like many another of God's saints, he was not content to wait for God's time and way to mature.

More than once had he warned his wayward sons that they would bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and now they would fill up his cup of bitterness, by urging that Benjamin *must* go with them on the second journey to the land of Egypt to buy corn. But the turning point had come at length, and he whose life had been so full of planning and scheming, was to learn at last how much better than all our thoughts, and how far beyond our hopes, are the ways of God towards us.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer. xxix. 11).

The details, and the success, of Jacob's sons' second journey to Egypt are too well known to need repetition here. They return to their father with the evidences of their great discovery—“Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” Is this another trick, another deception? “And Jacob's heart fainted,

for he believed them not; and they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

And now mark the change so simply expressed in the words, "And the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father" (why this change of name here?) . . . and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him." Yes! at last Jacob submits to be carried. How could he do otherwise, when God, the faithful God, had appeared to him in the visions of the night, and, calling him with that significant double call, "Jacob, Jacob," had assured his poor failing servant with the words, "I will go down with thee into Egypt. . . . And Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

What a proof of the unchanging faithfulness of God. How it bows our hearts before Him, to see such actings as these towards one so wayward and wilful.

But the end is worthy of such a God, for Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh." The mighty monarch of Egypt submits to be blessed by the aged shepherd of Canaan. "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. vii. 7); but the "better" place here is only what the conscious sense of having God with one, can confer. Most simple and touching is Jacob's confession in answer to Pharaoh's inquiries, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh."

But this is not the occasion that is chronicled in

Hebrews xi. Another scene gives Jacob a place in the records of faith's exponents. "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21).

How it must have reminded him of a similar scene of parental blessing many years before, when the two lads came near to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. Now his own eyes "were dim for age, so that he could not see," when Joseph, bowing himself with his face to the earth, brought Manasseh and Ephraim to his father's knee, to receive the blessing he was anxious should be bestowed upon them.

The words of Isaac his father must have recurred to him—"the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau," as Joseph (doubtless thinking his father could not see) would have placed his right hand on the head of Manasseh and the left on Ephraim. But Jacob is acting "by faith" now—not by sight, or instinct, or even natural affection—so "guiding his hands wittingly," he refuses the well-meant correction of Joseph with the striking words, "I know it my son, I know it. . . . And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh."

And so the Scriptures chronicle this one act, and the only one of Jacob's eventful life, so rich with warning and instruction for those who seek to tread the pilgrim path thousands of years after; and he who exclaimed "all these things are against me," learns in his day, as we in ours, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose."

T. R.

God's Governmental Ways.

THE ways of God in dealing with His Saints and His ancient people of Israel in the past, or with His children at the present time, providentially or governmentally (which is the same thing in principle), is a subject which is very little understood, while at the same time, through His mercy, numbers enjoy His care without being able to account for it. But we should often be wiser in our ways, and avoid serious complications with others, if we were more acquainted with the Scriptures, and read them more carefully from this point of view.

For a large number both of young and old, government is so connected in their minds with chastisement—perhaps from the frequent occurrence of this word in Hebrews xii. 5-9—that it is difficult for them to attach any other meaning to it; and their thought is no doubt further strengthened by the word “scourgeth,” added in verse 6. There is no doubt, in the verse, an allusion to Proverbs xxiii. 12-14, which insists upon its necessity as well as its character, “Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall *not die*,” but “thou shalt *deliver his soul* from hell.” So in Hebrews xii. 9, the verse which speaks of *correction* concludes with “and live.”

It will therefore be a help to many to learn that the word in the original, as given in the Greek dictionary, both the *verb* and *noun*, is rendered by “the rearing or bringing up of a child.” The word “discipline” might be more appropriate, but as we have always been accustomed to the word “chastening,” let us leave it so, while seeking to ascertain its true force and meaning from the Scripture itself. In any case, its

object is quite clear from verses 8 and 9, which prove that the end in view is *life*, and life in the enjoyment of filial relationship and affection; for without it we would be "bastards and not sons," at all.

Mere definitions, especially such as are honoured with the title "theological," have little attraction for the great majority of readers. Should we not rather seek for a deeper and more extended acquaintance with the history of God's ways of old, whether with the patriarchs individually, or with His people collectively, in order that our souls may be established in the true meaning of what sonship implies, and of what it involves for our thoughts and prayers to Him who is, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the "Father" of our spirits?

Now the relationship of "Father," as known to us through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and the manifestation on earth of the **Son** of His own bosom (John i. 18; Rom. viii. 14-16), was wholly unknown in the Old Testament. It is not even expressed prophetically in the Psalms. The only case of its occurrence there, is rightly printed with a small "f" (Ps. ciii. 13), and the verse of itself proves that it is an illustration taken from the well-known *human* relationship, in order to express the "pity" which Jehovah had over all those who were subject to His government, remembering that they are but "dust" (compare Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.") God does not call Satan "dust"; but Adam was formed from it a lifeless body, and then animated by "the breath of life" from God Himself. Thus his *soul* is *immortal*, and his body was the object of God's attention. When he was driven out of Paradise God took care that he should be, in the first instance, suitably clothed. But though under sentence of death eventu-

ally, his faith in the promise as to the woman's seed led him to give her the name of "Eve," which means "living."

And this just illustrates our subject. The promise given was the basis of *faith*; it was a simple matter of believing God's word. Whereas the clothing was an evidence of God's kindly care, suited to Adam's personal condition thenceforward. A careful comparison of the first two chapters of Matthew with the first two of Luke will bring strikingly before us the difference between these purposes of God and the details of His ways in carrying them out.

In Matthew every event recorded was of the providential or governmental character, except the indication of Bethlehem as the Lord's birthplace. That having been pointedly declared in the writings of the prophets, the written word alone had to be followed. And it is remarkable that those who were most troubled at the news of His birth, had no doubt as to the indication of the place. The words, "For thus it is *written* by the prophet," decided everything; and it was by the definite command of the king that the magi,¹ or "wise men," directed their steps to that town. They had already heard and seen enough to make them very careful as to how they should proceed, and consequently they went by night, and in a direction the very opposite of that which they must necessarily take in order to return to their own country: in other words, they had to go south instead of north, and then find some by-path across the hills, by which they could retrace their steps without passing again in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

¹ The word refers to a known class accustomed to stand before the Eastern kings; see Daniel i. 4, 20; ii. 12, 27, etc. They probably were acquainted with the Book of Daniel.

In Luke's account, we note the converse of all this in the two chapters which treat of the Lord's birth and childhood, and again with one exception which, remarkably enough, turns upon the town of Bethlehem, and shows the *circumstances* which compelled Joseph and Mary, much against their desires, to go there at the appointed moment, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Outwardly, everything was against them and in every way most unsuitable; but go they must, in obedience to the decree of the heathen Roman Emperor. Mary was not then in a condition to travel. When they reached the town, necessarily very late, every place was occupied; and, for the most important birth in the whole history of mankind, the unclean stable was the only available spot left open for them. Little did they think that the contrast between the rough manger and the beautiful swaddling clothes, carefully prepared by the mother, was the very sign needed to bring home to the poor shepherds the reality and the marvel as to who their "Saviour" was. The journey to Bethlehem was needful in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled; but Joseph and Mary were forced to go there providentially, in obedience to orders from an earthly ruler.

Elsewhere in these first two chapters of Luke a distinct *word* is given, *not* in a *dream* as in Matthew, but by an angel who gives his name, in speaking to Zacharias; and he was also sent to Mary. The *word* had to be received and obeyed. Zacharias was struck dumb because he hesitated; Mary was called "blessed," because she believed (Luke i. 19-20, 26, 45-56). In the case of the shepherds, the angel came indeed by night, but there was no "dream," as we find in Matthew, five times over. "The glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid" (Luke ii. 9).

There was also a distinct order given to them, which they received, believed, and obeyed. And that is very characteristic of Luke's Gospel, as a whole, where *faith* has such a prominent place, as well as the "word" which was "with power" (iv. 32). His gospel is illustrative of the Epistle to the Romans.

But what is so prominent in Matthew i. and ii., is that the providential guidance, often in dreams, or as in the case of the Magi, twice over by a star, led to the accomplishment of the written word given hundreds of years previously, but—at the time of its fulfilment—in a way unknown by the actors until afterwards. Such was the flight into Egypt, the slaughter of the innocents, etc. Little did Herod think that, on the occasion of the Lord's birth, he was sending up to heaven a tribute, as it were, from Bethlehem of all the little children from two years old and under, as a forecast of the effect of the death of the Son of man who came to *save* that which was lost (chap. xviii. 11).

There are many other precious details into which we cannot enter now. Our desire is to call attention to the matter for the exercise of our souls, and growth in the knowledge of the Lord. In Luke we have the word, faith, and an obedient walk; but in Matthew divine direction in a path not chosen by ourselves, and which turns out to be the Lord's mind and the fulfilment of His blessed will.

W. J. L.

The Inspiration of the Holy Scripture—iii.

HAVING already referred to the testimony of the apostles, we will now give some also from the Lord Himself.

In Matthew v. 17, 18, He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not

come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Under the word "law," there are often included all the writings of the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus therefore takes away nothing of what they contain, but He adds to it. He fulfilled, but He set aside nothing.

In Mark vii. 6, etc., He said to the Pharisees and Scribes, "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, *as it is written*, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me"; then He reproaches them with "*laying aside the commandment of God*" and observing the laws of men.

Here the Lord puts forth the commandments of Exodus and Leviticus as *commandments of God*, in contrast with the "teachings of men." In verse 13, He calls the books of Moses the "Word of God." Not that the Word of God was *contained in* these books, but, *in their entirety*, the Word of God. In Mark xii. 36, the Lord declares that David wrote Psalm cx. by the Holy Spirit. The inspiration is recognised in these passages.

In Luke iv. 27, He reads a part of Isaiah lxi., and stops in the middle of the sentence, saying, "This day is *this Scripture* fulfilled in your ears." In Luke xvi. 29, He says, "They have *Moses and the prophets*; let them hear them. . . . If they hear not *Moses and the prophets*, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Could He, the Holy One, represent Abraham, who is in happiness, as saying anything which would not be absolutely certain?

Would the Lord Jesus have spoken of the Scripture in view of death, before the cross, in the darkest moments of His life, if that Scripture were not the infallible revelation of His God? During the night in which He was betrayed, we find frequently, "In

order that that which was written might be fulfilled," in presence of Judas, of the Jews, of the enemies who had taken Him prisoner, of those who gave Him vinegar to drink! Even after the three hours of darkness He pronounces the words of Psalm xxii.

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus says, "Search the Scriptures," and especially the testimonies to Him in the Scriptures. He adds also that Moses wrote of Him. And more than that; He so fully recognises that Moses did not write of himself, but as *inspired by the Holy Spirit*, that He puts *the writings* of Moses on the same level as *His own words*, "But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" Yes, there is an intimate connection between the words of Scripture and those of Jesus and the apostles. He who knows God, knows that they form together the Word of God.

Is it astonishing that the disciples understood very little, for as yet they "knew not *the Scripture*," according to which He must rise again from the dead? This same Jesus who said when He was alive here below, "The Scripture cannot be broken," who fulfilled this Scripture in His death, brings it afresh to His disciples after His resurrection. He says, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, *which were written* in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Not only did the Lord recognise the Scriptures, but he recognised the book in its entirety, in its three parts—the book as entrusted to the Jews to keep (Rom. iii. 2).

