

Faith, Hope, and Love.

1 Thessalonians i. 3.

WHEN writing to the young converts at Thessalonica, the apostle Paul could speak of their “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” The divine life expressed itself in its early freshness in that Church, though they suffered much in the way of persecution and tribulation.

Their work for the Lord was a work energized by faith, their labour had its spring in love, and their patience was a patience of hope in Christ Himself, who was its object.

These blessed characteristics of the divine life are surely as much needed to-day as they were then. We live in times of trial to many, of sifting and testing, of weakness and declension in the assemblies of God’s people.

But Christ and the truth remain the same, and faith can always count on Him for the needed grace. It has been truly said that, “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, 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.”

At Thessalonica, not only was their work energized by faith, but their labour for the Lord had its spring in that love which burned so brightly in the heart of Paul

himself, and in which these believers had been taught of God. It was no matter of routine or form ; into which we are so prone to slip unless Christ is kept livingly before the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Then there was the “enduring constancy of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ” (new trans.). This hope it was which cheered their hearts in times of “much affliction” and enabled them to persevere and even to rejoice with joy of the Holy Ghost. And is this blessed hope, which pervades the whole epistle, any less powerful for us than it was for them ? It should not be so ; for the coming of the Lord Himself—the climax of all hope—is nearer. Indeed everything seems to show that it is now close at hand.

Should we be permitted to enter another year, may it be one in which these three Christian virtues will have a deep place in our hearts, and a practical effect on our life and service for the Lord !

F. G. B.

The Way.

EVERYONE whose heart and conscience are exercised aright as in the presence of God, will admit that the first principle of life, in a practical sense, is *dependence* upon God. Thus felt the prophet Jeremiah, when he said to the Lord, “I know that the way of man is *not* in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (chap. x. 23). There can be no true start in practical life, so as to please God, unless that principle is unreservedly held and acted upon. One of the early lessons in the book of Proverbs is, “Ponder the *path* of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (chap. iv. 26).

As to this, we may remark that the number FIVE is

very characteristic of the Book of Proverbs ; and the above passage is no exception to the rule. Heart, mouth, eyes, feet, and hand are here brought together in a striking way. It is no wonder that the *heart* should be the first member spoken of, since it is from thence that proceed the issues of life. This word "issues" no doubt includes every manifestation of it, whatever its individual character may be. Thoughts, hopes, fears, conclusions drawn, determinations formed, are all found in the heart ; and the mouth is the organ by which these things are passed on to others, in order that their effect may have more extended scope for display.

Then come the searching questions as to the character of life, which can be seen and observed by others. Is it such that God may be glorified in and by it ? The mouth cannot, in this respect, fulfil its duty, unless eyes, feet, and hands are carrying out their divinely-ordered purpose and intention, that is, being so kept from vanity, as to be used for the blessing of others. And this will vary according to our surroundings in this world, in their varied forms.

We read in Proverbs xvi. 9, that "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." That teaches us the principle of *dependence* in every detail of life, and shows where we have to look for guidance and direction. But David, in Psalm xxxvii. 23, goes further, when he says that "The steps of a good man *are ordered* by the Lord." This is indeed a blessed assurance, and reminds us of where we have to look for real divine intelligence as to the path in which we are called to walk. What a blessing it is indeed to know that God, in His condescending grace, undertakes these details in our behalf !

*

Now a little quiet reflection, in the Lord's presence, will surely lead us to the conclusion that the choosing of the *path* is not our business, but that, in His mercy, the Lord condescends to do this; and, consequently, we have simply to accept what He has ordered for us. He may see fit to keep us a long time waiting for the path to which He has already directed our minds, or He may lead us little by little into circumstances and responsibilities, of which we had never thought at all.

David's life is very interesting as an example of this; and as to detail, much is to be learned from the manner in which he had to wait for the important position of authority to be exercised by him, when he was only thirty years old. As to his intercourse with God, he had no equal. About ninety of the Psalms were written by him, and have since then been the joy and comfort of believers in every century.

He had of course his lessons to learn, as we all have; and his life affords warning as well as encouragement. He was not allowed to build the temple, though he designed it, and made great preparations for it. All these things have their importance, in teaching us many details of the government of God, as well as the importance of prayer which brings its blessing with it, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

But for the Christian, there is another, a deeper, and more blessed way of learning what God's way for him is. In the first place, he is brought into a known and divinely-appointed relationship with God, made good to him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. This is made clear by the Lord Himself in John xvi. 7: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I

will send Him unto you.” And He adds, in verse 13, “He, the Spirit of truth, will guide you into all truth . . . for whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

Could anything be more blessed and complete in the way of needed direction as to the path in which every Christian is called to walk ? The Lord Himself has condescended to mark it out. We have to follow in His footsteps, learning day by day as we ponder over His blessed humanity, what largeness of heart means, when associated with hourly dependence upon God—who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And that life is to be finally spent with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Blessed be His name for ever. W. J. L.

“Understandest Thou What Thou Readest ?”

Acts viii, 30.

IN one of the leading daily papers recently, a startling announcement was made : that there are less than two thousand intelligent readers of the Bible in the United Kingdom.

This was the outcome of an interview between the writer of the article and a Canon of the English Church ; in which, by an apparently fair process of reasoning, the number of those who read the Bible intelligently, out of the forty-five millions of inhabitants, was reduced by various tests to 1350. Leaving out the great number who never read it at all, and starting with “those who

hear small portions read to them on Sundays but pay little attention"; the Canon gradually brought down the number to the minimum stated above.

Now, whether we accept his mode of reasoning or not, we think the subject is well worth the serious consideration of all true Christians.

If, as we verily believe, the Bible contains the only revelation from God that this world possesses, it is surely a serious question, "How may I become an *intelligent* reader of this communication *from* God and revelation *of* God, so as to benefit for time and eternity, by that which is therein revealed?"

It has been well said that the only way to understand the Bible is to believe it, and it itself says, "The entrance of Thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." Wherein then lies the secret, that notwithstanding the immense circulation of the Scriptures, the number of those who understand it should be so small? If we take the reports of the "Bible Society," and the "Scripture Gift Mission," to mention only two of the well-known agencies for the circulation of the Scriptures, we find millions of copies are distributed every year, and that the event of the great war gave opportunity for millions of extra copies to be circulated in English and other languages.

Now what is the consequence of this? One thing is certain, it entails a grave responsibility on those who receive them. And how can all this sowing be expected to produce the fruit which we would expect? "The seed is the word of God," says the Divine Sower in Luke viii. 11, and He ends the parable with the ominous warning, "Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

The Canon particularized many classes of readers in his remarks, and gave it as his opinion that even theological colleges as well as other supposed helps, were at fault in their methods and aims; but there was one very striking omission in his calculations—he omitted all reference to the Holy Spirit, as the only infallible guide to the understanding of the Word of God.

Readers are necessarily divided into those that have, and those that have not, the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, “Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word” (John viii. 43). Here he raised no question as to their deafness or physical deficiency, but as to their *will* to hear and receive what was from God. How often, too, He spoke of those that, hearing, hear not. Again, in 1 Cor. ii. 11, the apostle says, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Now far be it from us to say, that none should read the Bible unless they have the Spirit; we rejoice in the broadcast circulation of the Scriptures, and have during the last few years given away thousands of copies of the New Testament and Gospels, thankful indeed that even the incidence of war has been used to open a way for spreading the truth. But we want to emphasize the need of prayer, that the Spirit of God may use it to enlighten the eyes, and reach the conscience and heart of the readers. There is much danger of being satisfied merely with circulation and outward effects. But if there is a soul in real earnest desire for the word of life, what saith the Lord? “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.” Surely this is as true to-day as ever.

We know well that it is not the quantity read, or even learned by heart, that saves and blesses ; but that which is *believed* ; this it is which reaches heart and conscience, and “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The point therefore which arrested our attention is how to be an *intelligent* reader of the Scriptures, and to profit by them ; and here there will be many ready to say with the Eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts viii.), “How can I, [understand them] except some man should guide me ? ”

Thank God there are guides, and reliable ones—gifts given by the ascended Lord to His Church ; Spirit-taught men. But there are also guides that are blind leaders of the blind ; well-intentioned, perhaps, some of them, but unconverted and without the Spirit, therefore without the knowledge of the things of God, though possessing many human credentials.

As far as we remember, the word “intelligence” does not occur in our English New Testament, but there is a word often used in the Old Testament, and particularly in the book of Proverbs, that may help us, “Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom ; and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs iv. 7). It is this “understanding” we need ; and is not the Holy Spirit the source and giver of it ? “Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,” was one of the many blessings communicated by the Lord to the disciples on the resurrection day.

At the same time, as already remarked, while we rejoice in the circulation of the printed or written word, we believe that nothing can alter the importance of preaching. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” The early

(Continued on p. 9.)

disciples did not go upon their various missions with a volume of the Word of God in their hands; few of them had seen many of its parts, but "they went everywhere preaching the word," carrying the message of the glad tidings to Jew and Gentile. It was the evangel of God, and that brought forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the power of Satan. The Holy Spirit was, and is, the effectuating power for present and lasting profit either by the spoken or the written word of God. Divine intelligence is only from and by Him.

T. R.

The World, and what should a Christian's Life be in it?—1.

WHAT is the world? Such is the all-important question which must be seriously considered by every thoughtful Christian. What is this world, from which he is called to keep himself "unspotted"? (James i. 27).

Scripture uses the word "world" in three different senses. In the first place it signifies literally the order, the system, the organized state of human affairs on the earth. Secondly, the earth itself, which is also called "the world," because it is the sphere where that system is developed. Thirdly, all individuals who live according to this system are included under the same word. We must therefore make a distinction between the world as a *sphere*, then the *persons* who compose it, and finally the *system* of the world.

When we read in the Word of God that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15), we must understand that He came into this scene called the world, and therefore He is found in contact

with the *system* of the world which hated Him. He said of His disciples : “ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world ” (John xvii. 16). Quite the opposite to men of the world who find their life in that system, they did not form part of it. Whosoever is the friend of the world, in that sense, is the enemy of God (James iv. 4). The characteristic of such a system is, to govern itself, quite independently of God.

Take as an example of this, military organization. When a man enters the army he finds everything arranged to suit his needs. His pay, his uniform, his arms and equipment, are all provided for. Rules prescribe where he must go or lodge, and there are regular hours for the various duties. He is, in fact, so bound to the organization of the army from the moment he enters it, that he cannot henceforth do anything on his own initiative. One can indeed say of it that it is a little world in itself, so complete and methodical are its arrangements. It is, however, only a feeble illustration of the system which governs everything called the *world*, where every need of man is provided for, as also everything required for the use of his faculties.

Man has need of *society* as well, and the world has not failed in providing him with a social system—a perfect study in itself. Social position comes first with man, and he spares himself no trouble to create it, and no expense is too great for its attainment. Consider the immense fabric which we call “ society ” with its myriads of human beings, some straining every nerve to climb higher and higher, whilst others seek to maintain themselves suitably in the positions already attained. What a terrible power has this social system of absorbing the mind and heart of man.

Again, man needs a *political* government for the protection of his life and property and rights. To this also the world responds fully.

And what has it not done in the way of organization for what we call "Business"? The world's occupations form a remarkable whole. Men with only physical strength procure work; inventive minds find an outlet for their genius; artistic souls show their abilities in the world of sculpture, painting, music and poetry; learned men seek to solve problems; authors compose books; even the desire for luxuries on the part of some, furnishes others with the means of living.

Man is a very complex creature, needing many different things for his satisfaction. He wants a little business, something of politics, a little society, a little study, and finally a little *religion*. Man is religious *by nature*. The word "religion," which we so often use, is only found five times in the Bible. It is not godliness, for the worshippers of idols are religious. Religion is a part of the nature of man, quite as much as his intellect or memory.

Consequently, this system termed the *world*, which responds so perfectly to all that is of man, is able to satisfy this need also. To anyone particularly sensitive to tender impressions, with a love of the beautiful—harmonious music, imposing ceremonies, religious rites,—will be presented. Another, with a frank, independent nature, finds in liberalism a free scope for his beliefs. On the other hand, to a cold, reserved, deep thinker, a strict orthodoxy would be more to his liking. If he should be a conscientious man, making nothing of himself, and believing it impossible to do without penance in one way or another; his needs, too, can be met by this world-system, and so on.

There are, therefore, doctrinal creeds and sects for every kind of character and for each form of religious sentiment in the flesh.

What system could be more admirable and complete? Nothing is left out. It contains sufficient imaginary joy and satisfaction to keep this vast moving mass of humanity always employed, and in the enjoyment of a relative happiness. Hearts always seeking something to fill them, busy and active minds: if one thing fails, they turn to something else. Sorrow and even death itself are not forgotten in this world-system. Provision is made for funerals, mourning, visits of condolence, words of sympathy, and everything of a like nature; so that, in a short time, the world is able to rise above its grief and return to the sphere of its usual avocations—
(*Translated from the French.*)

J. N. D.

Questions and Answers.

QUESTIONS suggested at a friendly conversation.

Q.—What is meant by a “sin unto death” (1 John v. 16)?

A.—A sin unto death is a sin—not any particular one—of such a character or under such circumstances that God saw well to take away the one who committed it. It is not, of course, a question of the “second death,” which will never come upon a true believer, but it is God’s governmental chastening which is exercised with His people. We have an illustration of it in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.), who lied to the Holy Ghost; also of some at Corinth, who were acting very badly at the Lord’s supper. Some of these were in a weak and sickly state of body, and some had died under

the chastening of the Lord. This chastening was in order that they “should *not* be condemned with the world.”

Q.—What is meant by “If we sin wilfully,” etc. (Heb. x. 26–30) ?

A.—It is important to see that verse 26 follows upon verses 23–25, which contain exhortations to persevere and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It is always a bad sign when saints neglect the assembling of themselves together. This epistle to the Hebrews takes them up on the ground of profession ; they had embraced Christianity, professedly at least, and the apostle expresses the strongest hope about them before the chapter closes.

In chapters ix.–x. he had brought out the immense value of the sacrifice of Christ offered up once for all. Now to turn back from this was apostasy of the worst kind ; there was no other sacrifice for sin, and this one would never be repeated. In chapter vi., the warning is more against apostasy from the power of the Holy Ghost and going back to forms and rituals. We know that a true believer never can be lost (John x. 28–30) ; but both warnings are wholesome and needed.

Q.—What is the significance of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. iv. 2) as contrasted with the “Bright and morning star” (Rev. xxii. 16) ?

A.—It is remarkable that both the Old and the New Testaments close with the coming of the Lord. In the former, as we might expect, He is presented as the Sun of righteousness, who will arise with healing in His wings to usher in the *day* of millennial blessing for those that fear Jehovah’s name in Israel. When the sun arises all the stars disappear ; the sun ushers in

the *day*. But before that, just before the dawn, the morning star arises and illuminates the horizon with a brilliant light. During the darkness of the night (morally) which overspreads this world, the Christian's eye and heart turn heavenward to watch for the rising of the bright and morning star. It is Jesus Himself thus presented as the coming One; the proper and *heavenly* hope of the church.

Q.—When the apostle speaks of “the righteous Judge” giving a reward in “that day” to him, and to all those who “love His appearing” (2 Tim. iv. 8), why does he use the term “righteous Judge”?

A.—In the first verse of this chapter (iv.) the apostle charges Timothy before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, to preach the word, etc. Here it is clearly a question of the *responsibility* of the individual servant in view of “that day” of manifestation when the Lord appears in glory. When Paul comes to speak of himself in this, the last chapter of his last epistle, he reviews his course, which was now finished. It was an act of righteousness on the part of the Lord, the righteous Judge, to reward His servant according to His estimate of his work.

We must remember that, in this epistle, it is not a question of our *privileges*, or of what *grace has done for us*; but of our *responsibility* as individual servants of God. Hence we do not find the Lord's “coming,” or what we call the “rapture”; but His “appearing” or “manifestation.” *Then* everything will be made manifest, and the rewards will be given by the One who knows how to act in perfect righteousness, not only towards Paul but towards all those who “love His appearing.”

[ED.]

The Cross.

LET me ponder o'er the cross,
Think of Jesus' shame and loss,
While I see Him on the tree,
Weep and bleed and die for me.

That rich blood for sinners shed,
All He suffered in my stead,
Tells of love that bore my load,
Reconciled my soul to God.

Hark!—His dying words, “ 'Tis done,
I the victory have won,
Sinner wipe thy tears away,
I thy ransom freely pay.”

Farewell, world ; thy gold is dust,
Since I gaze upon the cross ;
Jesus died to set me free,
Gave me life and liberty.

Thou hast dearly bought my soul,
Lord, accept and claim the whole !
To Thy will I all resign,
Make me fully, wholly Thine.