But in order to know the Scriptures, it is necessary to have opened eyes and an enlightened intelligence. Many people do not think about this. They take up the book of God to study just as they would take up a human book. But this is indeed a grave mistake, for the

things of the Spirit of God can only be spiritually discerned. And in order to do this, one must receive the truth of God by the guidance and teaching of the Holy Ghost. They are "received" and "communicated" by the Holy Ghost, and that, not in merely human words, but in words "taught by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. ii. 11-16).

J. N. V.

Brief Scripture Notes.

The Peacemakers (Matt. v. 9).—"They shall be called the children (sons) of God." Oh, this is a sweet title—sons of God! Is it not because it was the reflection of His own nature—of what God Himself is? The stamp of God is upon them. There is no one thing that more indicates God manifested in His children, than peace-making. This was what God was doing, what His heart is set upon. Here are found men upon the earth who shall be called "the sons of God"—a new title from God Himself.

* * * * *

The Golden Calf (Ex. xxxii.).—Moses, when he came down from communing with God, in His zeal for God's glory, broke the tables of the law beneath the mount. How could these tables be put beside the golden calf? It would be to link up the name of God with idolatry. Is not this just what Christendom is vainly trying to do—to set the idol of ritualistic observances, sacramentalism, etc., in the so-called house of God, but only to their own shame and His dishonour?

But Moses, acting in faith according to the mind of God, pitched the tabernacle outside the camp; thus showing that God cannot have fellowship with evil. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever,"

The Line that Separates.

THE late Professor Cramb is responsible for the following interesting account:—

On the night before Alexander of Macedon started for the East on that career of conquest, in which, like Achilles, his great exemplar, he was to find his glory and an early death, he had a farewell interview with the man who had been his tutor and the master of a rising school of thought in the shades of the Lyceum. Towards the end of the interview, Aristotle said to the Macedonian:—

“You are about to start upon an enterprise which will bring you into many lands, and amongst many nations, some already celebrated in arts and arms, some savage and unknown. But this last counsel I give you: Whithersoever your victories lead you, never forget that you are a Greek, and everywhere draw hard and fast *the line that separates* the Greek from the Barbarian.”

“No,” answered the youthful conqueror—he was barely two-and-twenty—“I will pursue another policy. I will make all men Hellenes. That shall be the purpose of my victories.”

One in their purpose, the soldier and the philosopher were wide apart in their policy. Aristotle stood for exclusiveness and national isolation, but conflict and conquest appealed to Alexander.

Separation and *Service* are themes which are suggested by this incident, and a word or two as to them may be in season.

First, as to **Separation**—If to “draw hard and fast the line separating the Greek from the Barbarian” was urgent for Aristotle, it is still more imperative that the line that separates the Christian from the world should be no less drawn. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “He that is not with Me is against Me.” The two

cannot indeed mix, and neutral ground as to the world, the flesh and the devil, is impossible.

But no separation is of any value unless it springs from intelligent and upright motives. It was acclaimed once by some in these words: "Stand by thyself, come not near Me, for I am holier than thou" (Isa. lxxv. 1-7), but this was a false claim, and drew on those professing it God's sternest judgment. Monasticism, Pietism, and Quietism equally fail to set forth true Christian separation, and likewise with every modern imitation, because wrong in their roots, and in their object.

Christian separation is not an artificial growth, nor a philosophy of negatives. Its wheels do not run in the ruts of tradition. Its ideal is not the stagnant quietude of a backwater, and in its operations it is not mechanical like a guillotine. To be worthy of the name it must ever embody the zeal, the fibre, and the backbone which distinguished the Apostles and the early church. What inspired and marked them was great love to the Lord, and to one another; a deep regard for the truth, a whole-hearted resolve to do God's will in life, service, and worship. Any separation lacking these features is correspondingly false and futile.

As the seared leaves of winter drop off in the bursting of new life in the spring time, so the energy of Christ's life—eternal life—in the soul, reaches out to the Father in worship and to the world in service; worldliness drops off, and, involuntarily, true separation is produced.

The reversion of this process is alas too well illustrated in the history of the church of God. That broad line which, at first, marked off the church from the world, faded and disappeared. In the ratio in which God's people neglected the active pursuit of those holy aims set before them in Scripture; the world swamped the church, and the sad result is seen to-day in a Christ.

less Christendom, helpless in self-destruction, and Christians divided into sects and unreconcilable parties.

Secondly, as to **Service**.—At the present moment “service” and “effort” are the watchwords: every one is “doing his bit” as it is termed. Yet how applicable are the prophet’s words to much of it, especially in spiritual things:—“Ye labour for that which is not bread. Consider your ways, . . . ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but have not enough, . . . he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes . . . ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little” (Haggai i. 4-9).

Oh, reader, how is it with thee? Thou, too, art active it may be, but hast thou Christ’s glory as definitely before thee as Alexander had that of Greece? Does thy service flow from that soul-commanding cry, “If any man serve *Me* let him follow *Me*. . . him will My Father honour”? In other words, Hast thou that burning affection for Christ, that personal communion with Him, that makes thine eye single with a holy purpose, and thy heart and feet swift in His service?

The highest example of one absorbed with a purpose is the blessed Lord Jesus. In service, as in life, He is the great Exemplar. He said, “I have set my face as a flint,” to accomplish His work—also, “I must be about my Father’s business.” This was so evident in His whole demeanour, that once the Samaritan villagers would not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem—that goal on which He was steadfastly set (Luke ix. 51-53). He is the Author and Finisher of faith, and He, “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.” God bids us look to Him and copy Him (Heb. xii. 2).

Next to Him, and modelled on His path, comes the intentness of the Apostle Paul. In Colossians i. 27-29, he lays bare the settled bent of his devoted life:—

CHRIST, "Whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may"—not make Hellenes of them, but—"present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily." And although he once stood alone (for all they of Asia, and even his own converts, had forsaken him), he still went on, and could exclaim, in almost the words of his Master:—"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me . . . that *all the Gentiles* might hear" (see Isa. l. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 17). His was no fitful, haphazard service, lacking in aim and intelligence, but the most tireless effort, harnessed to the divinest ideal, namely, that of reaching and winning all men, and presenting them perfect in Christ Jesus. His call from God to us is, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ"; "Those things which ye have . . . heard and seen in me, **do.**" What a path and what a purpose for us all to pursue!

On the other hand, what is the reason that we see the cause of Christ weak and drooping here, and worldliness and declension there? Is it not because our hearts are not animated by devotedness to the Lord and zeal for His work as they should be? We soberly think it is; the one is a reflex of the other.

These are perilous times for God's people—times that will grow darker yet, for "evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse." Precious souls, too, are perishing and saints of God are languishing for need of help, and we—writer and readers of *Words of Help*—what of us? If we too are to be saved from drifting with the evil tide, we must bestir ourselves and be braced up anew by the Lord's grace to wait for Him, and walk, work, and worship in His fear and by His word.

In this way only would questions affecting what we are—the "position," the "ground," and the "path" we

are on—be properly solved. Our separation and service would be evenly balanced; and *the line that separates* would be divinely drawn in activities more excellent than Alexander's, because apostolic in their aim and purpose.

W. M. R.

Prophetic Events after the Rapture of the Saints.

THE following brief account of the chief actors in the future prophetic events which are to take place after the saints of this present period have been taken to be with the Lord at His second coming, are of special interest in view of all that is now taking place, in connection with the Great War. They are taken from a book which has just been published on the prophet Micah, by "H. R." of Vevey, whose writings we have often quoted in this magazine.

The three great enemies of Israel at the end are:—
 (1) **The Roman Empire**, or fourth universal empire; the fourth beast of Daniel vii. 7, the first beast of Revelation xiii., whose deadly wound was healed. This empire will be revived under the form of a Latin confederation of ten kings with its chief or head—an emperor—the capital of whose empire will be Rome. This personage will possess all the power formerly granted *by God* to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and to the empires which succeeded him; but he will be raised up at the end *by Satan* as an antagonist of Christ and His reign. It is important to remark that Babylon, which will never be revived as an empire, is considered in the book of Revelation, not as an example of a national resurrection like that of the Roman empire, but as the final apostasy of Christendom, under its religious, political, and commercial forms, *in relation to the Roman empire* (Rev. xvii., xviii.).

(2) **The Antichrist.** This personage puts himself at the head of the ancient people of God, who will have become apostate from Judaism, as Christendom will be from Christianity. He rises up as a false king, and a false Messiah, even to the throne of God, after having taken possession of "the Lord's heritage" in order to deliver it over to Satan.

However small the land of Palestine may be, it has more importance in the eyes of God than all the countries of the nations, for it was of it that the Lord formerly made choice, as also it was Jerusalem which He desired to establish as the glorious capital of His earthly kingdom. It is there that He will set His throne, and from thence will finally go forth all the decrees of the only *universal infallible kingdom*, called "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The pretension to usurp this power will draw down on the head of the Antichrist the terrible strokes of the wrath of God. This false Christ will be destroyed without mercy, with all his adherents, when the true Messiah appears.

(3) **The Assyrian.** The prophets Isaiah and Micah are chiefly occupied with this personage, though not exclusively so. Although in the days of the subsequent prophets the *dominion* of the Assyrian, of whom history speaks, had come to an end, the rôle the Assyrian was to play in prophecy was still intact and mainly future.

The Assyrian had appeared *before* the people of God was definitively pronounced "lo-ammi"—not My people (Hos. i. 9). He will reappear on the scene at the moment when the relations of Jehovah with Israel will be renewed by the formation of a believing remnant, whom God will once more call "My people" (Hos. ii. 1).

It is when the Assyrian reappears that the great struggle of the end will take place around Jerusalem, which will close with the putting down of the fourth universal, or Roman empire, which had been reconstituted by Satan. Then the Assyrian, who in ancient times had been conquered by Babylon, will arise again in order to dispute the world-supremacy of Rome. This Assyrian of prophecy will appear under a form different from the ancient one; but, unlike the Babylonian monarchy which has been definitely destroyed, it is represented at the present time by Russia with its formidable Asiatic dominion and power.

We must, however, bear in mind that at the time of which prophecy speaks, the political character of this empire will have undergone important changes. It will be no longer a question of the king of Assyria, but of Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, who rules over the country of Magog; that is to say, of an Assyrian confederation, which aspires to constitute itself a counterpoise to the Latin confederation already referred to (see Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix; Ps. lxxxiii., etc.).

The "King of the north" is, it appears, the head or leader of the "Assyrian" armies. This king occupies Asia Minor—a territory formerly conquered by the king of Assyria, and which became, after the death of Alexander the Great, the kingdom of the Selucidæ and of Antiochus. Asia Minor is always called "the north" in relation to Palestine (Dan. xi.).

The Assyrian confederation, represented by the king of the north, takes the place, therefore, of an adversary of the Roman beast, and of the Antichrist in Palestine, and also of the king of the south in Egypt. The "Eastern question" will then have arisen again in its most acute form. The final conflict can only take place in Palestine, and that country is the last stake in the great drama by which Satan hopes to gain the day.

Satan was conquered a first time at the cross, and this victory introduces the *heavenly* kingdom of the Lamb. He will be defeated a second time, when the Church, the heavenly Bride, having been caught up to meet the Bridegroom, the devil will be cast down to the earth with his angels. If conquered a third time, his dominion must cease. In order that he may subsist, it is necessary that Jerusalem, the seat of earthly power, once taken from the true king, should remain to the Antichrist, and the Roman beast his ally, with whom the devil will have formed an unholy and murderous alliance.

But the Assyrian urged on by his pride, his ambition, and his cupidity, will overturn all Satan's plans, for he will have it in his mind to act independently of him. His action will eventually lead to the formation of the Judeo-Latin coalition, in order to oppose him and his armies.

Jerusalem will be besieged and conquered by the peoples allied with the Assyrian, and half its population will be led away captive (Zech. xiv. 2). The Assyrian will then attack Egypt; but, on his return, when he besieges Jerusalem again, after the beast and false prophet have been destroyed with their armies by the appearing of the Lord Jesus descending from heaven with His saints (Rev. xix.), the Assyrian also will himself perish on the mountains of Israel with all his hosts (see Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.; Dan. xi. 41-45; Isa. xxx. 33, etc.).

Fragment.—The cross is the centre of the universe according to God, the basis of our salvation and our glory, and the brightest manifestation of God's own glory, the centre of the history of eternity.

God's Governmental Ways.

(See page 125.)

LAST month we were considering this important subject in an elementary way, through the comparison of the opening chapters of Matthew and of Luke. Let us look now at the Lord's discourse with His disciples, after His partaking of the passover for the last time, previous to the fulfilment of the type "in the kingdom of God" by means of His own death, as the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor. v. 7).

One of the most characteristic "calls" in all the Gospels, generally answered to at once, was contained in the words, "Follow me." But on this occasion, after Judas had gone out, and Jesus was alone with the eleven, He said to them, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye *cannot come*; so *now* I say to you" (John vii. 34; viii. 21; xiii. 33). Was there anything more natural than Peter's question, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee *now*?" None of them really understood where the Lord was going, but all turns on the little word "now," which Jesus had used in answering Peter's question, "Whither goest thou?"

His public ministry was over, and the hour of His supreme suffering had come, in which He must necessarily be alone; so He had the pain of saying to His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Peter was the first to declare this impossible, but they all joined in (Matt. xxvi. 31-35; Mark xiv. 27, 29).

Peter had specially to learn the deceitfulness of his own heart. He was foremost in declaring his personal devotedness to the Lord, and was surely sincere in so doing; but that made it all the more necessary that,

in his case, the painful lesson should be learned, as a warning to us all. The four gospels speak of it; but Luke characteristically mentions the Lord's intercession for him, as well as the "look" of compassion which broke Peter's heart, and produced his bitter tears (xxii. 32, 61, 62). Luke brings into prominence the Lord's priestly office.

All these facts serve to show the necessity for that governmental dealing and discipline which is frequently difficult for us to understand, and may even for a time appear to us inconsistent with the *grace* revealed in the gospel. By *grace* we are saved, and in it we stand (Eph. ii. 8; Rom. v. 2; 1 Peter v. 12); yet we find the needed word of warning, "Let him that *thinketh* he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

We might very naturally suppose that the passage in which the Lord's "new commandment" is proclaimed for the first time on earth, was hardly the place to look for governmental direction of such a character as we find here. Yet we have to find out that it is the very place and time where it is most needed. The nearer we are brought to God, the higher the call in its moral features, the more need is there that we should be freed from self-confidence, and learn, perhaps by bitter experience like Peter, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9). The remedy is, as the passage in Jeremiah shows, that the Lord *searches* it; and we have, like David, to court His searching investigation, which is no easy matter (Ps. cxxxix. 1-5, 23, 24). And that is just where His providential dealing comes in.

It may be well to add a word as to the "*new commandment*," with which we are possibly not so familiar

as we ought to be. We find in the Scriptures three stages or obligations as to practical love:—

First of all, under the law, the duty of a redeemed people delivered by God's power from the oppression of their enemies was to love Him with their whole heart, and the neighbour as oneself (Rom. xiii. 8-10; Gal. v. 14; James ii. 8). *Secondly*, the far more rigid exaction, especially for a Jew, according to the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, is, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 43-45). That was a consequence of His ministry of grace and power, here on earth. But, *thirdly*, when about to leave His own and lay down His life for them, the measure of the love is infinitely higher—"as I have loved you." That is practical Christianity in principle, and only possible amongst those who are truly born again; for "everyone that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John iv. 16, 21; v. 1). Such is "the new commandment," which never could be set forth until in view of the cross of the Lord Jesus, where alone we find the full measure of it. And consequently, it was only given on the very night of His betrayal, an hour or two before it took place.

The objects of unconditional grace are bound to act in grace towards their enemies, but the sense of the love of Christ received into the soul brings the obligation of laying down one's life for the brethren (1 John iii. 16). As we meditate upon this, should we not all confess to the necessity for having our deceitful hearts tried, in order that true *Christian* responsibility may be understood and accepted by us? Do we not also find in Peter's case that it was his fall and recovery which fitted him practically for the ministry to which he was through grace appointed?

On the coming day of Pentecost, fifty days after the

passover, it fell to him to bring home to the Jews their sin in crucifying Christ; and shortly afterwards he charged them with denying the Holy One and the Just (Acts iii. 14). Any that knew him might have then turned the accusation upon the apostle, and said, But what did *you* do? That would have given him an opportunity for magnifying the grace of which he himself had been the object, and thus illustrating the grace of full and free forgiveness, which it was now his duty and privilege to proclaim to them. "Many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts iv. 4).

A further heart-searching had been necessary in Peter's case, in order to deepen the work of grace in his soul, and it is with that account that John closes his Gospel. In the forty days' interval between the Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven, the disciples had to go to Galilee, since the Lord had told them He would see them there (Matt. xxvi. 32; xxviii. 10). Seven of them were together, and as they had nothing to eat, it was natural that they should resort to their old occupation of fishing, but "that night they caught nothing." In the morning, Jesus Himself stood on the shore, and told them where to cast the net. Was not that providential goodness? "They were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

John was the first to discover that it was the Lord. He delighted to speak of himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Peter, when he heard it, could no longer contain himself, but threw himself into the sea, to get at once to Jesus. The others followed in a boat, dragging the net. But they all found a meal prepared: "A fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread." The Lord Himself had thought of their need, and provided for it; but Peter was specially empowered to draw the

great charge to land; and, wonderful to say, "the net was not broken."

After the refreshment came the three questions to Simon Peter: "Lovest thou me more than these?" was the first. Had he not shown it by casting himself into the sea? But the probe must go deeper to the very source of love in Peter's heart, and it was repeated according to the previous *three* denials of his Lord in the court of the high priest's palace. What could Peter do but find refuge in the supreme knowledge of the Lord, who tells him to care for His lambs and sheep? And finally, Jesus foretells further providential ordering which would be more severe, even to death, as the years rolled by. Then comes the word, twice repeated, "Follow thou me," which must have vividly recalled the words of three weeks previously, "Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

W. J. L.

Man's Choice.

IN the garden of Eden our first parents, listening to the voice of the tempter, chose the path of disobedience to God. Blinded by the seeming advantages offered by the evil one, they turned their backs on the good and beneficent Creator-God. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"; and man started his career under the leadership of the evil one.

Instead of the improvement indicated by the serpent, man's condition became worse and worse, until sin and wickedness was so great that God visited it with His judgment, and by the flood destroyed all save eight souls.

After centuries of trial, both without law and under

law, man was proved to be irrecoverably bad. As a last resource, God sent His only-begotten Son into the world for the blessing of man, but their hearts hardened against God and His love, and only sought to get rid of Him. After His wondrous pathway, doing good to the children of men, He was brought before the high priest; and, confessing Himself to be the Son of God, the high priest asked the question, "What think ye?" Their answer was: "*He is guilty of death.*" Then Pilate, having examined Him, said, "I find no fault in Him"; but their cry was "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas"; and again, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Thus man refused both God and His Son, come in grace and love, and chose a murderer. Yielding again to the promptings of the wicked one, men united as one—religious and profane, social and political, civil and military, Jew and Gentile—to rid themselves of the One who witnessed to them of God and His claims; and made the wicked one their "god" as well as their "prince."

To-day we see the result of this choice. Instead of the promised progress offered by the tempter in the garden, and man's boasted betterment of the world, we find the earth covered with bloodshed and crime. We see weeping wives and mothers and children bowed down in sorrow and bereavement.

But oh, ye weepers, listen! There is hope, there is light, there is life, and all in Him whom man rejected and crucified on the cross.

Thus the stone set at naught by the builders is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other, "for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." In urging on men to put the Lord Jesus to death, the

enemy sought to quench the last ray of light for this sin-stained and darkened world. But God is now offering life and salvation to any and every sinner who will repent and believe the gospel. R. G.

Self-Centred.

NATURALLY, **self** rules the heart of man. "Thou never gavest **me** a kid," says the elder brother in the parable in Luke xv. He could not get beyond himself, and think of **God's** joy in blessing.

We see illustrations of self-centralisation every day, and, alas, we are all prone to it in some way or other.

A man may be self-centered about his own personal affairs, about his business or his family. These are the centres round which his thoughts and interests revolve. Not but that these things have their right place: they surely have, but it is quite another matter when they engross our lives and thoughts.

Then, again, we may be self-centred about Christian fellowship. Some good men cannot look beyond the little circle *they* are connected with; if you belong to *it*, that is the whole point with them. Some again, in their anxiety to avoid the ditch which lies on one side of the road, which they have called "looseness" and "independency," fall into the ditch on the other side, which we might well call "narrowness" and "sectarianism."

In truth, it is only as **Christ** is really before the soul that we can be kept from these various and deceptive forms of self-occupation and self-complacency. O that **He** might so fill our hearts as to eclipse all else! If this is so, we shall be enabled to think of our

fellow-Christians as members of *His* body, equally dear to Him as we are; not as members of *our* body, *our* church, *our* fellowship, etc.

A Rod.

“What is that in thine hand? A rod” (Ex. iv. 2.)

Each one has something in his hand,
For leading to the Promised Land.
With Moses—just a shepherd’s rod;
But mighty by the power of God.

Our rods are varied—not a few
Will wonder what they e’er can do—
A loving smile, a shake of hand,
May help a soul to Heaven’s land.

But we must use our rod in faith,
And God will bless it as he saith.
Some spark of truth to us revealed;
Just pass it on—souls will be healed.

The Bible taught—in patient love,
And God sends forth His Holy Dove.
A visit paid, a need supplied,
Reveal the heart of Him who died.

Such little things, so easy too;
In reach of all, not just the few:
Each one may now like Moses be,
The means of setting bond-slaves free.

And God desires that each should use
Just what he has—naught else to choose.
The *power* is His, so we may rest
Assured in faith, our rod’s the best.

M. E. S.

“Be Strong.”

THREE times over in the first chapter of Joshua we find this exhortation. Joshua was just about to lead God's people into the land of promise, and he had real enemies to fight, real difficulties to overcome, and real trials to meet with ere he could take possession of the inheritance which God had given them.

And surely if the word “Be strong” was needed then, it is so now. We, too, have need of patience and perseverance in our day of sifting in the Church and unusual trial in the world.

But the Christian's strength does not consist in the ability to do great exploits which appear praiseworthy in the eyes of men. The apostle says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” The true secret of strength is to be found in humble dependence on God and simple obedience to His word.

Joshua, in his responsible place as leader of the people, was told to observe to do according to all the law of Moses, not turning aside from it to the right hand or to the left. And oh how important it is for *us* too, that *we* should take heed to the exhortation given to him and give ourselves to the prayerful reading of Scripture; seeking also the grace needed to *put into practice* what we know.