Gain the Heart as well as Conscience.

An Extract.

THE whip and the scourge may be righteous, but there is no winning the heart of man with these. Nor is it righteousness which reigns among the saints of God, but grace, through righteousness, unto eternal life.

Alas ! How many sins that might have been washed away (John xiii.), have been retained ! How many

brethren alienated for all time, that might have been won back to God and to us, because we have hammered at the *conscience* merely, with the heart ungained—with the heart, I may say, *almost unsought* !

We have not overcome evil, because we have not overcome it with good. We have taken readily the judge's chair, and have got back judgment; but the Master's lowly work we have little done.

But how little yet do we understand that mere righteous dealing—absolutely righteous, as it may be—will not work the restoration of souls; that judgment, however temperate, and however true, will not touch, and soften, and subdue hearts to receive instruction—hearts that by the very facts of the case, are shown *not* to be in their true place before God.

Man is *not all conscience*; and conscience reached, with the heart away, will do what it did with the first sinner among men—*drive him out* among the trees of the garden, to escape the unwelcome voice.

“Is Anything too Hard for the Lord?”

THIS was the question put by the Lord in Genesis xviii. 14, in reference to Sarah, whose faith could not look beyond what appeared impossible to nature, and rise to the height of God's promises. Again, we find almost the same words addressed by Jeremiah to Jehovah, “There is nothing too hard for Thee” (xxxii. 17). God *could* and *would* deliver His people, however great the misery they had to endure on account of their sins. In verse 27 of the same chapter the Lord Himself asks the same question, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Bless His name, He will infallibly carry out His purposes of blessing when the time comes for Him to do so.

The Path of Faith.

WE have only to read the Scriptures, and especially such a chapter as Hebrews xi., to see that God always allowed tests to arise in the path of faith in which His people were called to walk. Every one of the men of God from whose lives the Holy Spirit has selected certain parts for our instruction, had trials of faith in pursuing his way through this world.

Now this is an encouragement to us, for we too have our trials of faith, and the same God who sustained them can sustain us. No doubt at the present time many of His people realize the need of His sustaining grace on account of the difficulties which arise in their path owing to the state of the world in which we live.

But, in running the race set before us, this inspired epistle directs our attention, above all others, to Jesus Himself, who traversed the whole pathway of faith from beginning to end without one faltering step. He says, "Looking off unto Jesus the leader and completer of faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross," etc.

Looking at Him as man in this world, what was it that sustained Him in His path? It was perfect confidence in God His Father; "In Thee do I put My trust" (Ps. xvi.). No allurement of the enemy, no trial that ever crossed His way, not even the cross itself, could weaken His perfect confidence in God His Father, or move Him from the straight path of simple obedience to His will and word. He "endured" the cross, and "endured" also the contradiction of sinners against Himself; finding His joy in doing the Father's

will and accomplishing the work given Him to do, as well as in His service of love to us.

When we come to speak of His people—truly each of us have our “weights” and “besetments,” as well as experiencing at times the rough blast of the contrary wind of adverse circumstances, as His disciples did of old when crossing the stormy lake. But let us take courage and remember that we have many blessed examples of men like ourselves who have run the path of faith before us, whatever their failures may have been at times.

And, chiefest of all, what can impart energy and endurance in running the race towards the glory, like looking off to Jesus Himself? He has gone before us in it all, tasting its bitterness indeed, but ever sustained by the joy that filled His soul from above in perfect communion with the Father. And having finished all, He has taken His seat at the right hand of God.

May we gain fresh strength, courage, and endurance by dwelling upon His blessed and perfect example!

F. G. B.

Four Exhortations.

Jude 20-21.

WE find in this portion, as elsewhere in the Word of God, that God can be perfectly glorified by His own in the midst of the ruins of Christendom.

The first exhortation is to build up ourselves on our most holy faith, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith,” etc. It was that faith which was “once delivered unto the saints” (ver. 3). It is quite evident that we cannot build ourselves up on the poor foundation of that which is

found in our own hearts. But this faith—the Christian doctrine contained in the word which has been entrusted to us—is a *holy* faith, and by its means the Lord would separate us entirely from the world, for Himself. “Sanctify them through Thy truth,” says Jesus, “Thy word is truth.” Such is our first resource in order that we may glorify God.

The second exhortation is, “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” If God sanctifies us to Himself by the Scriptures, He does it also by *prayer*. This last expresses our dependence on God. By prayer we approach Him and present our needs. We thus enter into direct relationship with Him in our daily life; only let us remember that we cannot rightly engage in prayer except by the Holy Ghost. Thus we are sanctified, set apart to God, first by the word, and then by the habitual exercise of prayer.

The third exhortation is of the greatest importance, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” The Holy Ghost has shed abroad that love in our hearts, and we have to keep ourselves in it; watching lest, even the least thing which would mar the enjoyment of it, should find a place in our souls.

The fourth exhortation is, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” This is the Christian hope. All this passage, taken together, contains the three characteristic traits which should mark the child of God, so often mentioned in the New Testament—faith, love, and hope. This last is just as important as the two others. The hope is one which looks on to that eternal life into which the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ alone can bring us.

Eternal life here is not, as in the writings of John, that which the Christian already possesses, but that

*

into which he is *about to* enter ; for he does not enter into the *full* enjoyment of it whilst here below. Remark that in these two verses, our resources consist in our relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord give to all His beloved children to realize these things ; and let each of us ask ourselves, “ Do we bear the characteristics set before us here, in view of the present time ? ” If we cannot reply to this question by a positive “ Yes,” should we not feel deeply humbled that we show forth so poorly what the Lord sets before us in this portion of His word ?

H. R.

Two Songs.

THERE are two remarkable songs, one in the Old Testament, the other in the New Testament, similar in some respects, and especially so in the circumstances which gave rise to each of them. In both cases they were preceded by exercises, which we do not find recorded in the words of Holy Writ. The former, in Old Testament times, was given to Samuel’s mother, and must have furnished great delight to him in recording it in the first ten verses of his second chapter. The latter, in the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel, verses 46–55, was inspired on the occasion of the Virgin Mary’s visit to her cousin Elisabeth.

The ancient song was preceded by Hannah’s prayer near the door of the temporary “ temple of the Lord ” of those days, where the aged high priest Eli had his seat ; the other was in the house of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. They were of the same length.

Hannah's closing word introduced, if we may so say, the advent of the promised "king" of Israel, mentioned here for the first time. Mary's word of praise was inspired on the occasion of the Holy Spirit's action on Elisabeth, as soon as she heard her salutation (Luke i. 41-55; and compare Deuteronomy xvii. 15).

The key-note of Mary's song is God's governmental dealings with His people, while carrying out the merciful promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; whereas Hannah's, following the same lines more vigorously, sets forth finally universal judgment to "the ends of the earth," under the direction of Jehovah's anointed king, of whom David was to be a type.

Mary's position was unique; she was wholly in the Lord's hand. No other woman had been, or could be, so favoured. But He who was to be born condescended to go through every stage of humanity, in order to be truly SON OF MAN as well as Son of God, even to accepting death in this world sacrificially, for the opening up of Paradise to the repentant sinner.

The dying thief—picked out by the Jews in order to show their contempt of the Saviour, by all the obloquy they could cast upon Him—became the fitting example of what divine grace could operate in saving the lost. Such is man, and such is the immeasurable grace of God. The worst man in Jerusalem at that time, set forth in his death what the sovereign grace of God was able to accomplish by means of the suffering of the blessed Saviour Himself. Who but He could give such an answer to the dying man, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise"?

At the same time the Lord confided His mother to John, the beloved disciple, who, in his account of all that took place, never mentions his own name, except

by the epithet, "whom Jesus loved." And is it not touching to notice that in spite of the difference of the circumstances, the Lord was in the midst of His chosen people, both at His birth and at His death. Those that were morally "hungry" were fed, and the weak were "girded with strength." Death and life were, and are, in the power of His hand, as Hannah said (1 Sam. ii. 6-8).

W. J. L.

Christian or Israelite—Which?

THE attempt to identify the British nation (or English-speaking peoples) with the lost (so-called) ten tribes of Israel, seems to have received, alike with many other delusive errors, a great impetus by the late war and its results. The general question has so often been dealt with, and the fallacy of the reasoning by which the "identifications" are supported, so ably exposed, that it may be thought unnecessary to say more. But we are assured that amongst the converts to these theories are many truly converted Christians, and even some who believe in the near return of the Lord Jesus.

We desire briefly to call attention to two points only, that ought to have great weight with such, in determining the true character of this specious system. One is that it obscures entirely the Church's heavenly calling, which is the great distinguishing feature of the Christian dispensation; and the other, that it falsifies the position of the peoples involved, who form so large a part of what we call Christendom.

First, then, as to what we have ventured to say is the great distinguishing feature of Christianity: it is a matter of deep regret that so few Christians have

learned from the New Testament scriptures what the Church's calling really is. That the Church is not the "aggregate of all the saved from Adam downwards," as some catechisms teach, but an entirely new and unique company, formed of every living member of the body of Christ; "One body, one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. iv. 4). It is a body of saved people in which all distinction of earthly conditions disappear, "Where there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all."

There is such a body on earth, each member of which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is the power that forms and animates it; and of which the risen and glorified Christ is the Head. This is a "mystery" which scripture declares was hidden from ages and generations, until God's time for making it known through the one who was a chosen vessel for the revelation of it, namely, the apostle Paul.

Where is the Christian who has tried to "live up to" this calling (to use an every-day expression) that has not found that everything in and around him tends to weaken his purpose and pull the other way?

But this British-Israel system would turn our eyes to *earthly* blessings and *earthly* hopes, and is a denial of Christianity altogether. You cannot be a Christian, and lay hold of christian hopes and blessings with one hand, and on Jewish hopes and promises with the other. Nothing is plainer in the scriptures, than that the ten tribes of Israel are to be blessed in their land with the other two—Judah and Benjamin (see Isa. xi. and many other prophecies). But Ezekiel xx. makes it perfectly clear that before they are blessed there,

they have “to pass under the rod” of God’s judgment so as to purge out the rebels from among them.

Are the advocates of this system prepared for this? Nay, on the contrary, they would blind us to our true condition—unrepentant and unbelieving as a nation—with such words as these, “How marvellously has God protected, preserved, and favoured our race, and blessed us, and made us a blessing to others. This is not the first time we, as a race, have saved the world; and have we not saved it this time?” (Report of British-Israel conference).

This brings us to our second point. And still remembering we are writing for true Christians, carried away by supposed “identifications” and the mistaken interpretation of many prophecies, we would point out the seriousness of helping on those around us in the belief that they are themselves “the Covenant people,” approved of God for faithfulness; instead of Gentile rejecters of Christ, in this day of grace.

Satan is busy, as “the god of this world, blinding the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” It is a serious matter indeed for God’s saved people to be found helping the enemy in his work, and nothing is more likely to do this than a system which hides from men’s eyes their true state, and leads them into a false estimate of where they stand before God.

One word more: If a Christian, how can I have the true scriptural hope of the Church before me—waiting for the coming of the Lord to translate all that are His at His coming (1 Thess. iv. 14–18)—if my hopes are connected (as Israel’s in a future day will be) with the Messianic glory of Christ, and His appearing

(Continued on page 25.)

to deliver His elect people (Israel) when gathered back to the promised land from their last great oppression by the nations? The former is the *heavenly* hope of the Church; the latter is the deliverance and blessing of Israel *on the earth*.

If amongst that blessed company of "they that are Christ's at His coming," we shall be "caught up" long *before* these events, when the "shout," the archangel's voice, and the trump of God will summon from their graves "the dead in Christ," and change the living into their glorified condition. After that, we shall appear *with* Him in glory, when "He comes to be glorified *in* His saints, and admired *in* all them that believe."

T. R.

The World, and what should a Christian's Life be in it?—2.

GOD is now leading some few to see that all that which makes up "the world"—its business, politics, education, government, science, inventions, railways, social arrangements, charitable institutions, reforms, religion, etc.—form part of the "fashion of this world"—a system which is being continuously perfected. What is called the progress of the age is nothing less than the development of this great system.

Now the present relation of Christ to such a world ought to be ours too. The position *He occupies* in heaven, and the position *He does not occupy down here*, plainly shows us what ought to be our position also.

Why should it be so? Because *Satan* is "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air." He is the leader of this vast system, the moving power of it, and its prince. When the Lord Jesus Christ was

on this earth, the devil came and offered Him "all the kingdoms of the world," saying, "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If Thou, therefore, *wilt worship me*, all shall be Thine" (Luke iv. 6, 7).

Here the veil is drawn aside, and the real object of all man's religious worship is exposed. The Bible speaks of Satan as being "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezek. xxviii. 12) and one who disguises himself as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14). It is not therefore surprising that careless (and even thoughtful) men should be mistaken and deceived. How few have had their eyes opened by the Word of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to the *real character* of the world! Some think they have escaped from its snare because they have given up what are called "worldly pleasures"—and because they have become members of certain churches and religious associations—not discerning that they are just as much in the system of the world as before. Satan, who is the prince of this world, has simply made them change from one form of the world to another, in order to quiet their uneasy consciences by rendering them better pleased with *themselves*.

These things being so, what is the remedy? How shall those living according to this world, walking in the broad road, escape from its bondage? How shall they discern between what is of the world and what is of God? The apostle Paul says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). The normal way in Christian life is, to be directed by Christ, in the same manner that a man's body is governed by his head. When in good

health, neither hand nor foot moves unless directed by the head. And in the same manner Christ is the Head of the Christian (1 Cor. xi. 3), who is henceforth under His guidance in all things, be they great or small. It is thus that Christianity strikes at the root of worldliness; for as the free will of man is the fundamental principle of the whole edifice of the world, so dependence on God and obedience to *His* will are the foundation of all Christian life.

Satan's great aim is to set up a system for man that will entirely replace the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This will be His masterpiece in the last days, and is the most prominent feature in the great apostasy so near at hand. Then, Satan will publicly declare himself to be, in his own person, the god of this world; though at present this is hidden under a mysterious form. Surely it is time for Christians to awake out of sleep, and to consider whether they are in any way linked with a system which is rapidly ripening for judgment. . . .

All around us we find those who tell of what is suitable or fitting to be done amongst men; for their rule and measure is *what will suit man*. But a child of God goes straight on, not influenced by what people say; for *what suits God* is his rule and standard. Men may see the way before them as clearly as possible—a reasonable and satisfactory path—but that is worth nothing to anyone walking by faith: for he knows that what is universally esteemed as the right way amongst men, is really the wrong way; for that which stands high in their estimation is, in fact, the broad way (Luke xvi. 15).

For instance, everyone would say that a Christian, as becomes a good citizen, should be interested in the government of his country, and that he ought to vote,

in order to ensure worthy men being put into positions of power and authority. God tells us the contrary. In several places in His Word, and in various ways, He shows me that, as His child, I am not a citizen of any country, nor a member of any society. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). Henceforth I have to do with "heavenly things" (see Gal. vi. 14). If I give my thoughts and my heart to earthly things, I shall be "an enemy of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). Again, we read, "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. xii. 2).

Then, what about rulers and authorities? *Be subject to them*, since they are established by God. When they demand the payment of taxes, etc., discharge your debts, and "make supplication . . . for kings and for all that are in authority" (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). All that a Christian has to do with politics, is to be subject to those in authority over him, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake" (Rom. xiii. 5). It is true that Christ is the Heir of "all things"—including the earth in which this worldly system is at work now—but we should be like Abraham in the land of Canaan; God did not give him even so much as to set his foot on as an actual inheritance (Acts vii. 5). "The just shall live *by faith*."

If, then, a true child of God refuses to vote, it is not so much that he thinks it a bad thing in itself, but that he has given his vote and his whole interest to the One in the heavens whom God has exalted as "**King of kings and Lord of lords**." Not only so, but he has lost interest in earthly matters, having found something much more attractive. He sees the world as ungodly, both in its spirit and its actual state; and that its boasted reforms and improvements only end

in closing the door of man's heart to God still more firmly. He desires to bear witness to God and His truth; and he announces judgment to come, and the coming of Christ, just at the time when men are congratulating themselves on being in "peace and safety"! He hopes that by his testimony others may learn the way of escape from the snares of Satan, by which he is seeking to entrap the mass of mankind.—
(Translated from the French.) J. N. D.

The Church of God.

Its Place of Privilege.—1.

THE blessed truth of the Church of God shines like a gem on the page of inspiration, especially in those epistles of the Apostle Paul which were written from his prison at Rome. God raised up that remarkable man as a "chosen vessel," and gave a foreshadowing of that truth in the word of the Lord to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

The Lord Jesus Himself had already spoken of leading His Jewish sheep out of the fold of Judaism, and of "other sheep" whom He would bring, thus there would be "one flock and one Shepherd." This was, in itself, a step towards the setting aside of the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, forming in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. The full truth of this was developed through the ministry of Paul, after the Lord's death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost.