A friend remarked to us lately that, in the present day, it was often the case that the Scripture was “crowded out.” Alas, this is too true! Even Christians sometimes seem as if they have so many other occupations that they do not give the Word of God the time and place it must have, if we are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

ONE with Christ.—It is a very solemn thought, but a true one, that God having taught the saints that they are one with Christ, he who puts anything whatever between them and the Head virtually denies Christianity.

* * * * *

Faithfulness to Christ.—The eye of God rests on the least spark of faithfulness in the midst of evil. There is not one throb of the heart that beats true to Himself, in the midst of abounding iniquity, that passes unheeded by the Lord. This is what sustains the heart in the midst of untoward circumstances.

* * * * *

The Church and the World.—Just so it is now, in the day in which we live! Christians are largely seeking just what the world seeks—wealth, power, and influence: these three things are just what the Lord had not, and can I be said to be a stranger where I have power and influence? Certainly not. The Church must give up a heavenly Christ and a crucified Christ, if it takes the world up in any sense as its portion.

* * * * *

Needed Grace.—Common grace will do when the Church itself is in its place, but *uncommon* grace is needed to sustain the faithful when the Church is not keeping its place. . . . When that which bears the name of the Church of God is nigh unto cursing, and is going to be “spued out,” then a double measure and peculiar character of grace is needed to sustain the faithful ones in the narrow and often lonely path in which they will be called to walk.

Man's Choice.—The dark shadow of the cross rests upon this world. Pilate's question was, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" They said, Barabbas. The choice was deliberate and decided—it was religious man that made it, too. They "desired a murderer to be granted unto them, and killed the Prince of life."

Has the verdict of the heart of the unregenerate man changed in the twentieth century from what it was in the first? Not one whit. It is the same now as it was then, even in nominally Christian countries—"enmity against God."

Christian reader, let us remember that this is the world through which we are passing to-day!

* * * * *

"Thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. ii. 4).—It is utterly impossible that Christ can forget *His* love to the Church, and therefore just as impossible that He can be satisfied without the return of her love to Him. For, remember, that it is only love that can satisfy love. The very reproach He makes brings out the strength of *His* love to the Church, which cannot rest till He gets the same from her. *He* cannot cool down to be satisfied with a feeble return of His love, however much the Church may have cooled down in her thoughts about Christ's love to her. . . .

There must be dividedness of heart, if there is instability of affection for Christ. This was the secret of all the failure at Ephesus. Undividedness of heart as regards the object of affection had been lost, singleness of eye was gone, and the perfect reflection of that love which had laid hold of the character for Himself was gone also.

God's Governmental Ways.

(See page 141.)

WHEN we turn to the Old Testament it is not difficult to trace two lines of truth, which run side by side in the history of God's dealings with individuals, or with His chosen people of Israel descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the one hand we find His *purposes* in view of Christ, and the great principles of truth needed for a consistent walk with God; on the other God's *ways* with man, and the discipline needed to teach us what is really involved in obedience and dependence upon Himself.

These two lines of truth are perhaps most easily apprehended by a comparison of the Books of Kings and Chronicles. In the Hebrew Bible, these were considered by the scribes, such as Ezra, so different and distinct in character that the two books of Chronicles have been kept entirely separate, and classed with the Psalms or Holy Writings at the *end* of the Book. The first book of Chronicles and first nine chapters of the second are almost wholly typical or prophetic in character, in view of the final restoration of God's ancient people; and the remainder of the second book, from chapter x. to the end, contains a series of most remarkable and immediate answers to prayer. When the accounts are common to both, the types are specially reserved for Chronicles, as in the case of God's wonderful answer to David in 1 Chronicles xxi. 26-30, omitted at the end of 2 Samuel xxiv.

It would well repay any young student of God's word to compare these books, and underline the passages or parts of verses which are peculiar to each. The two books of Samuel belong to the Kings, as is

indeed noted in the headings of our Bibles, making in all four books of Kings.

Referring to the very commencement of the inspired writings, the first two chapters of Genesis are all typical, a compendium of God's ways in creation, setting forth the order of this earth, and man's position in it as the responsible head under God, and the formation of the bride as part of himself. All was perfect, including the Sabbath which was God's own rest, a figure of that which is to come, to be enjoyed in the eternal state (Heb. iv. 4, 9-11).

The first spoken word, "Let there be light," is expressive of every soul's conversion to God, and the beginning of true relationship with Him, however feebly known and enjoyed. The apostle's use of it, in 2 Corinthians iv. 6, establishes this beyond question. All that follows in a believer's experience, if rightly understood, must be referred to this divine beginning. Again, in the opening of John's Gospel, Christ Himself is the Light, manifested in the "darkness" of this world. So in Proverbs i. 7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (see Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. ix. 10; xxx. 3-6; 1 John v. 20). Such is the start in life, and, as far as the individual soul is concerned, the foundation and guarantee of eternal and infinite blessing. For God abides faithful; "He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13).

All this may be very imperfectly grasped, and little understood by one recently converted; but the privilege of every new-born soul is to receive it. The office of the Holy Ghost is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us, and He glorifies Christ in so doing (John xvi. 14). What a comfort it is to know this! But whether we know it or not, such is the start in the divine life. Then follows needed edu-

cation in the school of God, in which we have to learn, little by little, what He is for us, what we are towards Him, as well as what we ought to be.

Here then it is that His governmental dealings begin. And so it was with Adam in Genesis iii. The serpent enters upon the scene, attacks Eve, the weaker of the two, who yields to the temptation, and Adam has to face the question as to whom he will be faithful. Shall he give her up, or take his place with her under the sentence of death? He decides on the latter course, not being himself deceived, but, for the moment, seeing no other course open to him (1 Tim. ii. 14). For himself he has lost God, and they both try to hide away as soon as His voice is heard in the garden of Eden; but they are driven out of Paradise, and the cherubim with the flaming sword bar any approach to the "tree of life." Notwithstanding this, the judgment of the serpent involves the birth of a promised "seed," and Adam calls his wife's name Eve (*i.e.*, "living"), because the Deliverer was to come through *her*. Henceforth, for them both, life was only conditional and must end, unless God comes in providentially, as in the case of Enoch. Death in fact "reigned," and he who had the power of it was the deceiver of the woman (Rom. v. 14; Heb. ii. 14). The Deliverer must Himself go through it, having thus His "*heel* bruised," in order to save the ruined race (Gen. iii. 15).

For Adam, paradise was lost for ever; the very ground he walked on was cursed, and he could only get his food from it by careful cultivation in spite of the thorns and thistles which it would henceforth naturally bring forth. But he had to learn dependence upon God in a new way, in the changed conditions of his existence. And how precious it is to see God's intervention on his behalf!

God's words, and His merciful care, combined to show that they both had a term of life in this world before them. In the woman's case, not only the promised "seed," but the very sentence, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," proved it; as did also the words to Adam concerning the ground, "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." And how much more must they have felt His gracious care in the fact that He Himself *made* them "coats of skins," with which He *clothed* them! But the very judgment that drove them out of Paradise proved it also; for had they died then, what need would there have been for the cherubim "to keep the way of the tree of life?" From the very moment of their fall, however, they were *mortal*.

While dwelling upon this, may we not usefully refer to Matthew xix. 16—the only case where the word "have" is used with "eternal life," in the first three gospels?¹ (In John's gospel it is, of course, frequently found.) But in this passage the young ruler's word "have" involves an addition which is not found in Mark and Luke. For the Lord substituted instead of it the words "enter in," showing that the man was practically in Adam's position, "driven out" of paradise. No one could penetrate inside without meeting the cherubim's flaming sword. Here the word of the prophet has its application, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. xiii. 7). The sword of judgment is, as it were, sheathed in Him, and through His death and resurrection the entry into paradise was opened to the dying thief upon the cross.

The above passage leads us to the end of Psalm xvi.,

¹ The word "inherit" in Mark and Luke refers to the *future* blessing on earth, mentioned in Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

where the whole secret of God's ways of grace towards Adam's ruined race is unfolded: the "path of life" is shown to God's "Holy One," and in Him it is righteously opened to all whom the Father has given to Him.

Nothing more is said of Adam except that he lived 930 years; and then, though created "in the likeness of God," he had to experience in his own person the sentence of *death*. So it was for his descendants also except Enoch, a marvellous proof of God's further intervention in power on behalf of one who walked with Him (Gen. v.).

The increase of wickedness on the earth put a term to God's patience; and another remarkable man of faith, Noah, was raised up to show God's deliverance; he acknowledged it by the most striking burnt-offering ever presented to Him, in which *all* creation was represented by "every clean beast and every clean fowl," offered on the altar, when Noah and his family went forth of the ark on to the earth with which we are acquainted (compare Rom. viii. 19-25).

Here the first chapter of man's history closes, as given in Hebrews xi. 1-7. A fresh chapter is opened with the *call* of Abraham in Genesis xii. And he becomes "the father of the faithful."

But let us not forget that the close of the old world in the flood is also a presage or forecast of what is reserved for the present scene—not by water, but by fire (2 Pet. iii. 3-15). May we learn our lesson of sobriety and patient waiting for the Lord, until we enjoy in perfection His full "salvation" at His coming (1 Pet. i. 7-9).

W. J. L.

Questions and Answers.

Questions—What does prophecy say respecting the Powers engaged in the present conflict?

REFERRING to the countries engaged in the present war—there can be no doubt that England, France, and Italy will form part of the future Roman Empire. As Russia is to head the confederation of Powers designated in prophecy by “the Assyrian,” and finally “Gog,” it is clear that her present alliance with the Western Powers will be broken off.

Does prophecy afford us any light as to

- (i) When this will take place?
- (ii) The future of Germany and Austria?
- (iii) Who will then occupy Egypt, so as to be “King of the South”? Ed.

* * * * *

Answers.—As regards the nations engaged in the present war, we are convinced that England, France, and Italy form part of the Roman Empire, now destroyed, but which will be revived under a new form, at the time of the end. As to Russia—we are also convinced by the prophetic Word that this Power will form an integral part of a future confederation called “the Assyrian” and “Gog,” under the direction of the King of the North.¹ We are also certain that the alliance of the Russian Empire with the Western Powers will be broken off sooner or later; but you desire to know if prophecy furnishes us with any light—

¹ The “King of the North” is always in prophecy, the king of Asia Minor, the country which fell to his lot at the time of the division of Alexander’s empire.

- (i) As to the moment when these events will take place.
- (ii) As to the future of Germany and Austria.
- (iii) As to the Power who will possess Egypt at the time of the end, and whom Daniel calls the "King of the South" (Dan. xi. 40).

The reply to these questions can only be approximate.

(i) It is certain that at the time of the end, that is to say, after the rapture of the Church will have, so to speak, given the signal for the events of prophecy, the alliance between Russia (Gog or the Assyrian confederation) and the three allied Powers by whose side she is fighting to-day, will no longer exist. There is, however, no reason why that alliance should not be broken off *before* the taking away of the Church, if the Lord should still delay His coming. These three Powers—Italy, France, and England—will form a part of the future Latin confederation of ten kings, which constitute the revised Roman Empire, with an imperial chief or head, having Rome as his capital.

Like the first universal¹ empire of Babylon, this future Roman Empire will be in direct opposition to the Assyrian or Gog (the Russia of to-day) and his vast empire, re-organised on a new footing, in view of the final conflict (Ezek. xxxviii. 3-6). The Latin confederation, allied with Antichrist and the apostate Jews who had returned to their land, whilst maintaining its ascendancy over Palestine and Jerusalem, will seek to withstand Gog.

One cannot doubt that the *hidden object* of the Latin confederation, or rather that of Satan in raising it up, goes far beyond his antagonism to Gog; and is designed to hinder the establishment of the kingdom of Christ at Jerusalem (Rev. xvii. 12-14). The formidable final conflict around Jerusalem will be the *last effort* of the devil to

¹ This, at least, is the name which we usually give to the four beasts of Daniel. It would be more exact to say, as we shall show later on, the "general monarchy."

oppose the Lord's reign, an effort which will fail, and which will be the prelude of the definitive overthrow of that great enemy of God and man.

On his side, Gog, that is Russia, will seek to conquer Palestine and Jerusalem, which had become the centre and the essential factor of world-wide power. He will succeed in it for a moment (Ps. lxxxiii. ; Zech. xiv. 2), but will encounter the opposition of the "King of the South" (Dan. xi. 40), then of the Latin confederation, which will bar his way on his return from Egypt. In this way Jerusalem will become "a cup of trembling unto all the people round about" (Zech. xii. 2). The appearing of the Lord to establish His reign will put an end to both these antagonistic powers.

It is impossible to say *when* the rupture between the Western Powers and Russia will take place. Prophecy clearly proves that the present agreement cannot last, and perhaps, as we have already remarked above, we may witness this rupture; but the great conflict between the kingdoms will not take place until the last days. It is even possible that we Christians may witness the return of the Jewish nation to their own country—prophecy in no way precludes such a possibility—but not, however, the establishment of Antichrist as king over that people (2 Thess. ii. 3-10).

Let us not forget that the Word never fixes the length of time which will elapse between the rapture of the Church and the beginning of the last half-week of Daniel ix., or the three and a half years of the great tribulation and of the final conflict. That this preliminary period will be *relatively* short we do not doubt; but, apart from the return of the Jews, mighty changes will take place in the grouping together of the European States, and the events now taking place appear to tend in that direction.

The Latin confederation, the Assyrian confederation, the grouping together of the "kings from the East," will not come into being in a day. These antagonistic group-

ings are still future, and will lead to the dismemberment of the Turkish empire as an Eastern Power.

It is evident that the Christian *need* not await any of these events, because he lives in the daily hope of the Lord's return ; but he can see clearly that all the principles which will come into play after the rapture of the Church are already floating like threatening vapours in the air he breathes. My "appendix" to the prophet Micah has pointed this out as regards the Latin confederation. The grouping together of certain nations called Panslavism, and that of the Eastern peoples, which is much more secret, becomes more and more marked ; and Zionism is preparing the way for the return of the Jews to their own land.

(ii) As to the future of northern Germany, I do not see that prophecy authorises us to affirm anything definitely. One thing, however, appears to me to be certain, namely, that the ambition of Germany for Continental domination will come to nought. I say this in view of what the Word of God reveals to us respecting the reappearing of the Roman Empire, revived by Satan, or, to be more explicit, of a Latin confederation of ten kings, dependent on a temporal head or chief ruling at Rome, and of a spiritual head (the Antichrist) at Jerusalem.

Germany, in her opposition to the *world-domination* of England (which it is her aim to possess herself of), aspires to arrogate to herself universal monarchy over the peoples of the Continent. These two pretensions are not identical. Prophecy only speaks to us of the second, that is to say, concerning the *general monarchy* entrusted to the Gentiles (or nations) as a consequence of the unfaithfulness of Israel. There has been, and there will be, only *four* empires having this character, and represented by the four beasts of Daniel. When the fourth, that is the Roman Empire, revived under its last form (the Latin confederation) shall have been destroyed, *universal empire* will be entrusted to the Son of man, and to Israel, His restored

people—"the people of saints of the high places" (Daniel vii. 13-14, 27). This kingdom will never be destroyed.¹

The pretension to a universal empire, comprising at one and the same time both world-domination and the general empire ruling over the Continent, is a *gigantic dream* which rises up, on the one hand, against the counsels of God respecting His Son and His elect people; and, on the other, is inconsistent with all the events of which prophecy speaks.

The four general monarchies of the Gentiles were not characterised by the extent of their boundaries, but by the fact that the *Continental kingdoms*—at first of the East under the first three monarchies, then of the West under the fourth, the Roman Empire—had to accept, by turns, the supremacy of each of these empires, and became their vassals or tributaries, either by right of conquest or by the fear with which they were inspired by these monarchies.

If one or other of these monarchies has ever, in modern times, aspired to establish, for its own ends, this general domination over the Continent, its aspiration has soon been overruled. Such was the case of Charlemagne, Charles the fifth, the German Empire in its struggle with the Popes for the domination of Italy, and, especially, Napoleon, whose plans so rapidly came to grief. The present ambitious designs of Pan-Germanism are much less likely to be realised, in view of the fact that the world is on the eve of witnessing the prophetic events of the end; and these events, instead of bringing about the formation of a general empire under the sceptre of Germany, will lead to the restoration of the Latin confederation under the sceptre of the Roman Emperor.

The empire entrusted to the Gentiles, beginning with Babylon, was, in its origin, established by God, either in

¹ It is interesting to observe that Christ *voluntarily* "delivers up" the Kingdom to God, even the Father, after His millennial reign is over. All other kingdoms were *taken from* their possessors at some time or other (1 Cor. xv. 24-28).—ED.

view of His chastisement on unfaithful Israel, or to put the nations themselves to the test in their turn. But hardly was it established when it became characterised by two Satanic principles—*the exaltation of man* and *the idolatrous exaltation of the State*. Pretensions to a general domination have had, ever since, these two principles at their base. In Nebuchadnezzar, in Darius, in Alexander, the exaltation of *self* (Dan. iv. 30 ; vi. 7) ; then the setting up of the golden statue—image of the empire—which had to be worshipped (Dan. iii.). The fourth, the Roman Empire, has in the past shown out the same principles. It will be the same when it is revived, through Satan's instigation, under the form of the Latin confederation. Its *spiritual* head will cause himself to be worshipped as God (2 Thess. ii. 4), and an enforced worship will also be rendered to the Empire, represented by the "image of the beast" (Rev. xiii. 14-15).

The same principles, alas, are coming to light to-day, through the mouths of the philosophers and political and military leaders of Germany: *The exaltation of the individual—the lofty title of "Super-man" as a quality belonging to the race—and the exaltation of the State, as an abstract being, possessing power to which homage and obedience must be rendered without reserve. Never, perhaps, in modern times have these principles, founded on individual and national pride, been expressed so boldly as a doctrine.*

If, from what we have just advanced, we ought to conclude that Germany *will not be able to realise* her programme, we can in no way gather from the prophetic word what her future destiny will be. However, one thing would appear certain, namely, that the territories of the German Empire, which once formed part of the Roman Empire, will be detached from the main portion of the former, so that they may be restored to the Latin confederation. The rôle played by the portion which will remain independent of this parcelling out of the empire is

not revealed to us, and does not appear to come within the prophetic field, unless, indeed, it should join the Assyrian confederation.

With reference to Austria—it would seem that it will, in part, re-enter the Slavonic union, and, in part, be joined to one of the ten kingdoms of the Latin confederation; but as regards this, I would hasten to add, we have no very definite scripture teaching.

(iii) Finally, the “King of the South” is, without doubt, the Egyptian Power. When the final conflict takes place, this may be represented by England, and such would seem probable, if one may take as a starting-point the present political state of things, in order to account for prophetic events. But seeing that the entire order of things which exists at present will be overturned at the time of the end, the Christian is not, such being the case, justified in drawing a definite conclusion.

One thing is certain, namely, that we are to-day in presence of a cataclysm quite sufficient to modify all the relations of the nations to each other. This upheaval will doubtless issue at first in anarchy, then in the final apostacy, thus dispelling all men’s illusions as to a lasting peace, on which many have built their hopes.

Happy are those who have as their hope the near coming of their beloved Lord and Saviour!

* * *

The Editor quite agrees with H. B. that, without looking for signs of the approaching rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, the earthly ground is being rapidly taken for the closing conflicts. Even the newspapers ring with men’s projects, which, we know, will end in a revived empire of the West and a vast Eastern power (the Beast and Gog), both of which are destined to meet their judgment successively from the hand of the Lord, and that in the Holy Land. May our loins be girded and our lights burning!

Bible Treasury, June 1859.

Obedience and Dependence.

BLEST Saviour, we would fain retrace
Thy humble footsteps here ;
Learn of the love and lowly grace
To us in Thee brought near.

Descending from the glory bright,
Where Thou didst ever dwell,
In servant's form, 'twas Thy delight
To do the Father's will.

Jesus ! Thy name its fragrance sheds
O'er all our pathway here ;
While Thy rich grace before us spreads
Its blest, unfailing cheer.

Thy rich provision from on high—
Heaven's manna all the way—
In free and plentiful supply
Sustains from day to day.

And e'en though sorrow's paths we tread,
Thou, Saviour, changest not ;
We follow where Thy steps have led,
Home to the rest of God.

'Tis this gives confidence indeed ;
Thy fulness, our supply ;
Thy grace will meet our every need,
Since we on Thee rely.

Then teach us, Saviour, thus to be
Obedient to Thy word :
To take Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,
For this will rest afford.

* * *

The Lord's Coming—Its Practical Effect.

THE blessed truth of the Lord's coming is not only a real joy and cheer to the Christian's heart amidst the difficulties and trials of the way, but it has also a most practical bearing upon his life and conduct in many ways.

For example, if we were found living and walking as those "waiting for God's Son from heaven," how it would affect us in our daily work, in our business, in our service for Him, etc.! If His people were passing through the world "like unto men that wait for their lord," ready to open the door to Him "immediately," what a testimony it would be!

Nothing tells like the truth carried out in practice. And, let us note it well, so much mere knowledge held in the intellect will never produce these results; it can only be in so far as Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

Indeed, we may safely say that if this "blessed hope" were fresh, living, and powerful in our hearts, it would quicken our christian activities, it would lead us out in earnest desire for the salvation of sinners, it would animate our souls with the desire that His people should be found walking with undefiled garments and suited to the One who is coming.

Again, it would enlarge our hearts towards *all* His people. It would give breadth to our desires and prayers for the whole Church of God, and lead us daily to seek grace from Him, so that at least some of the sad divisions which separate the scattered sheep of Christ might be healed.

May this "blessed hope" be revived in living power in the hearts of all His people!

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

HUMILITY.—If we are not humble, we must be humbled.

* * * * *

Evangelisation.—I believe that in all times blessing within is in the measure of evangelisation. The reason is very simple. It is the presence of God which blesses, and God is love, and it is love which makes one seek souls. But God loves souls, and if we do not seek them, He will set His testimony elsewhere. He loves us, I believe, but He has no need of us. May He give us only to be faithful to Him, and He will certainly bless us.

* * * * *

Beholding the Glory of the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 18).—The glory of the face of Jesus, a man on high, is the proof that all the sins of those who behold it are blotted out; for He who is there bore them all before He ascended, and He needed to put them all away in order to enter into that glory. We contemplate that glory by the Spirit, who has been given us in virtue of Christ having ascended into it.