What, then, is the Church of God? It is not an edifice built by men, it is not a church, a sect, or a denomination; in fact, it is not anything of man's devising. Man could never rise to the height of God's

thoughts and purposes of grace ; they are as entirely outside his comprehension as was the greatness and extent of the father's love outside the comprehension of the prodigal when he was in the far country.

The Church of God, in one aspect of it, is a body formed on earth, united by the Holy Ghost to the glorified Head in heaven.

In that wonderful prayer in Ephesians i. 17-23, the apostle prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would give to them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, etc. ; and he ends with the fact that Christ has been set at God's right hand, far above all principality and power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, etc. Thus He is the highly exalted One, Head *over* all things as man (Ps. viii.) ; the One whose divine glory also fills the whole scene of creation, indeed the whole universe.

What is His relationship to His Church ? He is Head *to* the Church : and then follows the wonderful fact, " Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." We may say reverently that, in order to make up the mystic man, the body is necessary to the Head. The body is the fulness or completeness of the Christ whom God has raised from the dead, of no less a Person than Him that " fills all in all."

Do we at all rise to this blessed and wonderful privilege, conferred in divine grace and love, or are we so taken up with earthly things—lawful it may be—that we have little heart to appreciate what the riches of God's grace has accomplished in Christ ?

In chapter ii. the apostle takes up man at the lowest point, " dead in trespasses and sins," in order to show out all the more fully that God is " rich in mercy," and the " exceeding riches " of His grace. What has that

grace done? It has quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. And what will it do? It will display, in the coming ages, the “surpassing riches” of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

Thus all distinction between Jew and Gentile is done away, the middle wall of partition is broken down, the enmity is slain, and both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. Here, in this second aspect of the Church, it is looked at as a spiritual building, composed of “living stones,” growing to a holy temple in the Lord. God dwells in this temple by His Spirit.

And so the apostle in chapter iii. breaks off his discourse in a parenthesis, in order to dilate on the “mystery,” formerly kept secret, but now revealed; that the Gentiles should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel. This message of the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles he calls the “glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

The “mystery” was, as we know, not something strange or mysterious, but something that the mere mind of man could never have conceived or could take in. It was “hid in God” throughout the ages—unknown in Old Testament times. Now that it is revealed, the principalities and powers in the heavenlies—those heavenly beings which had seen so many displays of God’s wisdom, in creation, in sending His Son to be the Saviour, etc.—could see in the Church the all-various wisdom of God. It was something altogether unique—poor sinners saved by grace, formed into one body, united to a glorified Christ, all national distinction being done away. Such were the purposes

and counsels of God. Surely this magnifies—not indeed the Church, but the ineffable grace of God.

No wonder that the apostle closes this chapter with a prayer to the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” that “they should be enabled to apprehend the whole import of the counsels of God, and the love of Christ which formed the assured centre for their hearts” (Synopsis—J. N. D.).

And remark, this is what God would have us to *know*. For this reason He has revealed these wonderful and blessed truths, so intimately linked up with the glory of His beloved Son; and He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in* us.” Let us not say these truths are too deep or too high, but seek grace to enter more fully into them for His glory and our soul’s blessing.

F. G. B.

“Worthy is the Lamb.”

O LORD, what honours shall we bring ?
How celebrate Thy matchless name ?
When all the notes which angels sing,
Thy peerless worth cannot proclaim.

Worthy art Thou who once wast slain,
The Lord of life, who bled and died ;
Worthy to rise and live and reign,
O’er all creation far and wide.

All glory, Lord, is Thine by right,
Yet Thou didst stoop to bear the cross ;
To Thee be now eternal might,
Who suffered pain and shame and loss.

O Lamb of God ! we sing Thy fame,
Who died in love to guilty men ;
Let angels sound Thy sacred name,
And all creation join—“Amen.”

The Truth.

ONE of the most marked features of the world at the present time is a spirit of lawlessness and insubjection to authority. Russia is, for the most part, given over to infidel socialism, and the same spirit is to be found, more or less, in most other countries. These are serious facts to which we cannot be indifferent, as they affect us all in some way.

In the professing Church (Christendom) old truths are being given up in favour of modern ideas, and this is declared to be in keeping with the progress of the times and after-war reconstruction.

But this unsettling of foundation truth is just the reason why the Christian should hold firmly to what he has received and heard, to all that is contained in the written Word of God; and that he should "contend earnestly for the faith (that is, the body of truth) *once* delivered to the saints," and bear witness to it.

We have the example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who, in an evil day, bore witness to the truth and confessed His Father's name at all times and under all circumstances. He was, indeed, the *holy* and the *true* One; He could say, I am that which I speak, and He was "the truth" (John viii. 25; xiv. 6).

The proverb says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." But let us remember that we can only maintain and confess it, in the measure in which we walk in communion with God, and with the Holy Spirit ungrieved within us. To suppose that we can testify to the truth and yet go on in a careless way, or one inconsistent with what we profess, is only to deceive ourselves and bring

discredit on the Gospel of Christ. One of the greatest needs of the day is the practical living out of the life of Christ in His people here.

The epistle of John, written in view of "the last hour," commences with the presentation of the person of Christ as man here, "That which was from the beginning." There is no change in Him; and *the truth* does not lend itself or bend to the petty novelties and speculations that attract the mind of man. May we take heed to the word, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John ii. 24)! It was Christ—the mystery of whose person no one knows but the Father (Matt. xi. 27); whom the "fathers" in the faith had known, but in measure only; in whom there is no change, whose fulness we can never exhaust, and who will be the object of our worship and adoration throughout eternity itself. F. G. B.

The Church's Resource.

"**W**HATEVER the failure of the Church might be—however it may have coalesced with the world, this remains always true, that the full divine competency of the Holy Ghost, in His various attributes, is its portion, under Him who is the Head of the Church and cares for it, and loves it, and watches over it. So that the Church is without excuse on the one hand, and the believing saint has a resource, on the other" (J. N. D.).

How this reminds us of the word of the Lord to the remnant in Haggai's day, "I am with you," and, "According to the word that I covenanted with you . . . so My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." Ought we not to say, in deep humility and self-judgment, "If such are the resources at our disposal, why

are we in such a weak state?" Surely one of the causes of weakness, speaking generally, is the practical denial of the presence in the Church of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's reproach to the Church at Sardis (Rev. iii.) is, "I have not found thy works perfect before God," and He adds, "Remember therefore how thou hast *received* and *heard*, and hold fast, and repent."

There is no lack of Christian work to-day. Schemes for attracting people to the Gospel, societies, associations, brotherhoods and efforts of all kinds are set on foot; but rarely do we find any practical admission of the only power worth anything in the Work of God. It reminds one of some of the great factories of the present day; equipped with various machines, marvellous productions of science and skill, but all are silent until connected with the dynamo in the engine-house. The dynamo of God is the Holy Spirit; His power alone produces what is of value in the eyes of God. T. R.

"My Firstborn."

Psalm lxxxix. 27.

NO theme given for our study exceeds in its helpfulness that of the varied glories of the Son of God; and not the least of these is His glory as the "FIRSTBORN." Each ray of light which Scripture casts on His personal glory as "firstborn" stirs our admiration of God's wonderful counsels as fulfilled in and by Him.

To get a true idea of what the "firstborn" signifies we must turn to the Old Testament history. There we see that it was generally the *inherited* position of the eldest son; though sometimes the *official* rank to which a younger son was chosen. It carried with it the birthright, namely, the possession of a double portion, as compared with the other children. It denoted also

*

“the excellence of *dignity*, and the excellence of *power*,” as mentioned in Reuben’s blessing (Deut. xxi. 17 ; Gen. xlix. 3 ; 1 Chron. v. 1).

We read also of the firstborn in a *national* sense, where each of the nations of the earth forms a part of the great family of nations, having their inheritance divided and their bounds set by Him—but “according to the number of the children of Israel.” This was owing to the latter having been chosen to the firstborn’s place amongst them, as it is written, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn.” Afterwards they became, in a double way, a nation of firstborns, so to speak, because their firstborn males were saved from the judgment, when the Egyptian firstborns perished ; henceforth they were to be devoted to God (Exod. iv. 22–23 ; xiii. 14–16 ; Deut. xxxii. 8).

But every reference to the Lord Jesus as God’s “Firstborn” is in marked contrast to the individual and national positions noted above. On the maternal side, we read, He was the Virgin’s “firstborn Son,” but we never find Him possessing either the “double portion,” or the outward dignity or power of the birth-right : rather was He “cut off and had nothing” (Luke ii. 7 ; Daniel ix. 26, N.T.).

Though Israel, through their sins, forfeited for the time being their national position as firstborn, as Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, forfeited his birthright, yet God introduced Him of whom Joseph was a type (the one whom men cut off), exalted Him and made Him what Israel nationally failed to be, “His Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” The allusion in this Psalm is, doubtless, primarily to David, but only as the type of Christ—He who, in His own power and His position in glory now, as well as in the millennial

day to come, sets forth permanently and completely all God's thoughts and plans, as concentrated in the words "MY *Firstborn*" (Gen. xlix. 3; 1 Chron. v. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 27).

We would now notice briefly three different presentations of our Lord as firstborn in the epistles.

i. The Lord Jesus as "*the firstborn of all creation*" (Col. i. 15). These words tell of His priority and divine power, as compared with every created thing. He cannot be the creature Himself, inasmuch as He is the Creator. He is the originator, before all things, and by Him all things consist. So, whatever theologians, scientists, or sceptics may assert to the contrary, all things were created by Him and for Him. God has made Christ the Head, the administrator, "*the firstborn of all creation*"; who, when He appears again, will enter into complete and manifest possession of His "*double portion*" (Col. i. 16-17; Ps. ii. 8).

ii. The Lord Jesus as the "*firstborn from among the dead*" (Col. i. 18). The present creation having been brought under the curse through man's sin, we find the New Testament full of references to a *new* creation; and the Son of God has come into this world and, as man, has wrought in a new and precious way for God's glory. He died on the cross to take away sin, was buried and rose the third day, victorious over both sin and death. As a risen man He becomes the beginning of a new race in resurrection, "Head of the body, the Church," of which every believer now forms a part.

Through death, Christ has won the victory over him who had the power of death, and by His death and resurrection He has set His people free. He possesses the "Keys of death and hades," and is now Head of His Church in a new and glorified position. Thus, He is

“firstborn of all creation,” as taking the first place in the creation which He has created—Head of creation; and He is “firstborn from among the dead” (Col. i. 15–19).

What a comfort to the child of God this is. He looks at death (from which he naturally shrinks), in view of the coming again of the Lord Jesus. And he looks at all that is beyond death with a calm and peaceful mind; for all its darkness is lit up by the presence of Christ in that very scene; He who has already removed, by His death and resurrection, every obstacle to our being there (1 Cor. iii. 22–23).

iii. The Lord Jesus, in heaven, will be “*the firstborn among many brethren*” (Rom. viii. 29). In the present period He is the “Captain of our salvation,” leading the many sons to glory; but when that glory is secured, these will be His companions there, conformed to His image, like Him above.

The first creation, which witnessed personal intercourse between man and his Creator, was soon marred; but the Spirit of God works now and forms new relationships based on redemption—relationships which will be more fully realized in a scene which sin will never mar. When on earth the Son of God was alone in His perfection, but the precious corn of wheat would not “abide alone,” but fall into the ground and die, so that a rich harvest of many grains might be stored in the granary of God (John xii. 24). And then He will be pre-eminent in both joy and glory, having, as companions, those declared here to be His “many brethren”—trophies of His victory and sharers of His glory.

iv. We must not close without drawing attention to one other scripture which links together the Church of God and the Firstborn in a striking way, and one well calculated to bow our hearts in adoration and worship at the grace it exhibits.

In Hebrews xii. 22-24 we read that we are not come to Sinai, with its fire and thunder, but "unto mount Zion . . . and to the assembly of the firstborn who are written in heaven" [new trans.]. Let us note that the word "firstborn" here is in the plural and might be translated "firstborn ones." In an earthly family *only one* can have the birthright, but redemption changes this order, for *all* those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ form the "assembly," *all* have their names enregistered in heaven, and are constituted "firstborn ones," to be with and like the Firstborn Son, and to enjoy together all He is and all He has.

Nothing less than this would suit the mind of God and of Christ. What unspeakable grace on God's part, and what a theme for praise on ours! No wonder it is written, "And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." It could not be otherwise!

W. M. R.

Questions and Answers.

Q.—"Ephesians i. 4 says, 'He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.' Does it mean that you and I and each Christian have been personally chosen by God before the foundation of the world, and that a man who dies away from God was not chosen? Does not this kill responsibility? Or does it mean that God has chosen before the foundation of the world one way to bring us to Him; that is the 'grace' way, and that every man has the responsibility to accept it? In few words: God has not chosen personally each one of us, but has chosen the way, and we have the responsibility to accept or refuse it."

G. P—, GENEVA,

A.—Your explanation of the text, by reading it as if it were God choosing the “one way” to bring us to Him, would not do: the passage says that God has chosen “*us*” in Christ. God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are two facts revealed in His word; men may not be able to reconcile them, but there they are. A common mistake people make is, in trying to throw over the blame for their refusal of grace upon God. But no: He must judge *us*, not we Him.

Again, if God is to be God, He must act in His own sovereignty. The apostle replies to objectors by saying, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” (Rom. ix. 20). That is, he puts God in His right place and man in his. But man is a sinner and a rebel against God, and if God saves any, we have to bless His name for His rich grace. “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (ver. 21); but the verse avoids saying that God *has* made vessels to dishonour, so that the idea of what is called “Reprobation” has no warrant in Scripture. Peter says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

In verse 4 of Ephesians 1, the object is not so much to teach the sovereignty of God as to show that the saints belong to an order of things which existed in the counsels of God *before the world was*, and which is therefore *not of the world*, when it does exist. When election is brought in, in Scripture, it is *to* some blessing; here it is to be “holy and without blame before Him in love”—a nature answering morally to His own. This is what God has chosen us for in Christ. [Ed.]

The World, and what should a Christian's Life be in it?—3.

THOSE who are saved should be separate, taking part with a rejected Christ in face of the world which crucified Him; being manifested as a heavenly people, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. ii. 15). Such is the calling of the children of God! But it costs something to live in this way—it is like an isolated rock in the midst of a rushing river! Everything around it in motion, seeking to overturn it—pressure from all sides—but it stands unmoved in the midst of unceasing opposition, which would surely drag it down if it had not the stability of *the Rock*.

When we begin to put in practice God's words, then comes the storm! It is easy to belong to what is called a "Church," and to do as others do. To be upright and a good citizen does not bring down persecution upon us; for we may be both, and yet go with the current. But to shine as lights for God in the world provokes enmity: wherever Christ is seen He is hated. If He should be seen in me, I should be hated too, for that reason (John xv. 18–21).

When a Christian has really come to know God, or to be "known of Him," he is carried above participation in the things that belong to the system of the world. How can he return to "the weak and beggarly elements" wherein he was formerly in bondage? The child of God possesses life eternal in Christ; he is one with the Head (Christ), as revealed to him by the Word and the Holy Spirit. How, then, *can* his interests be absorbed with the world, when he

has learnt to *know God*? If we saw a child in an orchard, eating bad and sour fruit, we should conclude he was ignorant of what real, good fruit was. In the same way, if a man entangles himself in this system of the world, can it be *possible* that he knows God?

This is why the words of God are not presented to us in the way of formal commands, such as "thou shalt not vote," "thou shalt not receive honours in this evil age," "thou shalt suffer reproach," etc. Instead of this, they are given to us in such a way that the disciple who loves Him, whose selfish heart has been broken, and who desires nothing better than to know the thoughts of his Lord, can find out the secret of becoming increasingly like Him, by being more in His company now, apart from this present evil world.

It is no longer the old commandments of the law of Moses, "thou shalt," "thou shalt not," etc., and yet the path is quite simple and easily discerned, *provided that the eye is single*. God sees to it that a heart full of love for Him shall have no difficulty in knowing His will; but an insincere heart will invent excuses and pretexts in order to follow an evil way. Family life is a good example of this. Take a loving, devoted and obedient son, taking pains to understand his father's wishes and ways. He has a sense of duty, and all becomes easy and natural to him. Whilst another son, brought up under the same conditions, enjoying the same advantages and knowing also his father's thoughts (or who ought at least to know them), but seeking his own pleasure, begins to say, for that very reason: "I did not know this or that," "you never told me I was not to do that, or to go to this or that place."

Finally, I would just add one word. We cannot avoid coming in contact with this system of the world,

but this contact should never be *fellowship* with it. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . What concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 14-18). "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii. 15). Jesus, who was not of this world, suffered here and knew privation; loneliness and tribulation were *real* things for Him; and according to the measure in which we are faithful in following His steps, it will be the same for us. How many are there amongst Christians who seek their own pleasure and comfort, finding in a certain sense their "home" in this ungodly system of the world? What! a "home" where Christ is not? We are travellers, passing through this world; weary pilgrims and real strangers if we truly walk as those who belong to Him.

As long as we are in the world, we cannot avoid coming in contact with it; but let us see to it that we are not in fellowship with it in many things where it should not be so, and where it certainly would not be if we bore about in the body the dying of Jesus.

There are many ways in which the enemy seeks to allure hearts, even of the children of God. It may be, religious meetings, charitable works, brotherhoods, etc.—things in which the flesh can take a part—these are substituted for what marks a life "by faith of the Son of God." Godly men of old days whose testimony was that they pleased God, have been persecuted and despised (Heb. xi. 36, 37). Others were "made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things *unto this day*" (1 Cor. iv. 13). They had their citizenship in heaven. But *we*, instead of that—are we applauded by the world? We live too much according to the "course of this world," hence there is no conflict

between us and it; with the result that we are disloyal subjects of Christ, avoiding the Cross and its shame.

Yet the Word of God remains unchangeable: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). The road is a narrow one; may we be amongst the "few" that find it! We have our passports with us. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and we only await the "shout," the cry of command, to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Saviour and to be with Him for ever. What a blessed hope!—(*Translated from the French.*) J. N. D.

The Church of God.

Its place of privilege—2.

IT would be a great mistake to suppose that the truths on which we have been meditating in our remarks on Ephesians are in any sense unpractical or belong to some peculiar school of doctrine. Quite the contrary: for they are the fruit of the sovereign grace of God and the love of Christ, and therefore they ought to be precious to us.

The epistle to the Colossians was written from Paul's prison at Rome about the same time as that to the Ephesians, and was probably sent by the same messenger. In the first chapter we have a full presentation of the glory of the Lord Jesus, the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation. He takes, naturally, the first place in creation inasmuch as all things were created by Him and for Him. Here we have a double headship—Head of creation as the Creator-God, and Head of the Church in resurrection as the firstborn from the dead.

The apostle, in his unselfish and devoted labours, took his full share in the afflictions of Christ, "for His body's sake which is the Church," of which he was made a minister. He was not only a minister of the Gospel, going out to all the world, but a minister of the Church, for which he suffered persecution even to bonds and death. Had he accommodated himself to Judaism and the law, he might have been thought well of, and even applauded; but to preach the utter ruin of man, and the cross as the divinely-given remedy, as well as a glorified Christ, drew upon him the most bitter hatred and persecution.

But the truth of the Church, the mystery "hid from ages and from generations," was no question of an earthly Messiah reigning over Israel, as He surely will—a fact fully revealed in the Old Testament—but of a heavenly Christ, Head *over* all things, and Head *to* the Church which is His body. These are the two parts of the "mystery," a thing quite outside the thoughts and conceptions of men; hidden up to then, but now made manifest to the saints.

No wonder that the apostle—we may say the Holy Ghost through him—makes use of so many exuberant words here, as also in Ephesians, to give expression to these truths. He speaks of the "riches of the glory" of this mystery, which God would make known to the saints—and that to poor Gentiles, once alienated from God, now reconciled by the death of Christ. The mystery here is in connection with "Christ in *you* [Gentiles] the hope of glory." This is not exactly our being in Christ above, as Ephesians presents our place of blessing; but Christ in us down here: though both truths are connected.

In the second chapter the apostle tells us how he

“agonized” in prayer for these saints that their hearts might be comforted, knit together in love, to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God, in which [mystery] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (See new translation.)

It was this “full knowledge,” learnt by the teaching of the Holy Spirit through Paul’s ministry, which would preserve them from the attacks of the enemy, who sought to turn them aside by tradition on the one hand or philosophy on the other. Whatever specious appearance these might have, they were but the “elements of the world” which the adversary sought to use to displace Christ and His glory in the hearts of the saints. It was not necessary to go to the schools of the world’s philosophy or to follow the reasonings of the scientists (then called Gnostics); they had *everything* in Christ. “In Him dwells all the completeness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him.” How important this is for to-day!

Forms, ceremonies, rituals, observing of days, etc., were but “a *shadow* of things to come”; the body [i.e. the substance] is of Christ. If we are dead and risen with Christ, we are clear of a system of ordinances, such as Judaism was in its time. All this apparent humility and self-mortification was but a plausible effort of Satan to turn them away from Christ; and the danger was that of “not holding fast the Head.”

What was a danger then, is just what Christendom has fallen into and what marks it now. And what is it to “hold fast the Head”? It is, we believe, to have deep down in the soul, the consciousness of our union with a heavenly and glorified Christ, by the Holy Spirit. If anything comes between the Head and the

members—be it the philosophic speculations of the learned, a priestly order of men, or ought else—it falsifies true Christianity. But when the soul lays hold, by faith, on the truth of Christ as the Head, it lifts the heart out of the world and satisfies its deepest longings by presenting to it the fulness and sufficiency that is found in Him alone.

And from the Head flows down the nourishment needed for the supply of the body, by those joints and bands, the various means which God uses, so that the whole might increase with the increase of God.

If we review the history of the Church generally, we cannot fail to see how completely these precious truths were lost sight of, as the world flooded in more and more. And what shall we say of the history of the recovered truth? Are *we* “holding fast the Head”—walking daily in the conscious realization of our union with a glorified Christ in heaven? May the Lord revive these truths in the hearts of all His people!

F. G. B.

Power in Service.

WE may spend time and money,
And preach from wisdom's lore,
But education only
Will keep God's people poor.
God wants not worldly wisdom;
He seeks no smiles to win,
But what is ever needed,
The Spirit's power within.

It is the Holy Spirit,
That quickeneth the soul;
God will not take man-worship,
Nor bow to man's control.

No human innovation,
 No skill, or worldly art,
 Can give a true repentance,
 Or break the sinner's heart !

We may have human wisdom,
 Grand singing, great success.
 There may be fine equipment,
 But these things do not bless.
 God wants a pure clean vessel,
 Anointed lips and true,
 A man filled with the Spirit,
 To speak His message through.

O God, revive us truly,
 And help us every day,
 That men may all acknowledge,
 We live just as we pray !
 The Lord's hand is not shortened,
 He still delights to bless,
 If we depart from evil,
 And His dear name confess.

The Bible.

“**T**HE statement has lately been made on the authority of the Russian Liberation Committee, that the Bible is prohibited in the Bolshevik prisons throughout Russia, as it is described as a ‘counter-revolutionary’ book.” So says a contemporary religious paper. This only shows the active power of Satan in using socialistic infidelity on the one hand, as well as Ritualism and Romanism on the other, to shut out the Word of God from the people.

Wholesome Words.

"Take heed what ye hear." (Mark iv. 24.)

"Take heed therefore how ye hear." (Luke viii. 18.)

THESE are two out of the many instances in the Gospels, in which the Lord Jesus said, "Take heed." Are they not wholesome words for us to-day? We are responsible for *what* we hear, and for *how* we hear and act on it.

When Paul and Silas preached to the Bereans, they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. For this reason it is said of them that they were more noble than those in Thessalonica: they tested even the apostle's words by Scripture. Are there such "noble" searchers to-day?

One sometimes hears explanations and expositions of Scripture more or less confusing and conflicting; but does not this show the far-seeing wisdom in the counsel given so long ago and recorded in the Word of God for all time, "Take heed what ye hear"? The Scripture is our sure safeguard and guide.

Many are remarking and regretting the scant attendance at meetings for prayer, for reading the word, for Gospel preaching and Sunday-school work; also the lack of manifest blessing in the work of the Lord, so that assemblies are decreasing rather than increasing. Should not this awaken a deep and heart-searching inquiry, especially amongst those more responsible as leaders, preachers, teachers, etc., as to why there should be this dearth of fruit in the Lord's vineyard?

Do we cry to the Lord for "fathers," "nurses," "pastors," who would truly care for the flock of God—

men who would be ensamples to the flock and lead them, as under-shepherds, to those green pastures where the Great Shepherd of the sheep would have them to feed ?

How the Lord Himself, on the road to Emmaus, “drew near” to the two disciples, who communed and reasoned of “these things,” and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures “the things concerning *Himself*” ; so that they were constrained to say, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? ” This turned their feet towards Jerusalem, where they found those gathered together and told them what things were done in the way, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Is not this the way to increase those gathered together—by finding in the Lord Himself the attraction and the attractive One, here on earth, as He will assuredly be for ever in glory ? May His saints and His servants sit at His feet and hear His words, and thus be used for gathering to Him, and not for scattering, whether it be of saints or sinners !

U. G.

Spiritism, or the New Revelation.

Being brief remarks on a book by Sir A. Conan Doyle
entitled the “New Revelation.”

THE five years of war through which the world has recently passed and the subsequent troubles and unrest, were, no doubt, intended of God to teach the nations righteousness. The prophet Isaiah has said, “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” During the long preceding years when His “favour” was lavished upon them, they had not learned it : “Let favour be shewed

to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Isaiah xxvi. 9-10).

Doubtless in those terrible years God worked by His Spirit in the conversion of many souls; but what can we say of the mad rush after pleasure and dissipation which has followed? Was there any return to the Word of God or to respect for it? No indeed: what ensued shows very clearly what the state of the religious world around us is. The cardinal truths of Christianity are being given up for a religion which comes *straight* from the enemy of souls!—I allude to Spiritism, to which the name of the "New Revelation" has now been given.

True Christians *have a revelation from God*, contained in the Holy Scriptures; of which Christ is the centre and object, with all that His Name conveys to the soul taught of God. Those who have received Him by faith as the "Saviour-God," are in possession of the truth—all the truth—they know it on the authority of His Word. They *know* God's thoughts about sinful man, and His love, which has found a remedy for that state of sin. They know, on the same authority, God's thoughts about the old and the new creation, the first man and the Second (Christ), heaven and hell, Satan and Jesus the Son of God. Further, they know what God thinks of the world and of believers, death and life, judgment and salvation, things visible and invisible. In short, they know all things by the Holy Ghost who has been given to them: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John ii. 20).

Now all this truth, which imparts such joy and strength to the believer, and which will soon be his eternal joy in heaven above, is being lightly esteemed and given up for a "New Revelation," which indeed is

*

not new, for Spiritism was practised thousands of years before Christ.

Let us briefly examine it.

We are told that the basis of all religion is "the life after death." No doubt philosophical paganism (Egyptian or Greek) did not deny this, but we venture to say that it is by no means the *basis* of Christianity. Christianity is based on the revelation of the Son of God—"God manifested in flesh"—come down from heaven into this world, there to die, and by that sacrifice to obtain salvation and eternal life for lost man.

The "New Revelation" begins by attacking the old Revelation and seeking to take its place. Let us see what it teaches and where it would lead us. The following are some of its tenets:—

Man is not lost, though he be a sinner. Christ is not a Saviour, but He was a perfect man in His life, and is placed very high in the uppermost circle of the spheres where men dwell after death. Thus His resurrection is not believed, nor the atonement, nor redemption accomplished on the cross for sinful man. These ideas must be given up—so they say. Men live in spiritual bodies after death. Directly they die they are happy, and this happiness continues, though there is development, more or less, according to the sphere they attain. There is some sort of purgatory for mankind, corresponding to what their life on earth has been, but all finally arrive at their destination; there is no such thing as eternal punishment!

Whence comes this "New Revelation"? They allege that it comes from *the dead*; with whom we can hold communication by agents, or by revolving table, or through mediums, and especially by automatic writing—a gift possessed by some only. Being thus

brought into contact with spirits, we can, they say, learn many details as to the life after death, and even be put into communication with our dear ones gone before, and many others! Above all, according to their theory, one is delivered from all fear of death—the “King of terrors” has lost his dread. Directly after death comes happiness. Strange to say, *God* is not mentioned in these communications: Christ is very far away, and they have nothing to do with Him. Satan no longer exists, and the Word of God is not our guide.

Such, briefly, is the “New Revelation,” and it is well that the people of God should be put on their guard against it. It is limited to communication with the dead and receiving messages from them. But do not let us forget that these votaries of the spirits confess that they often tell lies, as do also the mediums, and that it is often very difficult, amidst “such a mass of lies and silliness,” to discover a single word which could be called truth.

After the foregoing outline, it does not require many words to designate the real *author* of the “New Revelation.” Anyone who has found safety, peace, joy, strength, and full deliverance in the *Revelation of, and from, God*, given in His Word; and who knows Jesus, the Son of God, the gift of the Father’s love, and the “mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. ii. 2, new trans.), can reply at once.

The real author of the “New Revelation” is the *devil*; so carefully hidden behind the miracles and lies with which he seduces mankind, that their poor blinded souls are no longer capable of recognizing him. “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John viii. 44). It is the

Revelation of God which instructs us about Satan and his devices.

Moreover, this Revelation of God shows us how strongly God abhors His people becoming in any way entangled with the practices promulgated by the "New Revelation." He says, "There shall not be found among you anyone . . . that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [consulter of the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. xviii. 10-12). Anyone who fears God knows, therefore, where his duty lies with regard to these abominable practices. And again it is written, "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living, should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isaiah viii. 19-20, R.V.).

These passages are sufficient to make all conscientious Christians flee from such practices. The early Christians, when first converted, "brought their books together, and burned them before all men" (Acts xix. 19). To others who have been drawn into these things by thoughtlessness or ignorance of their real origin, we would point out that such communications are impossible; and those who go in for them put themselves into the power of a being characterized by craft, subtilty and lying; for whom man, in himself, is no match (2 Cor. xi. 3, 14; John viii. 44, etc.).

And further, God's word plainly teaches us that these devices are a *judgment from God* on apostate

Christendom. They will prevail to a far greater extent after the taking up of the Church at the coming of the Lord. The apostle says, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved . . . God shall send them *strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians ii. 10-12).

In closing, we would notice that *only the Lord* can draw aside the veil which hides the abode of spirits who have departed from this world, and show us what takes place on the other side of death.

In Luke xvi. the Lord Jesus distinguishes between the blessed ones among the dead, and the lost. He shows the terrible sufferings of the soul in torments, before the resurrection of the body for the judgment of Gehenna. He contrasts it with the perfect repose of the soul of a true son of Abraham, before he enters the glory. This scripture also shows that the gulf between the wicked and the righteous, in the invisible place (Hades), is "fixed" and positive; and that from the time when death takes place, that gulf *cannot be crossed*, no communication being possible between the dead and the living. The only way to be saved from such an irrevocable destiny is to listen to the Word of God—the Revelation He has given—and receive everlasting life through faith in the Son of God.

Reader, may these few words preserve or deliver you from the snares of the enemy! To those grieving over the loss of dear ones and desirous of knowing where they are, we would say, Remember that God can make use even of this very uncertainty to reach the conscience and heart, and for the salvation of the unconverted members of the family of departed ones. The writer has often been witness of this.

H. R.—VEVEY.

Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba.

(Amos v.)

IT was not pique or revenge that made the herdman of Tekoa exclaim, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." These "words of Amos," like the record of them in his book, were inspired by God. They were prompted by the low condition of Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba—the three cities linked together in his charge in chapter v., "*Seek ye Me, and ye shall live; but seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba Seek the Lord, and ye shall live*" (verses 4–6).

It is, perhaps, difficult for us to realize with what disappointment such a message would be heard. For since the days of Abraham, the three cities had played a foremost part in Israel's history; and, with Jerusalem, were the pivots of their national life, the outstanding names woven into their ancient fabric.

To sweep these aside then, as God did here, would seem to them like removing the key-stone from an arch, or the foundations from a building. Yet this painful operation became a stern necessity before they would seek the Lord, or their still deeper ruin could be averted.

What we see, then, in Amos, is this: Things and places which God had of old owned and richly blessed the people in, may, in course of time, so deteriorate in their value as to become hindrances to His people in seeking Him. If we look a little at the annals of these three places before we say a word as to *seeking Him*, it will well repay our attention.

1. **BETHEL.** Bethel means *House of God*. This was where Abram pitched his tent when he first arrived in

(Continued on page 57.)

Canaan *from* Haran, and where he built an altar to the LORD and called upon His name. Here God spoke to Jacob (as he fled *to* Haran) and promised him the land. Here also He enlarged on this promise, when Jacob took the return journey twenty years after, on which occasion God says of Himself, "I am the God of Bethel" (Gen. xii. ; xxviii. ; xxxv. ; xxxi. 13).