He did not say, as Moses, “I will go up; peradventure I shall make atonement.” He made the atonement and went up. Therefore we gaze upon His face with joy, we love to behold it. Each ray that we see is the proof that in the eyes of God our sins are no more. Christ has been made sin for us; He is in the glory. Now, in thus beholding the glory with affection, with intelligence, taking delight in it, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the power of the Holy Ghost, who enables us to realise and enjoy these things; and in this is Christian progress.

Four Golden Links.

THE Psalms, in addition to their prophetic and dispensational value, contain much profitable food for God's people in every period. Not the least interesting is the way the house of *Israel*, the house of *Aaron*, and, *them that fear the Lord*, are jointly addressed in them. There are at least four instances of this.

I. In Psalm cxv. 9-11 we read the following:—

“ O *Israel*, trust thou in the Lord . . .
 O house of *Aaron*, trust in the Lord . . .
 Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord,”

and adding each time, “He is their help and their shield.”

The application of all this to us to-day comes in with the third company. Because He is our help and shield we are exhorted to *trust* in Him. How deeply necessary this word is, especially just now, none can fully tell. The sailor and soldier, tired and weary, and perhaps wounded in battle, need “help”; they need a “shield” to protect them from shot and shell. The aching hearts of parents and relatives at home sadly need “help” and comfort. The sorrowing widows and children of fallen fathers need a “shield” wherewith to face the unknown future. Here is ointment for all their wounds—“Trust in the Lord . . . He is their help and shield.”

Our first parents, through not confiding in God's word, lost their blessing. We get ours by reversing the process—by trusting Him in sunshine and in shower.

II. Lower down in this same Psalm (vers. 12, 13) we get:—

“ He will bless the house of *Israel*,
 He will bless the house of *Aaron*,
 He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small
 and great.”

Here is an answer in blessing to the trusting named above. No sinner ever trusted Him without getting peace and salvation; and no saint truly confided his case to Him but found rest and relief, and power to say, “The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will *bless* us” (see ver. 12). The R.V. and N.T. strikingly translate Psalm xxxvii. 3 as follows:—“Confide (or trust) in Jehovah . . . and feed on faithfulness.” So God’s faithfulness and care are active to sustain and bless us.

“ Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.”

III. In Psalm cxviii. 2-4 they are summoned to celebrate the “mercy,” or loving-kindness of the Lord.

“Let *Israel* now say, that His mercy endureth for ever,
 Let the house of *Aaron* now say, that His mercy
 endureth for ever,
 Let them now that *fear the Lord* say, that His mercy
 endureth for ever.”

The “house of Aaron” do this (1 Chron. xvi. 41), and the house of Israel (2 Chron. vii. 3), and nothing becomes us more to-day. Once as guilty, rebellious sinners we received the greatest mercy known on earth or in heaven—a frank and full pardon through the blood of Christ. As Christians we daily need mercy, and God exhorts us to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain this. We are bidden to look still onward, for that *crowning mercy*—the second coming of our Lord—“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 21).

“ His love in times past forbids us to think
 He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink.
 The Lamb in His glory is ever in view,
 The pledge and the proof He will help us quite through.”

So we can say, even more fully than the Psalmist, “ Our God is the God of salvation.” And while the nations say, “ Where is *now* their God ? ” (Ps. cxv. 2), shall we not reply, in spite of all the clouds and fears, that *His mercy* endureth, not merely *now*, but *for ever* ?

IV. Psalm cxxxv. 19-20, shows us the divine counterpart of all this, namely, worship and praise to God :—

“ Bless the Lord, O house of *Israel* :
 Bless the Lord, O house of *Aaron* :
 Bless the Lord, O house of *Levi* :
Ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.”

Here is a basket well filled ; a harp well tuned to *bless* and praise *the Blesser*. There is divine order and method in the very setting of these four things in the Psalms, and to mix them would make them void. They form *four golden links* which should never be severed. If we *trust* Him simply, He will surely *bless* us : give us to look up, rejoicing in His *mercy*, and send up as sweet incense, for his blessing come down, the glad response of our hearts, “ Bless the Lord.” Oh for hearts in these days to trust Him, take freely from Him, triumph in Him, and truly worship Him !

W. M. R.

The Prayer-Meeting.

THE meeting for prayer is, without doubt, one of the most important, and we might also say one of the most blessed meetings of any Christian assembly. There we can come to lay down our needs and petitions at the throne of the God of all grace, and

to get His peace instead of our cares (Phil. iv. 6-7). Alas, we know only too well that even the prayer meeting may become a formal thing, if there is not constant waiting upon the ministry of the Spirit for power and guidance.

What we want when we come together for prayer is simplicity, definiteness, earnestness; to remember that we are speaking *to God*, and not merely for the ears of others. Truly there is much to pray about, especially at the present time. We are passing through a world where sin and Satan's power are, and where everything is out of course—a groaning creation. Weak as we are, we might well say that, amidst it all, "*We know not* what we should pray for as we ought," but thank God we can add, "*We know* that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Do we, then, when we come together for prayer, lay ourselves out to think of the interests of Christ in their breadth and fulness, and the needs of His people, as well as the needs of this poor perishing world? Is it not often the case that we fail to wait on God for guidance in prayer, and, as a result, we run in a groove, too much narrowed up to our own wants and difficulties? What blessed times we should have in prayer if saints always came together with simple and earnest desire to pour out their hearts before God, just asking Him for those things which He would lead them to remember! "Prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" is indeed a very blessed reality.

Then again, how encouraging it is to know that the Father's ear is ever ready to hear every petition which goes up to Him. And the Lord Jesus, just before He left this world, gave to His own the assurance that they would have all the value and efficacy of His name to plead before the Father in prayer. Twice over He

says so:—"Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you," and "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He will give it you." Again, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do"(John xiv. 13; xv. 16; xvi. 23).

Mr Spurgeon once said that some people's prayers are like runaway knocks, never expecting to be answered. Let us not forget the "watching" in prayer, but let us count on God to hear and answer, and *expect that He will do so*. The word says, "Watch unto prayer," and, "Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (1 Pet. iv. 7; Eph. vi. 18). When we leave a prayer-meeting let us not forget what we have asked for, but bear it still upon our hearts before God in the spirit of prayer and supplication.

Then there is that word in connection with prayer to which we do well to give heed—"perseverance." How often we find encouragement to this in Scripture! It is as though our gracious God said to us, "Come to My throne of grace at all times, go on and persevere; trust Me, no matter what the apparent delay in the answer may be." Daniel had to wait three weeks, and we know the reason why (Dan. x. 13). Paul asked three times, and he did not get the answer in the way *he* wished, but he got the comforting word, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Anna besieged the throne of God night and day, and she got a blessed answer in the end.

If our souls were thus filled with the sense of the reality of God's presence and confidence in Him, we should not have long, wearisome, and pointless prayers, or repetitions of known truth or doctrine before Him. Oh, no! We live in a real world, where the needs are definite, urgent, and pressing, if we have the heart and

earnestness to take them up in prayer before God, as it is our happy privilege to do.

Moreover, we have the word of the Lord Himself for united prayer, even if it be only two or three. It is in connection with this He says, "It shall be done for them by My Father which is in heaven," and He promises His own presence to the two or three gathered to His name (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). Blessed and precious provision for His people, whatever the character of the day in which their lot is cast!

One word more, and that is as to our *attitude* in the prayer-meeting. Alas, is there not sometimes a great lack in this respect, bordering almost on irreverence? We find our blessed Lord Himself and the apostles and early Christians *kneeling down* in prayer (Luke xxii. 41; Acts ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5). And surely we ought to do the same, unless in the case of those who are prevented by physical weakness.

F. G. B.

THY Spirit's power and grace supply!
 On Thee alone our souls rely:
 So shall our prayers and praises rise
 As clouds of incense to the skies.

Our God, our Father, wisdom give,
 That we may to Thy glory live!
 Walk as the children of the day,
 And all the light of life display!

Soon shall we meet on earth no more,
 Our service and our conflicts o'er;
 Soon shall we meet in heaven above,
 And still adore and bless Thy love.

J. G. D.

God's Governmental Ways.

(See page 152.)

AS already remarked, the second part of Genesis, giving the account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as "strangers and pilgrims" in the land of Canaan—thus anticipating its future possession by the Israelites, according to the purpose of God—opens with chapter xii.

It will be noticed that the previous chapter, xi., closes without any mention of Abraham's *call*, referring only to what Terah did, when his son, as it were, handed it over to his father: that is to say, that Terah, in undertaking naturally the leadership on account of his age, went as far as he thought proper to go, *i.e.*, about half way, and settled there, where he died. Abraham was helpless until that death took place, and, as far as he himself was concerned, it was all lost time, unregistered in God's book. His practical answer to the *call* only *began* after his father's death in Haran. And here we find the admirable correspondence with the second paragraph of Hebrews xi., which opens with, "By faith Abraham, when he was called . . . obeyed."

The *terms* of the call were to leave country, kindred, and *father's house** to go into a land which he had never seen. He accepted the two first, but demurred as to the third, reasoning, as we are all inclined to do, on the temporal enjoyment of family relationships, and comforting himself with the advantages which must surely

* It is very instructive to observe that the two sides of the *call* of Abraham are reproduced in Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the call of the first four of the Lord's disciples. In each case there were "two brethren." The first two, Simon and Andrew, left their *nets*; the other two left their *father* in the ship. The wrench was greater in their case.

accrue to his father if he consented to lead the expedition. He lost sight of the fact that, by so doing, his personal responsibility was merged in family considerations, and God's call was inoperative in his soul.

There is no saying what might have happened had not God come in providentially, and removed Terah at an advanced age. Abraham was then cast upon his own resources, and his faith came into exercise. Human reasoning is one of our great hindrances in the way of following the Lord's call in simplicity. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the *word* of God" (Rom. x. 17).

The *call* itself was governmental, an individual experience, as indeed for each one of us. But if considered morally, as figurative of God's ways in grace, it is the result of divine "predestination," as in Romans viii. 30. That is not, however, our present subject.

Two things strike us here. First, that Abraham's age is given in God's register, *not* when he left Ur of the Chaldees, but "when he departed out of Haran" in definite subjection to God's leading (xii. 4). But, secondly, we do not find that the Lord "appeared" to him until he got into the plain of Moreh, in the *land* which God had marked out for him (xii. 7). Here, he received from God a definite confirmation of the call: "Unto thy *seed* I will give *this* land." A *future* hope, in which he could not personally participate, was thus opened up to him; but his faith in God was sealed and confirmed, and "he builded an altar unto the Lord who had appeared to him."

All this is full of instruction for us as to God's ways in grace, and the progress of a saved soul. God is patient, and has mercy upon our weakness; but His *word* must be made good in our souls, so that "we walk by *faith*, and not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7). It often takes us a long time to learn this first elementary lesson.

In Abraham's case another matter remained to be settled, calling for further governmental dealing: what had happened during the stay in the rich country of Haran? The time spent there was considerable, and Abraham had become wealthy; his substance had increased, both in persons and in cattle; and that was also the case with his nephew, Lot (xii. 5; xiii. 2, 5, 6). God sent a *famine*, which, under the circumstances, obliged them to leave the land of Canaan, and go down into Egypt, where the resources of the river Nile rendered them practically independent of the rain from heaven. This led to further trouble, as we know, and Abraham had to return humbled to the place where he had built his first altar (xiii. 4). Finally, he had to separate from Lot, which reduced him to the terms of his first *call*.

Is not that an illustration of what constantly happens, so that we have, as it were, after humbling experiences, to recommence our spiritual course in God's appointed way?