Bethel is also the "House of God" referred to in Judges (chap. xx. 18, 23, 26 ; xxi. 2), where the tribes gathered to weep before going up to punish Benjamin ; returning thither in sorrow when the civil war was over. Here too Samuel, while on his yearly circuit, judged Israel, and here there was a school of the prophets (1 Samuel vii. 16 ; 2 Kings ii. 2). Afterwards we find Bethel was one of the two places in which Jeroboam placed the golden calf, and worshipped, "*in the month which he had devised of his own heart.*" It could boast also of having the King's chapel, court, winter-house, summer-house, ivory palaces, etc.

So the House of God—the God of Bethel—where once the patriarchs worshipped Jehovah in holy liberty, becomes a national stumbling-block, a house of idols, the scene of their king's pride and vanity, and a stronghold of their tyranny and oppression ; hence the injunction, "*Seek not Bethel*" (1 Kings xii. ; Amos iii. and vii.).

2. GILGAL. Gilgal means *Rolling*. Here the nation passed their first night after crossing Jordan, and kept their first passover in the land. Here they pitched the twelve stones taken from the river-bed, to be abiding witnesses that God had dried Jordan and the Red Sea, bringing them through both with a mighty hand ; so rolling away the reproach of their Egyptian foes (Joshua iv. ; Exodus xxxii. 12). To Gilgal they returned after their wars and victories. Here too their first king, Saul,

the man of *their* choice, was crowned, and here there was another school of the prophets (1 Sam. xi ; 2 Kings iv. 38).

Yet this place became the spot at which they heaped up wickedness, and incurred God's displeasure : hence the ban, " Enter not into Gilgal," and, Hosea's message, " All their wickedness is in Gilgal ; for there I hated them " (chapter ix.).

3. BEERSHEBA. Beersheba means *The well of the oath*. It is the southernmost limit of the Holy Land as Dan is the northern. Here, by the well, Abimelech made an oath with Abraham, and later on with Isaac. It was Isaac's home and the place where God spoke to Jacob in a vision of the night, while on his way down to Egypt. But, like Bethel and Gilgal, it too, was turned into a seat of idol-worship of such renown that, " The manner of Beersheba liveth," became the formula of a superstitious oath among the people. Once, " the high place of Isaac," it is doomed to desolation never to rise again, hence the words, " Pass not to Beersheba " (Gen. xxiii. ; Amos vii. ; viii. 14).

Such is the end of these three places. The nation could look back on these once hallowed spots as centres where their fathers had met God in worship and prayer ; where they had rested and feasted and celebrated their triumphs ; where God had answered their prayers, administered their laws and trained their prophets ; where they had heard mighty prophets and received mightier promises. Now they are reduced to citadels of tradition and dens of idolatry, terminating in moral bankruptcy and spiritual extinction.

In principle, the Church of God has done the same, with even more sorrowful results. The world's choice was " Not this man, but Barabbas." The choice of a

now degenerated Church is, “Tradition *and* Christ,” or, “The fruit of ripened judgment”—in other words, “Criticism *and* Christ.” But God sets forth His Son, Jesus, and Him crucified, minus tradition and human “culture.” The consequence of the Church’s choice is, that she has drifted far away from the joy and power of apostolic times, when Christ alone was everything to her. For, in course of time, tradition and human reason sprang up around the truth of God; certain places and systems of teaching became prominent, and as these grew, so spiritual decay deepened, till, at last, that which bears the name of Christ has a name to live but is dead. What men fight for is, not Christ but the teachings of councils and prophets of bygone days—the fathers, holy places, holy saints, holy feasts, etc.

Or, if it is not this, it is the idolising of human “culture,” which sets itself to question the word of God and the authority of the Lord Jesus. Or, perhaps, in more Evangelical circles, it manifests itself in dwelling on past times of power, on gifted and godly ministry given for other and special days, on specific customs and traditions which sprang from such ministry; yet all tending to replace attachment to Christ; till formality, coldness of heart, with spiritual and moral inertia, have eaten like a rot into the life and testimony of the assembly.

Through neglect of spiritually feeding on Christ and His words, the world has crept in. The Church has divorced Him from her plans; she has lost her power though she still clings to her Bethels, her Gilgals and Beershebas, which have enslaved her and become her ruin. No observer of the times, or thoughtful reader of chapters ii. and iii. of Revelation, will deny this palpable fact.

What is the remedy ? Here it is, no less for us now, than for Israel of old, "SEEK YE ME, AND YE SHALL LIVE." It will not do to revert to past days or special manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence, not even to Pentecost itself. We cannot go back to Pentecost nor bring Pentecost here. But God has so ordered it that the Christian's food and strength should consist, not in any of these, but in daily communion with Christ through His Word and His Spirit.

There is an instructive word in Ecclesiastes (chapter vii. 10) which says, "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." So many cling to the past, enquiring why we do not get the old times back again. Such enquiry is evidently not wise. What was it that gave those "former days" their value and glory ? Was it not that the Lord Jesus was received with a vivid faith and His truth held and taught with an ungrieved Holy Spirit ? Has He changed since then ? Is He less for us than He was for our fathers ? No ! No ! We have all that they had—*Christ* and all that He is, and they had no more.

Sooner or later, then, we must learn that, if we are to please God fully, nothing will avail us but the Lord Jesus Himself as our food, our strength and our all in all. Other seasons, places, gifts, or buildings—whether ancient or modern—blessed as they were in their time—will not do for God. *The* antidote is, "*Seek ye Me, and ye shall live.*" Be it the individual or the assembly that diligently follow this quest, such will be crowned with blessing and will prove that "The former days were not better than these," because he who seeks and serves the God of Bethel, the Christ of Pentecost, will receive his reward.

W. M. R.

The Church of God.

In its character as a local assembly.

WHEN we come to consider the Church of God as seen in this world, in its practical working, this carries us into a somewhat different line of things from what we have hitherto been looking at.

Had we lived in apostolic times and gone to Corinth, Ephesus or other places, we would have found a Christian assembly; and outside of that assembly was the world of heathens or Jews. There was, in fact, the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God. The "within" and "without" of the Christian assembly was then clearly defined. Although there were sects, schisms, and parties within the Church, as at Corinth, there was as yet no outward break. The apostle could write to the Church of God at Corinth and say, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27). They were the local expression of it at that place.

We have purposely refrained from saying anything as to the state of the Church of God as it is to-day, because our present object is to bring before the reader, as far as we are enabled to do so, the truth contained in Scripture concerning the order of the Church, before making any reference to its present condition. Moreover, the very faults and failures—the disordered state—which existed at Corinth, was the occasion of giving us the most valuable instruction in the truth about which we are now speaking.

We read, "When ye come together therefore into one place," etc. (1 Cor. xi. 20); so that all the Christians there came together in assembly on certain occasions. It was evidently the practice at Corinth to meet together for a kind of love feast and then afterwards to partake

of the Lord's supper; but this led to much disorder, accustomed as they were to the heathen feasts where it was not considered at all out of place even to get drunk in honour of the gods. The apostle therefore gives full instruction as to the holiness and separation from evil which should characterize the Lord's supper. He separates it from an ordinary meal; it being the occasion above all others where the love of Christ is brought so blessedly and touchingly before the hearts of His own.

Chapter xii. of this epistle gives us the various gifts or manifestations of the Spirit for the profit and edification of the assembly. These gifts were given sovereignly by the Holy Ghost—the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, working of miracles, prophecy, etc. It was no question of human arrangement or selection, but, “*God* hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets,” etc., according to His divine will and wisdom. All was for the good of the assembly, and so that even the youngest might be helped and encouraged.

Chapter xiii. shows us the *spirit in which* these gifts should be exercised; it is the spirit of *love*. Here we have fifteen characteristics of love; it is the divine nature in exercise, and all these characteristics were seen perfectly in Christ Himself. If the gifts are not exercised in this spirit, it becomes but a cold and powerless display (if not worse), like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Then in chapter xiv. we find the way and manner in which the gifts are to be used. The great point is the edification and blessing of the assembly. The Corinthians liked to display their “sign gifts”—tongues, miracles, etc., but of what use was this if the

assembly was not edified ? It was but a form of that *self* which loves outward display. Dependence on the Lord and being guided by the Spirit is the true and only way to help and edify God's assembly.

But, in reading these chapters, we cannot fail to see in them that what is before the mind of the Spirit is *the whole Church* ; " If therefore the whole Church come together into one place," etc. (1 Cor. xiv. 23). It was no question of helping or edifying one part or fragment of the Church of God ; it was entirely a question of *the Church* in that particular city, Corinth ; and this necessarily included, in those days, every true believer in the place.

In verse 12 of chapter xii. we have a remarkable word, " 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 " [see new trans.]. In the last clause, we should have expected to find, " so also is the Church " ; but not so, because all the members of that one body are so united to the Head, and to one another, that, in making up the mystic man, the apostle says " the Christ " ; this includes Christ and the Church.

In all this we see how God provided for the edification, exhortation, teaching and building up of His assembly ; giving the suited gifts and the needed power of the Holy Spirit. All was given to be used and exercised in dependence upon Him, so that man might be nothing, might in fact be set aside, and that Christ might be glorified in His saints.

Hence, not only was the Church of God, as united to a glorified Christ, a wondrous display of the sovereign grace and wisdom of God, as we saw from the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians ; but the practical

working of it, *as ordered of God*, was most blessedly suited and complete. What this became in man's hand, is another question, which we do not touch on now.

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

THE *presence of the Holy Ghost on earth.* The more we study this subject, the more deeply will we feel the immense practical importance of it. Alas! that it should be so little understood; that Christians should so little see what is involved in the personal presence of the eternal Spirit, God the Holy Ghost, on this earth—its solemn consequences as regards the world, and its precious results as regards the assembly as a whole, and each individual member in particular.

Oh! that God's people everywhere may be led into a deeper understanding of these things; that they may consider what is due to that divine Person who dwells in them and with them; that they may have a jealous care not to "grieve" Him in their private walk, or "quench" Him in their public assemblies!

* * * * *

Moses and the prophets. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). The testimony of God in His Word, both Old and New Testaments, is the ground of faith. Even a Lazarus sent from the grave would not avail to convince those who do not listen believingly to Moses and the prophets. In fact another Lazarus was raised by the Lord Jesus not long after; but instead of convincing the Jews, he only provoked the murderous wrath of the chief priests and Pharisees (John xi. 47-53). The carnal mind is enmity against God, and rises proudly and most of all against His grace in Christ.

Spiritual Power and Blessing.

IT was a dark day in Israel when the sins of the house of Eli, as well as the unfaithfulness of the people themselves, brought down God's judgment upon them (1 Sam. iv.). Soon matters came to a crisis; the Philistines came up and fought with Israel, and Israel was smitten before their enemies. Unless God was with them they had no power to stand.

The elders of Israel then asked the question, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" They at least recognized that it was Jehovah who had allowed this, but there was no confession of sin or repentance. On the contrary, the proposal they made was to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that, "when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Alas, this showed only too plainly, that insensibility to their true state, which led them to imagine that God would identify Himself with them in their unfaithful condition.

But will God give His power and blessing where the will is unbroken and the practical ways of His people are out of keeping with His holiness and truth? Certainly not: the second day's battle was even more disastrous than the first; the ark was taken by the enemy, and it remained with them seven months.

It was twenty years after this that Samuel spoke to Israel (who now lamented after Jehovah) and said, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the land of the Philistines."

The only way of deliverance and blessing is to return

to God *with all the heart*, and in separation from what is contrary to His name and glory. Samuel now prays for them, and poured out water before the Lord and fasted on that day, and said, "We have sinned against the Lord." Pouring out water was as much as to say, "We have no strength in ourselves"; prayer and fasting showed entire dependence on God as the resource of the soul, and the acknowledgment that all power and deliverance must come from Him.

Surely these lessons are needed at the present moment, while the hearts of many of God's people are longing for revival and blessing. But if we are to have a God-given revival, there must be genuine confession of definite failure, true separation from what is contrary to the name of Him who is the holy and the true One, and complete and entire dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.

We may be ever so correct in our ecclesiastical position, and yet be cold, formal, and even boastful of our orthodoxy. What is wanted is that the heart and conscience should be really in the presence of God, and that Christ should be the object which controls our life, animates our souls, and leads us out in longing desire for the blessing of others—whether of His own people or the unsaved.

F. G. B.

God's Peculiar Treasure.

IT is a noteworthy fact that the record of Israel's history opens and closes with the twofold declaration that God loved them, and that they were His peculiar treasure (Mal. i. 2; iii. 16, 17).

In sovereign mercy He had delivered their fathers from idolatry and themselves from bondage, and He

says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a *peculiar treasure* unto Me above all people . . . a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation"—and all this, "because *the Lord loved you*" (see Joshua xxiv. 2-6; Ex. xix. 3-6; Deut. vii. 6-8; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18, 19; Psa. cxxxv. 4).

This distinction, of their being *God's peculiar treasure*, which we are now considering, when first announced in Exodus, is held out to them as a reward for obedience; and not till after their crooked course in the wilderness was over, do we hear, in God's wondrous grace, that they *were* Jehovah's peculiar treasure without any qualifying "if." The psalmist afterwards, and Malachi at the close of their history, repeat the same fact.

In the Pentateuch, the circle of God's love and that of His treasure, are co-extensive; but this is not so in Malachi. While the love still went out to the whole nation in spite of its moral, social and commercial corruption, a *second* company is introduced as God's "peculiar treasure"—one limited to the few who feared the Lord—as it says, "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another . . . they shall be unto Me a *peculiar treasure*, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare" (New Translation).

There is, historically, a *third* company named in Peter's epistle—*loved* and called His *peculiar people*. These, in some ways, are in the *succession* of those in Malachi, and form their *counterpart*—"Ye have tasted that *the Lord is gracious* . . . ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar people*." The use of "people" instead of "treasure" here is

*

because it is a quotation from the Septuagint version of Exodus xix.

Thus all true Christians now form God's peculiar people—not "peculiar," as some think, in their manner; or because they belong to some sect or society whose peculiar mode of dress or speech they perpetuate; nor are they peculiar because of any special opinions they hold or teach, but in the sense explained by the marginal reading—that of being the "purchased possession" of Christ; His very own in an unique way, with the high and holy purpose behind it of showing forth "the praises" or "the virtues," or "the excellencies" (as variously translated) "of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter ii. 9).

We have said that, in a way, *the latter were in the succession* of those who rendered service of old—the elect remnant in Malachi. They are both attached to the name of the Lord, both a remnant apart from the mass around them; and, like those named in Luke ii.—Simeon, Anna and the others who waited for redemption in Israel—they spoke often one to another and "of Him." Faith, however sorely tried it may be, never goes unrewarded, as Scripture fully testifies.

The two companies also are *a counterpart the one of the other*. The Malachian remnant had their hopes connected with the Messiah on earth, while our portion is reserved in heaven; and behind the blessing of both, a dual purpose comes to light. In Malachi, they were a God-owned company, sharing in the common suffering and failure of the nation of which they formed a part. And although those of this remnant who have passed away will not, in the coming day, share the church's full portion, they will, nevertheless, be His jewels on high, God's love will go out to each with the intense

affection of a father to his only son who serves him (chapter iii. 17; 1 Peter i. 4).

In the last chapter our prophet holds out to them the hope of earthly blessing, of being used in God's service in establishing His glorious kingdom on earth. Passing over the present dispensation, which the prophet knew nothing of, he says, "Unto *you* that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and leap like fatted calves. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I prepare, saith Jehovah of hosts" (The "day when I make up," etc., of chapter iii. 17, and "The day that I shall do this," are the same, and rendered here with good authority, "The day that I prepare"—Mal. iv. 2, 3, New Translation). This fully agrees with Zechariah ix. 13; x. 3-7, and many other prophecies (Eph. iii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11).

His "prepared day," for them, will be when He appears as the Sun of righteousness, lightening their darkness and healing their sores; and they will rejoice in plenty like calves of the stall. As to Jehovah, these are His "peculiar treasure"; as to His enemies, they are His executors; and, in executing His judgments, one shall chase a thousand, and make them ashes beneath their feet (Zech. x. 4; Lev. xxvi. 8).

In marked contrast to this, the *third* company named have their portion outside this world. Associated on earth with a crucified, rejected and risen Saviour, they were scattered by persecution. An incorruptible, undefiled and unfading inheritance is reserved for them in heaven; while they are kept by the power of God for it down here. They are assured that the choice favours which their forefathers had received, and had

long since lost as we have seen, are now conferred on themselves by the Holy Ghost; also that they, and all who are Christ's, form, in a new way, God's "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Such is *our* present place; and that, too, with no menacing "if," as in Exodus, to mar our peace or move our ground of hope (1 Pet. i. 1-7).

Our Lord Jesus has *already* shone on us and *has brought us into* "His marvellous light." We now look for His coming, not as the Sun of righteousness, but as the Bright and Morning Star, who has even now arisen, by faith, in our hearts. When He comes in this character, it will be as unseen by the world, to take His bride to glory. From thence we shall return *with* Him, when, as the Sun of righteousness, He *publicly* appears to assert His righteous claims over the earth. He will, in that day, be glorified in His heavenly saints and be admired in all them that believe.

From other scriptures we learn that the glorified saints will accompany the Lord in judging the habitable world (Rev. xix. 14); but the remnant of Jacob it is, whom God will use to put down His enemies, as well as being like dew from the Lord and as showers upon the grass, in blessing (Micah iv. 13; v. 7-15). "*Rest with us*" (says the apostle) will be *our* portion, as God exhibits for ever and ever the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. The world will then know that the Father sent the Son, and that He loves His own people as He loves Christ Himself (John xvii. 23).

"This gives us ever to rejoice,
Turning to light our darkest days;
And lifts on high each feeble voice,
While we have breath to pray or praise."

W. M. R.

Christian Character.

Notes of a reading with young Christians.

OUR subject this evening was to be Christian character, arising, as you remember, from some remarks as to the good effects in men and women expected to result from the experiences of the great war.

We cannot do better than read, in this enquiry, the first chapter of the 2nd Epistle of Peter, because as you see it is here plainly stated, that *all things that pertain to life and godliness* are given to us by divine power, through the knowledge of Him (God) that has called us by glory and virtue. I call your particular attention to this, because it is a question of this present life and its daily necessities; not of heaven, or our future destiny, but of the provision made for our path, through being called of God by glory and virtue, into a path for which the world itself furnishes no resources. The courage, discretion, patience, zeal and love that form the character of *Christian* life, are of a totally different order from those of our *natural* life, and God would teach us whence to look for grace to put these into practice.

Q. Why do you say called us "by" glory and virtue; in our Bibles it reads, to glory and virtue?

I understand "by" is the correct rendering, and we shall see how appropriate it is, because, to gain the glory at the end by and bye, we need sustaining power of a suitable kind and character.

The word "virtue" needs a little explanation too, because it does not mean virtue in the sense in which we speak of a virtuous life, a virtuous woman, etc.; but the primary meaning of the word in the original is

valour or courage, and here it implies moral or spiritual courage. This at once shows us that what we are reading about is the necessary help for our walk, in view of the reward at the end.

We are in the world and in the midst of circumstances in the home, the workshop, the office, and the school, where we find the need of courage. Verse 4 is remarkable, too, for it declares that God's exceeding great and precious promises have conferred upon us the highest character of blessing; that, through these, we might be "partakers of the divine nature" (not, of course, Godhead), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust—that is, the craving for what we have not got.

We are not to fold our arms in contemplation of the benefits conferred upon us (important as meditation on this may be in its place), but besides this, giving all diligence as it says, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and so on till the six constituent parts that go to make up the Christian character are acquired.

This passage does not mean that we acquired these things one after the other in the way of successive attainment, but that we need them all at the same time and always. Let us read these verses from the revised version; "*Have in* your faith virtue, and in your virtue knowledge," and so on. Another translation reads, "*Supply in* your faith virtue," and so all through. You start with *faith*, as that is always the beginning, the essential link with God: "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; "By grace are ye saved through faith"; and here, where our path on earth is in question, *virtue*, that is spiritual energy, is the first additional element needed. It is easier to many

(Continued on page 73.)

men to face the foe in battle, than to confess Christ before a lot of godless fellow-soldiers or shop-mates, or to defend His name before a number of worldly business people.

Q. Why does "knowledge" come next?

Because our courage needs discretion in its exercise. Consideration of the circumstances, time, and company come in, and all these call also for temperance, which means self-control—a most essential element in making an impression on others. "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak," and the apostle said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. iv. 6).

"Grit" is a very desirable element in a young Christian, and we have seen some sad consequences result from lack of it; but often men of *grit* and courage need to have their zeal tempered with discretion, do they not? Look at Paul, and long afterwards, Martin Luther, together with many notable examples with which the history of the church furnishes us (see Proverbs xxv. 28).

Then comes *patience*, an element always necessary, and one for the exercise of which Scripture continually reminds us of our constant need. And *godliness* must be included, for our conduct should at all times have reference to God and His claims (see Titus ii. 12). Then again *love of the brethren* necessarily demands a place, for without affection towards others of the children of God we might be mere sticklers for correctness, uprightness, energy, and so on, and lack the very thing which is an unfailing mark of the divine nature in us (1 John iii. 14). Nor is this all. Our love is to be of the same character as God's love, for love is His nature; therefore not only is brotherly love to come

in, but love that is after the pattern of God's love. How fitting that this should complete the required elements.

This scripture always reminds me of a doctor's prescription—we take it to the apothecary, who adds together certain quantities of various drugs as prescribed, and then shakes them in the bottle. If we were to ask him, we should generally find that one particular drug is the vital element of the medicine, answering to the valour or spiritual energy we have here, because, as I have said, our path in this world is in question. It is really showing how completely we are equipped to fight the good fight of faith.

Then, in the 8th verse, we have the result of these things being in us and abounding—we are made neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—and in the 9th we see the consequences when they are lacking—we are blind, shortsighted, and even back again under the power of the sins we were delivered from. Not back to the old unforgiven condition, but, in our practical walk, characterized by the old faults and habits in which we once lived.

Then for the second time we are exhorted to diligence to make our calling and election sure, for so doing, “ye will never fall: for so an abundant entrance shall be richly furnished unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Caleb seems to me a good example of this “abundant entrance.” Of course, for him, it was to an earthly inheritance, not an everlasting one; but 40 years of wilderness experience during which he had seen all but one of those that came out of Egypt with him fall by the way, either under the judgment of God or in a natural way, found him still fresh in the energy of

faith, ready to take possession of his inheritance, spite of the opposition of the Anakims and their cities, great and fenced as they were. With undiminished confidence in God, he was as ready at 85 years of age to take possession of his inheritance as he was at 45; and this is what we also should be. Our Saviour, at immeasurable cost, has won for us a heavenly inheritance; incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. It is ours to go through this world as those that have such a kingdom in view, and to beware lest, "being led away with the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness;" and it is ours also to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

T. R.

The Grace of God in a Dark Day.—1.

(2 Kings vi. 8-23.)

I DO not desire to say much as to the details of what is related in the above Scripture, but I take this portion of the chapter as giving a striking illustration of THE GRACE OF GOD.

There is no limit to God's grace, for He is the God of *all* grace. For the sake of young believers I desire to emphasize the great importance of being brought to know, in our souls, what it is to *stand* in grace, so that we may *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter iii. 18).

The moment the soul gets off the ground of the absolute grace of God, any real growth and progress are hindered. The meaning of the word translated "grace," according to the new translation, is "favour," "thanksgiving," etc. The thought of favour is involved in it, but it has a much wider meaning than the word

favour expresses; and even the words "unmerited favour" do not fully express its meaning. If we take the scriptural contrast, this will help us to a clearer understanding: "The law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ." The contrast to "grace" is "law," as the principle of *faith* is in contrast to the principle of *works*.

Now the blessing comes to us through grace, and it is received on the principle of *faith*, and not through that which man accomplishes. Grace is what God *is* towards the needy sinner, in contrast to any demand being made upon man. It is what God *is*, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ; in view of all the ruin, chaos, and helplessness in which man is through sin. So, though there are thoughts that are nearly akin to it in the Old Testament, grace is properly a New Testament thought—one of the most difficult things for men to understand. God finds His good pleasure in meeting the need of the repentant sinner, He does not upbraid him for his sins.

The ministry of Elisha differs from that of Elijah in that it is, for the most part, a ministry of grace. And it is interesting to note that Elisha means, "God as a Saviour"; and Elijah, "Jehovah is my God." Elisha's ministry corresponds to the Lord's ministry, which was in contrast to that of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah. The object of Elijah's ministry was to recall the people to their allegiance to Jehovah; to a large extent it failed in that, though God's claim was maintained. Then the ministry of Elisha came in; this was the grace of God in the midst of the helplessness and ruin of Israel. Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit—that is, the portion of the firstborn.

Things were at a low ebb and very dark in Israel at that time. It was the reign of Jehoram, immediately after that of Ahab. The king of Syria was opposed to God's testimony and to Elisha. The testimony of God was in Israel, but the light was not with Israel, the light was with the prophet. The king of Israel got the benefit of the light, though the light was not with him.

The prophet seems to look upon Jehoram here with somewhat less disfavour than when on the expedition against the Moabites; there may have been some change for the better in his conduct which He would be quick to take note of and encourage, for God is gracious in His dealings with the sons of men. Though the king of Israel had not himself the light then, yet he had the benefit of it; and so, at the present time, Christendom, though it has not, as a whole, got the light, gains the benefit of it. The light now is with the people of God.

If it were not for the light of God, and that light being maintained, Christendom would quickly become apostate. This will be the case after the Church has been caught up to meet her glorious Lord in the air (2 Thess. ii.). Where there is the holding of the truth of God in faithfulness and love—be the company ever so small—we can surely learn from Scripture that there is immense benefit, even to those who have not got the light.

In verses 13–17 we find that the protection of God was with the prophet, who had the light, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." What a lesson there is in these few verses for each one of us! If our eyes have been opened, like the servant of Elisha, we shall see that the protection of God is with the light: the care of God is there.

Not indeed that His protection will be given to *assumption* or anything of that kind ; but where the truth is held in lowliness, God will not fail in His protecting care.

Let us turn for a moment to the addresses to the seven Churches (Rev. ii.-iii.). The Lord's eye was, without doubt, upon them all, but I think His interest was more particularly in Philadelphia, where there was little strength, but He could say to them, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." His care, His shelter and His protection was there ; so that if we take the lowly place, we can be encouraged in trusting Him, however dark the day may be.

R. B. C.

The Church of God.

Its place of responsibility.

IN writing to the church of God at Corinth the apostle Paul says, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men : forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ" (2 Cor. iii. 2-3). He does not say, "Ye ought to be the epistle of Christ," but "*ye are.*" The epistle may be a very blotted one, to our shame ; but he could say that the church at Corinth was Christ's epistle ; their place and their responsibility was to commend Christ in the world. Such is the calling of the Church as set here to witness for Christ during His absence.

But when we view the Church in its broad aspect as seen in this world, it is not, as in Matthew xvi. 18, that which *Christ* builds—a building in which there is nothing but what is vital and real, one composed only of "living stones"—but that which *men* build, and where there is mere profession as well as reality.

So also the same apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians iii. 10-17, he as a wise master-builder laid the foundation ; others builded thereon. It is a building committed to the responsibility of men, and like everything so committed from the days of Eden onward, it has failed. There are those who build "gold, silver, precious stones"—that which will stand the test of the day of manifestation ; but there are those who build "wood, hay, stubble"—mere profession, unconverted people, united perhaps by church membership or in various other ways.

There are three kinds of servants mentioned in this passage—the good builder building good material ; the builder who, though himself a converted man, is building in bad material ; and the bad builder building in false material, that is, introducing that which is unreal into the professing house of God on earth. The first will get a reward, the second will himself be saved yet—"so as by fire"—like Lot he will lose everything though saved himself ; the third is defiling the temple of God, and will be destroyed. And how solemn and suitable is the apostle's word, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth" !

It is the failure to see this distinction between the professing body calling itself the Church, which *men* build up, and the true Church, which Christ builds, which is the mainspring of Ritualism and Romanism ; because they attribute to the professing body those blessings and privileges of which Scripture speaks, but which belong only to the true Church, to those who have divine life, and not to the professing body at all.

In the book of Revelation we have Christ as the Judge, walking amidst the seven candlesticks, which are the churches ; coming to see what use has been

made of the light and truth He has given, and how far the Church has answered to the privileges conferred. Let us remember that every bit of light and truth we get from God carries with it a consequent responsibility. God said to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). The same principle is true, only in a greater degree, of the Church of God, because the place of blessing and privilege is much greater also. "Judgment must begin at the house of God," as Peter tells us (iv. 17). This is, no doubt, a reference to Ezekiel ix. 6, "Beginning at my sanctuary;" and if Peter could say even then, "The time is come," how much more is this the case now.

Now if we look back over the history of the Church of God from the earliest times, and in our own days, how many things which have been said and done, would have been left unsaid and undone, had Christians but remembered the solemn fact that the Lord takes knowledge of everything, and had we remembered also His judgment of the assembly! On the other hand, how much better we might have served Christ had we more fully entered by faith into what the Church is *to Him*—how precious every member of the body is to Him who is the Head in heaven, as expressed in His word to Saul of Tarsus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*? . . . *I am Jesus* whom thou persecutest." So intimate is the link between Christ and His people that, in serving them truly we serve Him; and if we should cause the least of them to stumble, we act against Him.

F. C. B.

“Come.”

(Matthew xiv. 22-33.)

IN giving the account of the storm on the Lake of Galilee, the Gospel of Matthew narrates one incident which is not given us elsewhere, that of Peter leaving the ship and walking on the sea. It is an incident well suited, in its typical teaching, to the circumstances of our day.

Having dismissed the multitudes, the Lord had gone up into a mountain to pray, whilst the frail craft in which the disciples were crossing the lake was tossed by the tempest which arose. When the night was far advanced, at the fourth watch, Jesus came to them walking on the sea. Then He calms their troubled minds with the encouraging words, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

Peter, on hearing His words, says: “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.” What—leave the only tangible means of support, the ship, and venture on an impossible element like water! It would indeed have been folly and presumption if Peter had not the express word of the Lord, “Come.” But that divine power which could enable Jesus Himself to walk on such an element—it mattered not whether it were in the storm or in the calm—could maintain Peter also, and it alone.

Have not the people of God in all ages been called upon to walk upon the stormy waters, and against the contrary winds of adverse circumstances and troubles? The early Christians had to endure much persecution. How many true saints of God have languished in dungeons under the oppressive hand of Rome in the

Middle Ages ! To-day the test may come in a different way ; we have not yet reached the rest that remains for the people of God. Everything in the world is out of course—upheavals, lawlessness, dear prices and other trying elements are at work. In the Church of God—unrest, disputes, discord, lack of heart for Christ, etc., are found.

But was not that great, and mighty, and loving Saviour sufficient to sustain Peter even in such a case ? His power was infinite, His love was perfect and divine ; yet He allowed the storm as a test of faith. How often we would fain lean upon something tangible, how we would like some “boat” in which we could place our feet as on *terra firma* ! But no ! we must learn that Christ is sufficient, that we can lean upon Him alone as our unfailing and unchanging resource.

And the moment Peter, overcome by looking at the waves, begins to sink, that blessed Deliverer was there at his side to stretch out the hand of power and take hold of His poor disciple, with the gentle rebuke, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?” If we are walking in the path of God’s will and His word, we can always count upon the Lord—on His grace and His power to maintain us in it, whatever the circumstances through which we have to pass may be.

F. G. B.

The Box of Alabaster.

(Mark xiv. 1-9.)

WITH this portion begins the second part of the Lord’s service. His ministry of grace to a rebellious and perverse people was at an end, and He enters now upon the last part of His life of obedience and

suffering, leading to the Cross. Like the Hebrew servant, His years of service were over, and He could go out free: "But if the servant shall *plainly say*," etc. (Ex. xxi. 5, 6). The glory and majesty of the Lord had been manifested on the holy mount, where the Father had testified to His supreme worth. He could have returned to heaven without passing through death, but then none of those who were the objects of the counsels and love of God would have been saved. The corn of wheat would have "abode alone" in its perfection; so He died, "that it might bring forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). The perfect Servant will not go out free. His love to God, whose glory had been touched by our disobedience; His love for His bride and for each of His redeemed, caused Him to sacrifice Himself. He will not go out free.

But when all the hatred of men and of Satan was about to be poured forth upon Him, God sends a perfect testimony to the glory and rights of His Son, making use of a poor feeble woman, Mary of Bethany, whose love for the Saviour made her sensible of what lay before Him. How remarkable that she it was, at such a moment, who bore witness to His glory! Whilst the disciples, who had seen His wonderful works, and had themselves received power to work miracles and to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, were utterly ignorant of God's thoughts as to Him. Following the lead of Judas, they even blamed the act which vindicated His rights. Are *we* in danger of being satisfied with our position externally, without sufficient exercise of heart as to how we stand with Him?