In Abraham's case, however, the experience turned to real blessing of life-long value, namely, not to trust in himself, especially when it was a question of a *choice* to be made. Lot, who was with him, missed that lesson; for shortly afterwards, trusting to his own understanding, he made choice of the plains of Sodom; and there, after a first terrible experience from which he was delivered by his uncle, he actually found a place of authority in the wicked city, where eventually he lost everything he had. He lost his character, too, for the men of the place had no respect for him (xix. 9).

Space forbids our entering into many details of the deepest interest to us, which the careful reader of the divine record can discover for himself. Let it suffice to note a most cheering principle in God's ways of grace

and mercy, namely, that *after* each definite act or step in the path of faith, God appears to his servant to give him a divine confirmation of the lesson learned.

In xiii. 14, when Abraham gave up the *choice of abode* to Lot, the Lord appeared to him to ensure his final possession of the *whole* land, adding that his seed should be in number as "*the dust of the earth.*"

In xv. 1, having already, by his interview with Melchizadek, been saved from any link with Sodom after his victory over the four kings and their armies, He gave him, as a divine revelation, the secret of the success he had had, namely, "I am thy *shield* and thy exceeding great *reward.*" The promise of a son followed, and his seed was to be as "*the stars of heaven.*"

In xvii. 1, a year before Isaac's birth, as a rebuke to his own and to Sarah's want of faith, the Lord gave him the revelation of *His name* as the "ALMIGHTY," which characterises the whole book of Genesis thenceforward, and is the basis of faith for all time. (See Mark ix. 23; x. 27; xi. 22.)

In xviii. 1, after his faithfulness in accepting the circumcision of his household, God gave him the opportunity of interceding for Sodom on account of his nephew, Lot, who was there.

Finally, we find the great trial of his life, when God asked him to give up Isaac, in order to bring his soul, as it were, into the inner chamber of communion with Himself, as to the promised "SEED" who was to come, and in whom all the nations of the earth were to be finally blessed (xxii. 18). Then we find that the "seed" gathered from this earth was to be not only as "the stars of heaven," but also as "the sand that is upon the sea-shore," representing the Gentile nations.

We find this expressed in the history of Abraham, "the father of the faithful," the *three* families spoken of

by the apostle in 1 Corinthians x. 32, "The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God," the latter being *heavenly* in principle and in character. Compare Daniel xii. 3, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the *stars* for ever and ever."

It was certainly to this last episode in Abraham's life—his binding of Isaac on the altar, and taking the knife to slay him—to which the Lord alluded when He said to the opposing Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56).

We cannot now pursue the history further, except to notice two successive famines besides the one already spoken of in Abraham's case. The second one took place in Isaac's time, about a hundred and ten years after the first (xxvi. 1, 2). Isaac did not seek to go into Egypt, as his father had done, but turned to the land of the Philistines, which was less affected by it. The Lord at once appeared to him to confirm him in his thought and action, and also to reiterate the promise of the SEED given to Abraham, at the time when the ram was substituted for himself on the altar of burnt offering. Isaac, in fact, never left the land of promise though in his later years for half a century he was afflicted with blindness.

The third famine took place a hundred years later still, when Joseph was in Egypt, and his father Jacob was constrained to give up the land altogether. The touching account of the wrench it caused him, to separate himself definitely from the land of promise, and God's gracious answer to him, are given in chapter xlvi. 1-4. Jacob's life, perhaps more than any other, is marked by God's providential care. His place is found

with that of his father and his grandfather as an "heir of promise."

Here the second paragraph of Hebrews xi. ends with verse 16, and a fresh one is opened, having for its subject the *trial* of faith. The whole of Joseph's life forms a part of the closing section of Genesis, under the general heading of "The generations of Jacob," in chapter xxxvii. 2. It is of thrilling typical interest, on account of the constant references to the Lord Himself during His life on earth.

W. J. L.

Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation?—I.

AS to the rapture of the Church, the true question is, in the first place, What is the Church?

Many do not know what it is, and for them to reason on its being taken up to meet the Lord is fruitless and unintelligent. The same is true as regards the ruin of the Church. I have found good brothers who understand nothing about it. As soon as one understands what the Church is, there is no longer any difficulty.

The Church, viewed as the body of Christ, united to the Head in heaven, and formed in unity by the Holy Ghost who unites it to Christ, is no more of this world than is Christ Himself, at the Father's right hand. The rapture of the Church only sets it, actually and materially, in the place to which it already belongs. It is impossible that it should be found amidst the judgments, because it is united to Christ in such a way that it will itself judge angels.

When Christ appears (and He will not judge before that), the Church will appear with Him in glory . . .

He will judge the world; and the Church is not of the world, as He was not of it. Her interests, her place, her lot, are absolutely those of Christ. Can He, Himself, be the object of His own judgments?—You see how the scriptural idea of the Church settles the whole question.

It is, perhaps, a more difficult question to solve, whether the Church passes through the tribulations which precede the judgments of the Lord Jesus. Now here one must distinguish between the Church and every other body.

How do I know that there will be this time to pass through? Let us examine the passages of the Word. There is a danger lest we should read the events, not according to what the Word says, but according to what fills our thoughts about ourselves, and so we sometimes desire to apply them all to ourselves. This is, in fact, a kind of refined selfishness.

Take, for example, the psalms. What is the deliverance desired by the faithful and granted to them? It is a deliverance which takes place consequent upon the destruction of their enemies and those who oppress them. They wash their feet in the blood of the ungodly. Now we know that this does not apply to the Church; because when her deliverance takes place, that will be brought about by quite different means. She is caught up from the midst of the ungodly, and they are destroyed later on. What is said in the psalms and the prophets has no relation to the Church. The form of her deliverance is quite otherwise.

This also shows plainly that there is another body of faithful ones besides the Church who must be delivered; and this is an important element in our inquiry. We have, then, two points made clear by the teaching of Scripture—the Church will be taken up *before* the

judgments, and there will be another body of faithful ones who will pass through the tribulation, and who will be delivered by another means than that which will remove the Church from the midst of the evil.

Now, according to Matthew xxiv., it is clear that the latter applies to a Jewish body, to Jerusalem, which has not the hopes belonging to the Church; for its place is to await the Lord here below for its deliverance. "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not," etc.; this has nothing to do with me, for if He is there "in the desert," etc., I shall have already been caught up to meet Him in the air. There are also many other proofs in this passage.

Now I know that this other body of faithful ones is specially the object of the thoughts of Jesus, when He brings before us the circumstances of the "great tribulation." It is, indeed, difficult to believe that the Church and another body of the faithful, recognised and warned, should be on the earth at the same moment; but that is only a deduction.

Now, if I take the Church at Philadelphia, to which the Lord said that He was coming quickly, I find there a promise to the faithful who had kept the word of His patience—the patience with which He Himself waits for the kingdom—that they would be kept from * the hour of trial which was about to come on the whole world, to try them which dwell on the earth (Rev. iii.).

* Not "through" it, but "from" it,—so kept *from* it, that they are not called to pass through it at all.—ED.

(From the French.)

J. N. D.

Words of Comfort and Consolation.

WE are now approaching the close of another year—a year which has brought sadness to many a heart and many a home. A terrible War still devastates a large part of Europe, and thousands have lost those dear to them. Many families, too, have suffered much owing to the effect of compulsory military service. Let us remember all such in prayer, that the “God of all comfort and consolation” may sustain their souls and guide their path in these times of trial and sorrow.

Let us turn to God’s Word and read in Psalm xviii. 30, “As for God, His way is perfect.” We may not be able to see *how* this is, but faith knows that *so it is*. Again, in Psalm xxvii. 11, “Teach me Thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path.” His way is surely always the best, no matter how inscrutable it may appear at the time.

Then again the Psalmist says, “Thy way is in the sea” (Ps. lxxvii.). This is the unsettled, turbulent state of things, which seems to us so out of course; but, thank God, he can also say, “Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.” *There*, in His presence, all that is of the flesh and of man—that which so often beclouds our vision—is silenced, only *God* is heard, and *His* will and wisdom are paramount. In His presence alone is the place to learn His mind, and to find the comfort of His word, apart from the strife of tongues and the heavings and tossings of men’s opinions.

And how sweet and encouraging are His words to us in this time of trouble, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Ps. l. 15). May we ponder it deeply for our soul’s profit and consolation!

Yes, so it is for us now as well as for the psalmist; faith can glorify Him in spite of the trials of the way, and we shall glorify Him for ever. "The LORD will give grace and glory" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11); "grace" for the present need, "glory" for the future. And thus, amidst the dark clouds and shadows of this present time, it is our privilege to look on with joyful anticipation to the moment when we shall be with Christ, in the joy and rest of His presence, and to sing—

"His face in radiant glory,
 With rapture we will see;
 His wounds will tell a story,
 To swell the jubilee!
 The subjects of salvation
 Will praise Him ever there;
 While all the new creation
 God's endless rest will share."

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

MAN'S Ruin and God's Grace.—If the gospel be the revelation of God's Grace in Christ, it supposes the utter ruin and good-for-nothingness of man. Doubtless it is humbling, but this is wholesome and needed. No sinner can be too much humbled, no saint too humble; but no humiliation should weaken for a moment our sense of the perfect grace of God.

"**Buy the Truth and Sell it Not.**"—No price is too great for its purchase; no gain sufficient to repay its loss. This is no direction for this world's marketing; but it tells us plainly why so few *obtain* what so many profess to *seek*. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath *no heart* for it?" Albeit the fool of Scripture is this world's wise man.

To him, then, who would advance in the knowledge of the truth, Paul's direction to Timothy must not

stand in the letter only: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." And he adds, "Take heed unto *thyself* and unto the doctrine: continue in them," etc.

"**The Keys of Death and Hades.**"—"I am the first and the last, and the living One: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades" (Rev. i. 18, new trans.).

The Lord Jesus, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, yet truly and really man, went into death in divine love, as His own voluntary act. He "became dead," and now He lives for evermore as the Victor over death and hades. Having the "keys" means power or authority. And so not one of His saints can pass into the domain of death or enter hades (the unseen world) without His permission; and when He so wills it, they will come forth in the full power of resurrection-life.

God Himself our Resource.

"For though the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet will I rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And will make me to walk upon mine high places."
(Hab. iii. 17-19, R.V.)

SHOULD not this be the experience of our souls in the present day? It is a day of spiritual want and famine; of extreme weakness in christian testimony; of profession without life, and without vital relation with God—but, *as for me*, adds the

prophet—the just one, who lives by his faith, has laid hold of the promise as a present reality.

But it is not in the *rest* or the *salvation* to which he is still looking forward that he rejoices. He has a joy much more excellent than that; he possesses *Jehovah Himself*, the God of his salvation. This God who never hides anything from him, who treats him as a friend, and who reveals to him even his most intimate thoughts; on whose compassion he can count when all else fails—this God, whose blessings are eternal, his Lord—*this is the One* in whom he can rejoice and will rejoice for ever. “We will be glad and rejoice in Thee,” says the Shulamite, “we will remember Thy love more than wine” (Canticles i. 4). It is thus that God “giveth songs in the night” (Job xxxv. 10). The prophet is henceforth in full *communion* with the Lord. He had understood from the beginning that “The LORD, his God and his Holy One,” is *light*, and that His eyes are “too pure to behold evil”; but now he can rejoice *in Him*—he tastes the perfections of His person and understands His *love*, the love of “the God of his salvation.”