There was one house in Bethany where Jesus loved to go, because of the hearts there who loved His person. There He had manifested His grace and His divine

*

power, and that in the midst of a rebellious generation who rejected Him, and who were preparing to put Him to death. At Bethany He could rest amongst those who had received His word, and whose hearts were in keeping with His. Were He to enter our doors to-day, would He find hearts that love Him and value communion with His thoughts, in the midst of a dark world which has not changed its attitude towards Him ?

Mary had chosen "the good part" of sitting at His feet to hear His word (Luke x. 39). Again, when death had entered their home, she takes the same place (John xi. 32), to find the comfort which her bereaved heart needed. And so in the hour when the cross lay before Him, she was ready for the service that such a moment called for—to vindicate the glory of a rejected Messiah. Confronted with the hatred of the people, the hypocrisy of Judas and the disciples' ignorance, she brought deep joy to the heart of the Lord. Is that how *we* appreciate Him ?

The very manifestation of Mary's attachment to the Master, brings to light what was in the heart of Judas. For him, hardened by contact with the truth, the perfume ascending to God was "an odour of death unto death" (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). If a man is not melted by love divine, and the Gospel is not to him "a savour of life unto life," then it is more likely to harden and make him shun the presence of the light and the truth. The conscience of Judas was never reached by the Word. Love of money governed his heart, closed it to the call of grace, and left it open to the enemy, who ended by taking possession of it, and causing him to deliver up the Master for reward. What a solemn warning for all who are privileged to listen to the Gospel. If the divine message meets with no response

from the heart, Satan will bind such an one more firmly ; “ Walk while ye have the light ” (John xii. 35).

Judas hid his real motives under the pretence of benevolence, and led the other disciples after him ; “ and *they* murmured against her ” (Mark xiv. 5). But Jesus justified her, whilst giving a solemn word to the disciples. It was *the last time* that they would ever have the opportunity of showing their love to His person in a world which hated Him, and was about to crucify Him. In the glory there will be no call for the service of love to the Lord Jesus, for He will be the object of the praise, worship and adoration of all (Rev. xxii. 4). But here, in the midst of those who reject Him and despise His name, we are privileged to confess Him before men ; “ Unto you which believe He is precious ” (2 Pet. ii. 7). It may be, and no doubt is now the last time, for the present day is fast drawing to a close, and then we shall no longer be His witnesses down here. Do we love something in this world better than Christ, or does *He fill* our hearts and lives ?

Mary’s act stands recorded in the unchangeable Word, centuries after it took place, and it will surely have its recompense at that day when the rewards are bestowed. Meanwhile, the Lord expresses here, and He would have us to understand, the joy He felt at the devotion of a heart which lived for *Him alone*. Shall He, in time to come, confess our names before the Father and His angels, because we have loved Him and testified for Him in presence of the hatred and scorn of the world ? May He grant us this favour.

J. B.

The Grace of God in a Dark Day.—2.

(Read 2 Kings vi. 8-23.)

WE see in this Scripture that the place where Elisha was, was protected by God: the chariots of fire were not around the king of Israel, but around Elisha. There was no true fellowship in Israel in that day; what fellowship there was, was with evil, not with what was good. Elisha was a solitary man (compare 2 Tim. i. 15; iv. 16, 17), but the protection of God was around that man. This is very encouraging to everyone who would seek above all else to be faithful to the Lord (verses 19-23).

When we have got the light of God we get a very deep sense of grace; indeed it is only in that light that we get a true sense of it. Here we have a very beautiful picture of grace. The Syrians were opponents of God's testimony; the first thing is that they are made completely weak, they are smitten with blindness according to the prayer of Elisha. Could you have a greater picture of weakness and helplessness than in a company of blind men? Elisha prays for them, but he does not ask for judgment, but that they might be completely weak. In a strange country, this was not an enviable position to find themselves in.

The next thing is, they are conducted to Samaria—the very place their heart was set on reaching. What did they meet? An enemy? Nothing of the kind; they met with GRACE. The king of Israel did not rise to God's grace; he said, "Shall I smite them?" The prophet says, Why, you would not treat your captive enemy in that way, "Set bread and water before them," etc. Is not that a beautiful picture of grace?

In Saul of Tarsus we get what seems like an antitype

of this. Saul was not going to Samaria, but to Damascus—the city of those very Syrians; and on the way he was struck with blindness—he was made completely weak. It was not judgment, but God struck him with weakness, and he was led into Damascus; the place to which he, in his mad rage, was bent on going. He never expected to arrive there weak, but strong in authority to carry out his mission of persecution; but God had other purposes in view for Saul, and to that end he made him utterly weak.

Saul was going to Damascus, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter.” Only think of it! But he had to be led by the hand and brought to the place where he purposed to go; this was truly a humiliating position. When he came to Damascus, what did he find? Not retribution indeed! Though the disciples were afraid of him at first, God sent Ananias, and instead of reproaching him, he put his hand upon him, saying, “Brother Saul,” etc., and set meat before him. He learnt two things in Damascus—the grace of God in forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Then we read in verse 23 of our chapter in Kings, that “the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.” So also we have in Acts, “Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea,” etc.—the persecution ceased.

Let us pause a moment and think what a testimony these Syrians could bear on their return to their master. Do you not think they must have been altered men? Had they not a remarkable tale to tell—an experience of *grace*, the experience of what we might call a converted man? We can well imagine their saying, “We came to the man of God, but we were struck blind—made utterly weak—and then he led us to

Samaria. And when we got there, he did not meet us with retribution, but we were supplied with a great store of provisions." It is a beautiful picture of the grace of God, who has His own blessed purpose in making men realize that they are weak.

The prophet brought them to the very place they wanted to go to, but he brought them there broken-down men, and thus they are prepared for what God has to give them; they have "bread and water" set before them.

The grace of God *brings salvation*; then when it has brought that, it teaches us how to live (Titus ii. 11-13). Many think that when they have got the knowledge of salvation, grace has done its work. But this is not so; it is then that the teaching of grace commences. Then it is we experience the proper moral effect of grace on the heart; and its effect is, that we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, etc., and our whole course is changed. And on the horizon of faith's vision a glorious prospect is in view, "The blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There is never any alteration in the principles of God's grace, and what has now come out in the Gospel was ever in His heart. May God give each one of us to know more of the greatness of His grace, that each of us may be better fitted as vessels to communicate it to others. So that in passing through this scene where the shadow of death rests upon everything that the natural man sets his heart's desire upon, we may be as radiators of God's love, finding our joy in making it known to others.

R. B. C.

The Church of God.

Its Present Condition.

THE very height of the place of blessing and privilege which God has conferred upon the Church or assembly, makes its fallen condition all the more serious. "Remember, therefore, *from whence* thou art fallen," says the Lord to the Church at Ephesus (Rev. ii. 5). When we think of all the care and love and grace which the Lord Jesus, who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, has lavished upon it; is not this an additional cause of grief to those who feel the ruined state in which it is now found?

Yet the New Testament, and especially the later epistles—2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude, and John's epistles—fully prepare us for this. Moreover, that remarkable outline of the history of the Church, given in the seven epistles in Revelation ii. and iii., bears witness to the same thing. Decline began with that which was *inward*, with loss of first love to Christ, and it went on till finally it reached the condition described in Laodicea—lukewarmness and loss of *heart*, the worst of all evils.

But what more concerns us for the moment, and that which touches us very closely, is the history of the revival of truth which God graciously gave, and which began about ninety years ago. One has often thought that it was somewhat similar, only in a small way, to the history of the early Church. When first-love declines, when Christ ceases to hold the supreme place in the heart, it opens the door for worldliness and other evils—man takes the place Christ should have, as the object before the soul and doctrines held in the intellect take the place of truth dwelling in the heart

and conscience. Such a state also leads to self-occupation—thinking of ourselves and *our* assembly—and failing to take in the whole breadth of *the* Church of God as that which is dear to Christ.

How far do we enter into the apostle's desire when he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2)? Have we not much to deplore amongst true saints of God to-day—sects, heresies, divisions, alienation of heart one from another, lack of spiritual power, dwindling meetings, as well as other evidences of decline? "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord," for "His compassions fail not" (Lam. iii. 40, 22).

The way of restoration is to "Repent *and* do the first works." There must be humble repentance if there is to be spiritual power and blessing, and there must also be those "works meet for repentance" which show that it is deep and genuine. If we truly act in the spirit of the ninth chapter of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, we can count on God, who is ever faithful, to answer our prayers. We can then also afford, all the better, to act in a spirit of grace and forbearance towards others, with whom we may not see eye to eye.

For our help and encouragement let us endeavour to gather some useful instruction from the history of the remnant who returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. They returned to Jerusalem through the mercy of God, but what a sight presented itself to them! Its walls were broken down, its gates were burned with fire, its temple was destroyed, everything was in ruins. But they set up the altar of God in the unwall'd town in faith, trusting Him for protection. They did not pretend to what they had not

competence for—they had no shekinah of glory, no priest with Urim and Thummim, no fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice as in the days of Solomon—none of these outward manifestations of power were to be found; but they had God and His word. Then, also, they kept strictly to the word of God, “As it is written” (Ezra iii. 2, 4; vi. 18), and acted upon it so far as circumstances permitted. These are valuable principles for our guidance to-day.

Again, the two epistles to Timothy contain important instructions for the individual servant of God—the first as to his conduct in the Church of God and as to its order; the second as to the path suited to the individual Christian in a day of corruption and disorder. The Church of God, whatever its condition may be, is still “the pillar and base of the truth.” It is responsible to uphold and confess the “mystery of godliness,” that is, the truth of the person of Christ, God manifested in flesh; this is the central truth of Christianity.

But the individual Christian has a direct responsibility to God which nothing can set aside. And if the prevalence of evil in the professing Church, or amongst those he is associated with, becomes such that it can no longer be “purged out” (1 Cor. v. 7), he must “purge himself” (2 Tim. ii. 21) from “vessels to dishonour,” whoever or wherever they may be. Thus only can he be a “vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

Moreover, not only is there to be separation from what is wrong, but association with what is right, “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” And let us remember that occupation with what is *good*—what is for the glory of Christ, with the work of the

Lord and His **word**—is that by which the soul grows and is strengthened to meet **the** power that is against us in an evil day.

We have briefly stated these truths in the hope **that** they may be helpful to the reader ; but, as we consider the state of things which now exists in the Church of God, and the difficulties of the times, we must, each of us, humbly look to the Lord for light and guidance in the *application* of the principles contained in His word to the circumstances of our path through this world, and especially in questions relating to God's assembly on the earth.

F. G. B.

The Persistency of Grace.

IN the parable of the lost sheep in Luke xv., we get an illustration of the persistency with which the Saviour seeks the lost. It is not only said that the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goes after that which is lost ; but the striking truth is brought out that he perseveres in his search until the lost one is found. He is not to be turned aside from his quest. The same lesson is taught in the instance of the woman who had lost the piece of silver. She lights the candle, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently for the piece of silver, "till she find it."

It is spoken of the Lord in Job xxiii. 13, that, "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him ? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." We may apply this thought to the work which the Lord set before Himself as a man upon the earth, and indeed also to that which has really occupied Him ever since He was here. He is not of double mind. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Not so the Lord.

When He spoke of going forward to the cross Peter might remonstrate, "Be it far from Thee, Lord," but Peter, in so saying, only brought upon himself a rebuke of the severest kind. The Lord was of one mind; who could turn Him? Certainly not Peter. It was what the Lord's soul desired that led Him on—even the salvation and lasting blessing of those He loved.

Not that He desired suffering for its own sake; He even prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him. But, severe as the sufferings were, the purposes and desires of His heart were stronger than all the weight of the sufferings He passed through to attain that purpose. The many waters of affliction could not quench His love; nothing could turn Him back. He set His face like a flint to accomplish our salvation.

It is profitable to thoughtfully consider this lesson of divine persistence as we have it presented in God's Word. With this object in view, let my reader examine the early chapters of Exodus. Moses at first resisted the call of God to deliver His people from the bondage of Egypt, but at length he could but yield to the pressure of the divine will. The same thing may be noticed in other servants of God called to His work. And when Moses reached Egypt, remark what opposition he met with there! But again and again, and yet again, the command to Moses was: "Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me." Pharaoh's repeated refusal made no difference in the end. The haughty king of Egypt might take advantage of a momentary respite from plagues to harden his heart against God's will, but the Lord remained of one mind; who could turn Him from it? "What His soul desireth, even

that He doeth." Who hath resisted Him and prospered ?

And, further, when He saves Israel in the future, He will brook no opposition ; He will say to the north, " Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth " (Isa. xliii. 6). No doubt there will be opposition, but Jehovah's purpose will be paramount. " The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision." No matter how great the opposition, He will overcome it all, and will be able to say, " Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion " (Ps. ii.). The government of the throne of David shall be upon the shoulders of David's greater Son. There shall be no end to the increase of His government and peace. His kingdom shall be ordered with justice for ever. How, then, shall such a wonderful result be accomplished ? Who is sufficient for such an infinite task ? The answer is given : " The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this " (Isaiah ix.).

Would it not be well for us if we could be possessed always with the same spirit of persistency ? Take the question of prayer—the Lord Jesus teaches that we should always pray and not faint. He illustrates this persistence by showing how a widow overcame an unjust judge. The judge was not at all disposed to help the widow when she first appeared. Her wrong in no way appealed to him. He had no pity for her. However, a person without a purpose may generally be overcome by one that has one ; and the unjust

judge grew weary of refusing the widow's request. She would not take a refusal. She was determined to knock again and again at his door until he granted her request. "Because this widow troubleth me," said he, "I will avenge her, lest by her *continual coming* she weary me." It was the continual coming that carried the day. How much more ready is God to hear our cry (Luke xviii. 6, 7).

We win victories in prayer, however, not by half-hearted, formal, perfunctory petitions, but by *continually* pouring out the *real desires of our hearts* before the Lord. Let us, then, persist in praying for conversions—in praying for the souls laid upon our hearts. Men who win souls are men of prayer. All genuine revivals are traceable to prayer—and to prayer that was continuous, persistent, importunate (see Luke xi. 8).

There is a remarkable illustration of this in 2 Kings xiii. 18, which shows how a want of persistence resulted seriously for a king of Israel. He was told by the prophet to smite upon the ground; he smote three times and stayed, "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it." Oh let us beware of being half-hearted! Who can estimate the danger of leaving off to be wise and to do good?

Let us *continue* to invite men to come to Christ; let us *go on* giving away our tracts, etc. Ours is a work of faith rather than a work of sight, and it demands perseverance. It is written of Christ that "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law." If Christ be our life, ought we not to be stirred up by a like determination also? The language of Scripture

presupposes opposition to the saints on every hand ; victory over evil and the power of Satan is only won by sheer perseverance in dependence on God and His grace. " Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord " (1 Cor. xv. 58). May God grant that the grace of persistency in doing His will in all things may ever be ours, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

T. H.

Our Walk as Christians.

OUR part as Christians is to walk, peacefully and entirely outside the world, seeking the simple power of the life of Christ without any pretension, whilst waiting for the coming of the Lord.

The Lord has long patience (I have been struck with this in reading Jeremiah lately) so long as such a thing as Judah, Jerusalem, or the professing Church has a place, even externally, in His love. He bears with them *until there is no longer any remedy*. " How often," says He, " would I have gathered thy children together," etc. The believer recognizes His goodness in this.

He is the same now ; He bears with the professing Church, and He so does everything for it as to leave it without excuse. This in no wise alters what is pleasing to Him and what should direct our walk, but it exercises our patience and the faithfulness of our affections for Him. Are they so truly the fruit of His Spirit as to render them lasting and durable, when we might have the opportunity of returning to what is pleasing to the flesh ?

J. N. D., Montpellier, 20th March, 1850.

“The Last Hour.”

(1 John ii. 18.)

IN the times through which we are passing, the words which the apostle John addressed to believers in his day come to us with special suitability. Writing to the “little children,” or babes—those not yet matured in the faith—he says, “It is the last hour* ; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last hour ” (chap. ii. 18).

This “hour ” is still running on, and we are now much nearer its close than they were. For this very reason the warnings which were needed then are even more needed to-day. Within the last few years quite a flood of evil doctrines and evil systems has been flowing over Christendom ; no doubt these are the work of Satanic spirits, whose object is to dishonour Christ and to sap the foundations of the Christian faith.

But the place of safety for the sheep of Christ is always to be found in keeping close to the good Shepherd ; in being so familiar with *His* voice that, when another voice falls on the ear, we know it is *not His* (John x. 4, 5).

Here, in the epistle, two things are given as a safeguard against those who would lead them astray. First, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things ” ; and, secondly, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.” This “unction ” is the Holy Spirit, who is given to

* The word “hour ” is used in John’s writings to signify a period of time, as we say, “the hour of Napoleon’s greatness ” (see new trans.).

dwell in the believer, and whose office it is to guide him into all the truth (John xvi. 13).