But the LORD is not only his *joy*; He is also his *strength*, when he, the prophet, has no strength. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee”! (Ps. lxxxiv. 5). Blessed be His name that, in a time of extreme weakness, at a time when none of the promises have as yet been realised, our feet are made like hinds’ feet. We can walk upon our high places, and traverse them with a free, happy, and light step. The “heavenly places” belong to us, they are *ours*, the very portion which God has given us. What does *want* matter to those who possess the Lord, His strength and His joy, and to those who enjoy “all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ?”

At the close, the prophet realises beforehand the future praise of Israel in the restored temple.

And we, beloved—have we not the same privilege? Even the certainty of the complete nothingness of earthly things drives us to the Lord, and, when we taste the unsearchable riches of Christ, one thought alone possesses our whole being—to cast ourselves at His feet and worship Him. The worship of the children of God may thus be realised anew, even amidst the ruins of Christendom.

In conclusion, we would quote the words of another: “There is nothing finer than this development of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the sorrows and anxieties produced by Him, the answer of God to give understanding and strengthen faith, in order that the heart may be in full communion with Himself.” H. R.

God’s Governmental Ways.

(See page 174.)

HAVING referred last month to the *trial* of faith, which occupies the third section of Hebrews xi., from verses 17-23, we will only add here that in each case mentioned the test came to those who were advanced in years; indeed, for Jacob and Joseph, it was quite at the *end* of their earthly course, though its relation to the preceding history, in these two cases, differed considerably.*

* It is regrettable that our Authorised Version does not show this. In Jacob’s case it was a contradiction, or a rectification, of what his life had been, and the word “dying” has its full force; whereas, for Joseph, it was a fitting *termination* of a course of separation from his brethren (see Deut. xxxiii. 16), but wonderfully owned and blessed of God. For, by his last commands, he showed that *he* had no intention of being separated from them, and in principle would not be so, even when his days were finished. The original expresses this by the word “finishing,” or “ending,”

To sum up what precedes, we may then say as to this wonderful chapter that the first section, verses 1-7, gives general principles: creation, death and resurrection, eternal life, *seeking* after God (a strong word, used also in Rom. iii. 11), and finally, the introduction into a new world through the waters of death, of which baptism is a "figure" (1 Pet. iii. 20-22).

In the next section, verses 8-16, we find that faith, acting upon the *call* of God, and in response thereto, produces "desire" (ver. 16), which only God can satisfy, according to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus; so that in result the believer becomes truly a "stranger and pilgrim" on this earth. This gives tone and character to the Christian's walk (1 Pet. ii. 11; see Ps. cxix. 17-19).

Do we think of this as we ought? One great object of governmental dealing is to produce that earnest and sanctifying *desire*, which is encouraged and strengthened by the *reward* in view, reserved for the end of our pilgrimage in this world,—God not being ashamed to be called the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." As such He revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Exodus iii. 6, 15, 16; iv. 5). The account of it produced worship in the hearts of those who heard it (Exod. iv. 31).

And should it not produce worship in our hearts too, enabling us to "walk worthy of the *vocation* wherewith we have been called" (Eph. iv. 1)? Two

sometimes used for "dying" in that sense. We may note also that in each example given in the chapter, a name is only once mentioned, except when a fresh subject is treated of, in a section apart. Verse 23 refers, of course, to Moses' parents. They put the child in the flags by the very river into which the *king* of Egypt had ordered every male child to be thrown; and it was the *king's* daughter that took him out! Such are God's ways of grace in government.

(Continued on page 183.)

things characterise the corresponding walk, as we find in the following chapter, verses 2 and 8: **love** and **light**. Each term expresses the very nature of God. John insists upon it in his epistle (i. 5, and iv. 8, 16). The measure of the *love* is "as Christ hath loved us, and given Himself for us" (see John xv. 9, 13; xiii. 34); and the *light* was practically manifested in His person here on earth (John i. 5, etc.; xii. 36 *); so we are called to "walk even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6).

Again, let us notice how **hope** was maintained and brightened in the hearts of the patriarchs by the very condition of strangership in which they were providentially kept. God's ways with them, especially in Jacob's case, bore witness to His faithful care, in spite of the impatience which resulted in that "heir of promise" having to leave the land and his father's house for twenty years, and afterwards reaping the bitter fruits which that absence entailed. For all his sons except Benjamin were born outside it, and had no heart-interest in it at all. Joseph, who really loved and served his father, was sold by his brethren into Egypt.

Notwithstanding all this, hope was rekindled in Jacob's heart at last. It is seen by the way in which he blessed his children, and more particularly in his charge to Joseph to bury him "with his fathers" in the cave in Machpelah (Gen. xlvii. 30; l. 5, 13). That final burial sealed, as it were, according to God's purpose the title of Abraham's descendants to possess the land of Canaan.

* It is noticeable that in *this* passage, the blessed Lord uses the word "sons," in speaking of Christians, which, as a rule in John's writings, is never found as expressing present relationship with God in *their* case, but always "children." Compare Hebrews xii. 7-8 (see R. V.).

The importance of *hope* as a main factor in the Christian's practical life and walk must not be overlooked. "We are saved by hope," says the apostle, and the "patience" which accompanies it, worked out by the "tribulations" allowed of God in His governmental dealings, produces the "experience" which should result from our wilderness journey through this world, the God of hope causing us to abound in it, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. v. 3-5; viii. 24-30; xv. 13).

In this respect the whole of Jacob's history is of great service to us, partly as a *warning* by showing the result of endeavouring to forestall God's purposes by plans of our own; and again, as an *encouragement*, on account of God's faithful care, which triumphed at the end, when he leaned on the top of the staff,—his inseparable companion since meeting the angel at Peniel (Genesis xxxii., 24-32; Hebrews xi. 21). We have to "press toward the mark" for the *prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," walking "worthy of the Lord," and "worthy of the gospel" (Mark viii. 35; Phil., i. 27; iii. 14; Coloss. i. 10); "worthy of God who has called us to His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 11-12). In these things the "hope" is ever prominent, the "hope of glory," as preached and presented in the "gospel" (Coloss. i. 5, 23-27). May we all take it to heart!

We are thus led on to the fourth section of Hebrews xi., which unfolds one great object of God's gracious dealings in government, namely, the making of a **choice** deliberately and definitely, when the opportunity is given. This we find with Moses in verse 24, and the account closes with Rahab, who, at the risk of her own life, threw in her lot with the spies, because she had heard of God's ways with His people in maintaining them for forty years in the wilderness.

How little Moses, at the time he made his choice, thought of what it involved! But he had to learn, as we all have, that our personal position or advantages are of small account in God's ways. He may please to use them, or He may not. God had purposes of which Moses knew nothing, and an apprenticeship of forty years in the wilderness of Sinai, keeping sheep, was needed to fit him to be the leader of some two millions of people for a similar length of time on their way to the promised land. It is noticeable that all this is omitted in Hebrews xi., between the passing of the Red Sea (and the Jordan) to the moment when the walls of Jericho fell down. Moses' faith, in its outward effect, began with renunciation of those things which the world seeks after, and then, when called to do so, acting in simple obedience to God's order. God's glory is thus maintained, and the soul is blessed.

Let us not forget that "the recompense of the reward" is associated with "the reproach of Christ." Does not this show the importance of the gospel narrative for forming and maturing the faith of the believer in his path through this world? We have to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Himself. In a true choice made, God's glory is maintained, and His work in giving effect to it is shown and felt by all. What a wonderful experience Rahab must have had consequently on the fall of the walls of Jericho, where her house was, and which evidently remained as a monument of God's grace and power in the midst of the ruins!

The closing section of the chapter, from verse 32, is a wonderful summary of God's gracious care of those who belong to Him, however long they may have to wait for the full enjoyment of the things promised,—which is the meaning of verse 39. All believers will finally be made perfect together at Christ's coming;

and those who suffer in the final judgments that follow will be raised and changed *before* His kingdom is set up on earth with Jerusalem for its centre (Zech. xiv. 8-11, 16; Rev. xx. 4). Here God's governmental ordering is seen again.

In conclusion, may we be kept mindful of His fatherly care and discipline, set forth in Hebrews xii., so that we may "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

W. J. L.

Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation?—II.

IF I take the parable of the tares in Matthew xiii., I find that the good grain is gathered into the granary at the end of the age—an age which was running its course at the moment when Jesus was there. This, however, does not carry us farther than to prove that the Church does not pass through the judgments.

Again, if I take 2 Thessalonians ii., it directs my thoughts towards the rapture of the Church as towards something well known, which was the proof that the "day of the Lord" had not yet come. The reunion of the Christians with Christ makes it impossible that the day of the Lord could have come whilst they are on earth. In the first chapter of that epistle the Spirit of God presents the rapture as the time of the repose of the Church, when it will be relieved from the present troubles; and that cannot be if the great tribulation—the tribulation *par excellence*—still awaited them.

In Revelation xii. I find a system of events arranged

according to these same principles. One part is caught up *before*; another remains *during* the persecution. What are the two parts? Now in reading what is said there, I have no doubt whatever that the "woman" represents the Jews, and the male child Christ, and the Church as being identified with Him. For, who is it who shall rule the nations with an iron rod (ver. 5)? It is Christ certainly; and the Church is united with Him in this rule, as we see in the promise to the overcomer at Thyatira (Rev. ii. 27). But, in following out this chapter xii., I find that at the *beginning* of the 1260 days, during which the woman is persecuted, the song of triumph of the inhabitants of heaven is celebrated; and it is said concerning the brethren of those who are in heaven, "They *overcame* him," etc. This would be very singular if it meant that it was at the *beginning* of the combats from which the elect (and we have already seen that "the elect" refers to others than the Church) would with difficulty escape.

To anyone who clearly grasps the relationship between Christ and the Church (His heavenly co-heirs); and the faithful who are left on the earth, this chapter has all its true force. We have already seen that in this book of Revelation, which presents to us "the woman," those who represent the Church are viewed as *on high* from the beginning of chapter iv., whilst there is also a second category of saints viewed as *on earth*.

Finally, another confirmation of the same is, that the last half-week of Daniel ix., which is still to come on the earth, relates to an earthly people, namely, to the Jews. The marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix.) is to take place before the "Lord of lords and King of kings" descends, and those that are with Him are "called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. xvii. 14). . . .

(From the French.)

J. N. D.

God Known as Father.

“I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”

AMIDST the sorrows, tears, and woe
Which Jesus passed through here below,
'Twas e'er His soul's delight to prove
The fulness of the *Father's* love.

“Father”!—'twas Jesu's lips declared,
All that in richest grace He shared
With those He loved to call “His own,”
The portion of the First-born Son.

“Father”!—how precious to the child!
Once far from God, by sin defiled;
Now, in the sunshine of His face,
To learn how rich, how great His grace!

And, *Father*, to Thy throne on high
In Jesu's name we can draw nigh,—
Sweet privilege to come in prayer,
Assured we have our *Father's* ear.

Our *Father*, too,—we worship Thee,
As those now by the *Son* set free;
To Thee our censers here we raise
In joyful songs of thanks and praise.

And when in glory bright we see
The Lamb, once slain upon the tree,
We shall behold in *His* blest face
The perfect reflex of *Thy* grace.

There, too, the *Father's* love can rest,
For all is *there* supremely blest, . . .
Our sweet employ through endless days,
The *Father* and the *Son* to praise!

* * *