We are not, therefore, dependent on man or man's wisdom : it is the privilege of the simplest and humblest believer to be taught by the Holy Spirit out of the Word of God, and thus to be kept in an evil day.

The second safeguard is equally important—that which we have heard from the beginning is to abide in us. This carries us back to chapter i. 1, “That which was from the beginning.” In truth the person of Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the God head bodily, is the pivot on which Christianity turns, it is the centre of all truth. New theories, new developments, are quite out of court here—nothing can be added to Him in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell.

May we learn more of Christ, follow His blessed path, in which every feature of the divine life was manifested in all its perfection. Truly God—co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit—Jesus took, and always kept, the place of humble obedience and dependence as man here, finding His joy in doing the Father's will and accomplishing the service given Him to do. What an example for us !

F. G. B.

**“I would . . . fill my mouth with
Arguments.”**

(Job xxiii. 4.)

SO said Job, thousands of years ago, when smarting under the chastening hand of God and in the dark as to God's “end” or purpose in passing him through all the bitter trials under which he was groaning.

But Job was a good man, “a perfect and an upright

man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil," as the Bible tells us. For wise purposes God allowed him to pass through a great deal of trial and bodily affliction, and this was aggravated by the mistaken suggestions of his three wise friends who came to comfort him. As they misunderstood the cause of his trouble, their remarks and counsel only drew out Job's self-righteousness, and he even longed for an opportunity to justify himself before God.

Suddenly, however, all is changed by God Himself speaking to him, and he says, "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth . . . now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Now one has found many men with much the same thoughts as Job. Their mouths full of arguments, ready to find fault with God; they are full of all sorts of questions, wise and unwise, as to what they cannot understand in God's government of the world. They say, "Why does God allow this"? and "Why does not God do that"? And they ask these questions with much less justification than Job had; for who amongst us could be classed as "perfect and upright"? Not one. For myself, I can only say, I must take the place of the sinner, on the lowest rung of the ladder, and take the words of Job in a former part of his book, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me."

The fact is, that everything depends on how, and where, we look at ourselves and our ways. Is it in the light of God's Word, God's truth; or is it a question of judging according to our own estimate of ourselves?

Even as to the difference between our own and our fellow men's estimate of us, we all know the oft-repeated

*

words of Robert Burns, "O wad some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us." This may be useful in checking thoughts of pride and self-esteem, but a far more important view is to see ourselves as *God* sees us.

One of old said, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And it is a sure mark of whether we have ever been in the presence of God as to what we are in *His* sight; if we are ready to listen to *Him*, and hear what *He* has to say to us.

Our place is very simply expressed by the three words used by the prodigal son when he returned to his father, "I have sinned." And if so, the one great question is, "What will God say to a sinner like me?"

If we take this place, it is no longer a question of seeking for arguments to fill our mouths, or arranging in what way we shall order our cause, as Job said; but we bow our heads in silence before God, and are ready to hear what *He* has to say to us.

There is a deeply interesting argument in the epistle to the Romans as to what the law—God's law—has to say on this point. It declares that the voice of the law speaks to all that are under it; "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." You see then, dear reader, that the law, instead of providing for us a ground on which we can stand before God and hope to be justified, really shuts us up to the *mercy of God*. What a blessing this is! It provides a way that God may have mercy upon all—Jew or Gentile, religious or profane, moral or immoral—all: "For *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Away, then, with all these flimsy pretexts, these useless arguments, often used to cover an uneasy

conscience and a restless heart. Listen to the voice of God in the Gospel; "Through this Man (Christ Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

"We fly not now from that all-seeing eye,
Which once we shunned, to hide ourselves in night;
The blood that purged our sins has brought us nigh,
To dwell in God's own love, and walk in light."

T. R.

"By Faith."

(Hebrews xi. 23-26.)

THIS chapter brings before us different characters of faith as shown in the case of those who were raised up of God as His witnesses on earth, and whose history is given us in the Old Testament. Faith is infinitely precious; it is a gift of God, being the fruit of the operation of His grace in our souls, by means of the Word (Eph. ii. 8; Rom. x. 17).

The providential ordering of God in the case of Moses is remarkable. As his name signifies, he was "drawn out of the water," where he had been left to the Divine protection by his parents. Taken up by the king's daughter, he was educated at the court of Pharaoh in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Thus it is that God shows the vanity and futility of all the efforts of the enemy to frustrate His counsels.

The wicked king, without knowing it, took care of the man in whose hands the rod of authority and of judgment would be placed, which would strike him, destroying his power over the people of God. The position which Moses occupied at the court of Pharaoh

furnishes the occasion of showing us a new character of faith. Moses might have reasoned thus: "God it is who has placed me here, and I will remain here in order to be a help to my people by obtaining from the king an amelioration of their sad lot."

But no: the deliverance must come entirely from God. Thus Moses, taught by Him, *refuses* to remain in association with a world which was hostile to the Lord. He refuses just what our hearts seek after so ardently, what is the object of eager desire and unbridled pursuit by men here below—the honours, riches and pleasures of this world—to which his position as son of the king's daughter gave him full access. But how intelligent faith is; it enables us to know God's will now, and it calls us to flee from the wrath to come.

What was it, then, which attracted the heart of Moses, since it was not the honours of the royal court? "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We find here the *refusal* of faith, and the *choice* of faith. Was it because the people were in affliction that Moses was drawn towards them? No: it was because they were *the people of God*.

Like Joseph, Moses was in the secret of God's thoughts respecting this despised people (verse 22), and he desired to have his part with them in the blessings which were promised. These blessings come from God, and are infinitely superior to the things which the natural heart desires most, but which are only, for faith, "the pleasures *of sin*," which we can only enjoy "for a season"; whilst the heavenly blessings are permanent and eternal. For the time being, the

people of Israel were in affliction and disgrace; but God revealed to Moses *His* thoughts as to that nation. Later on, in the vision of the burning bush, He says, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them" (Exod. iii. 7-8).

We have seen first the *refusal*, then the *choice* of faith; we find next the *estimate* of faith, and, finally, the *respect* (or outlook) of faith: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." What does the "reproach of Christ" consist in? We have the explanation of it in chapter xiii. 11-14. After the blood of the sin-offering had been carried into the sanctuary, the body of the victim was burned outside the camp, as the expression of the absolute judgment of God poured out upon it.

Such was, indeed, the place taken by our precious Saviour in death, under the judgment of God, He "suffered without the gate." The place which belongs to us as those united to Him by faith, is identical with His: we have no longer our portion here below. Our place is that of rejection, of death, and of reproach. Let us take it, then, in the energy of faith, and let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. Like Moses, let us esteem that reproach "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

But we must not forget to consider also the other side of our position resulting from the work of the cross, and of which chapter x. 19-22 speaks to us. If our association with Christ leads us into a position of rejection, of suffering and of death as regards the world—and even as regards the religious world

represented by "the camp"—it introduces us also into the full glory of the heavenly sanctuary, into which He has entered. If we are called to "go forth" from the world which has rejected Him, we are also invited to "enter" with boldness into heaven itself which has received Him. This exchange is infinitely for the better, and faith estimates it to be so.

The so-called Christian world which surrounds us, clothes itself more and more with the character of Egypt. This latter is presented to us in Scripture as having the moral traits of a system which is hostile to God, having no link with Him; it is the present character of the scene through which we are passing. Although having a form of godliness, men deny the power thereof (2 Tim. iii. 5). Soon even this form will be given up, to give place to the apostasy, and to open revolt against God—a revolt which will end in the judgment of the "day of the Lord." Such will be the end of this world which boasts in its progress, its light, its riches; but which, like Egypt, draws all its resources from below, and rejects God, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." But "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psa. ii. 3, 4).

Finally, we find in the case of Moses, the "respect" (or outlook) of faith: "He had *respect* unto the recompence of the reward." His faith enabled him to rise above the time then present, and to look on to the glorious reward which God has in reserve for "those who diligently seek Him." Nothing can enable us to refuse the present, except this clear vision of the future, which faith in the sure promises of the Word gives us.

What immense grace to possess this priceless faith, and that, too, in days of unbelief and apostasy such as

(Continued on page 105)

ours! Let us fix our eyes firmly on this glorious and blessed object and end of faith; "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

May we, like Moses, "refuse" the glories, the riches, as well as the defiled things of this world, "choose" affliction and suffering with Christ and His people, "esteem" His reproach greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, and "have respect" to the recompence of the reward!

J. B.

The Church of God.

Its Destiny.

WE can thank God that the destiny of the Church of God does not depend on its keeping up to a certain standard, but upon His sovereign grace. "Christ loved the Church"; this was the source and spring whence all its blessings flowed. In love He "gave Himself for it." He did so "in order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word" [new trans.]. This is His present service in love. And all this, in order that "He might present the Church to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). This is the climax of His love, and it is the Church's ultimate destiny.

If we turn to John xvii. 24, we shall find another feature of the Lord's purpose of love: though the passage does not speak of the Church *as such*, but rather of the believer—"His own." His "will" or "desire," expressed on behalf of those He so dearly loved, not only as the purchase of His life's blood, but

as the gift of the Father, is that they should be with Him where He is, in heaven above. There, apart altogether from this world in the intimacy of personal communion with Himself, it shall be their unspeakable privilege to behold the display of *His* glory, and that in a scene where no outside element could disturb or interfere.

There is *a* glory which will be manifested before the world, and which we shall share with Him (Col. iii. 4); but the glory referred to in John xvii. is one which is personal and peculiar to the Lord Himself, which we shall "behold," but in which we shall not share. To behold this glory is a privilege reserved, in His ineffable grace, only for His own. Surely the thought of such grace cannot do otherwise than produce worship and adoration in our souls!

Passing on to Revelation xix., we find that, as soon as the false Church has been set aside and judged, the true Church is brought in, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Everything she has is that which grace has put upon her; she shines in a beauty not inherent in herself; "To her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen," etc. But the subject is not continued in this chapter, because it was necessary that the heads of the apostate powers of evil, the beast and false prophet, should first be judged, as well as Babylon, the apostate Church.

Turning now to chapter xxi. 9 *et seq.*, let us follow the history of the bride.

There can be no doubt that there is an intended contrast in these passages between the false Church and the true. It was the same angel who, in chapter xvii. 1, showed the seer the judgment of "Babylon the

great," and the same phrase is used, "He carried me away in the spirit." In the case of Babylon, he was carried into the wilderness: no springs of God were there, nothing to refresh the spiritual man. He sees a woman, a harlot, arrayed with everything that betokened human pomp and glory. It was that awful prostitution of the truth, seen chiefly in Romanism, but not there only, for it no doubt covers all that which made commerce out of religion, and used it for man's aggrandizement. It is judged and set aside for ever.

How far otherwise in the case of the true Church! Here the seer is carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, that from this vantage-point he might see "the holy city Jerusalem" (as it should read), the true Church; here viewed in her relation to the millennial earth. Holiness characterizes her, and every beauty she possesses is that which divine grace and love has bestowed.

In view of all that this grace has done, can we wonder that the outbreathing, as we may say, from the very soul of the bride, finds suited expression in that word addressed to Jesus Himself—"Come"? (xxii. 17). And it is interesting to note that it is the "Spirit *and* the bride" who say this; for the Holy Spirit it is who has formed, and who quickens, those affections towards her Lord. Nor is it the crown He gives or the glory He confers, which she longs to possess—blessed as these are—it is *Himself*!

And here let us remark, that it is that aspect of the coming of the Lord which is presented in 1 Thess. iv. 15-18, the "rapture" as we sometimes call it, which specially falls in with the truth we are now considering. For how suited it is that the church, which belongs to heaven even when on earth, and

whose calling and hopes are distinctively *heavenly*, should disappear from this world to meet the Lord in the air, without having to wait for the fulfilment of any of those signs or events which will take place afterwards on this earth.

Then finally, even in the eternal state, after the close of the millennial reign, we find in Rev. xxi. 2 the last reference to the Church. There we read of "the holy city, new Jerusalem," which is seen as coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This we take to be the Church, still maintained in her bridal freshness, after the thousand years reign is over, as before it. It also shows that the Church's special and peculiar place goes on even into eternity itself. What ineffable grace, and what a destiny !

F. G. B.

Jottings on the Epistle of Jude.

WHAT words of sweet encouragement, alongside words of solemn warning and exhortation, we find written by Jude in his short epistle of twenty-five verses !

Of what immense importance and intense interest is this last letter written to the saints, coming in as it does just before the book of Revelation.

Jude took up his pen to write to the "beloved," or "saints," of "the common salvation"—a happy and holy theme to be occupied with—and it was with all diligence this earnest servant of Jesus Christ was about to speak on such a subject, when his efforts were diverted into another channel, to communicate something more urgently needed.

Is not this an object-lesson, with a forceful meaning

for any and all servants of the Lord? We should be ready to lay aside our own thoughts and take God's thoughts of what is specially needed in these difficult times for the welfare of saints, who are three times addressed by Jude as "beloved," thus showing how he enters into his Lord and Master's love for His own.

In the first two verses, a threefold cord encircles each and every saint—"beloved" in God the Father, "preserved" in Jesus Christ, and "called."

In verse 3, we have the exhortation, "that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." How needful this earnest united effort to contend together, as one man, to maintain the faith once delivered to the saints. It is the body of truth, unchanged and unchangeable, which we have in the Scripture of truth, and it all centres in "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

In verses 4 to 16 the apostle portrays for us the enemies of the truth, and the dark and deepening course of evil which has gone on through the ages. But God foreknew all, and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these ungodly men, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," etc.

In verse 17 we read, "But, beloved," and again in verse 20, "But ye, beloved," etc. The word "but" is like a sharp turning-point in a road; and so, after speaking of all the evil, which began by "certain men crept in unawares," and went on to "evil speakers," "mockers," "murmurers," etc., we turn to the precious provision for the man of God.

Someone has remarked that verses 20-21 give us what those whom he addresses as "Ye beloved" are to do Godward; and verses 22-23 what they were to

do towards others. Theirs was a "*most holy*" faith—striking contrast to all the ungodliness spoken of—and they were to build themselves up on that faith, in dependence on God, "praying in the Holy Ghost." The more deeply sensible we are of the awful evil which surrounds us in the world, and within the professing church; the more we should be found in the place of prayer and dependence on God.

The last two verses show us what God is able to do for all His own, His beloved saints. He is "able to keep" them, not only from "falling" but from "stumbling," as the word really means; and to present them "faultless" before the presence of His glory, "with exultation." This produces the grateful praise and worship with which the epistle closes, and we can truly add our "Amen." U. G.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

RESURRECTION.—That the saints will rise when Christ comes, is a thing acknowledged, as we have seen (1 Cor. xv. 23; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. iv. 15–17). In the Apocalypse xix., xx., we get details. There we see that the resurrection of the saints will precede, by a thousand years, the resurrection of the rest of the dead, in order that they who have suffered with Christ should also reign with Him when He takes the kingdom, and that they should appear with Him in glory when He appears, Who is their life.

Christian, do you know the power of the resurrection of Christ? Are your thoughts, as those of one who is risen with Him, set on things above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God? . . . Are you, as being raised up with Him, dead to sin, dead to the pleasures,

the greatness, the fading glory, of the world which crucified the Lord of glory ?

J. N. D.

THE CHURCH.—Whilst waiting, what is the place and calling of the Church ? We have said that the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, gathers her upon the earth. If the Bridegroom delays His coming ; and if souls go to wait with Him for the moment of the assembling of all that are His raised or changed in His presence in the air, those of the redeemed who remain gathered down here where the Holy Ghost the Comforter abides, always form the Church. There may be ignorance, the members may be scattered here and there, the Church may have been unfaithful and stripped of her ornaments ; but it remains equally true, that until Christ calls her to meet Him in heaven, she is always the Church, always the bride of Christ. She has been espoused as a chaste virgin to Him ; but it is to a *heavenly* Christ.

It is not merely that the Church has a heavenly calling ; this is not the whole truth as to her relations with Christ. She is also His bride and His body. When all the thoughts of God have been fulfilled, she will, as a fact, be *with* Him. Her thoughts and her character are (or at least they ought to be) formed after her portion, according to God. She is already united to Christ by the Spirit. . . . The bride should manifest her attachment to the Bridegroom—she is wholly and exclusively *His* !

J. N. D.

“YOUR HOUR.”—When the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders, came to take the Lord Jesus (Luke xxii. 47–53), He calmly submitted, and said, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Do

we realize that it is still man's "hour," and that this world, whether in its religious or political form, is under the power of darkness? John says, "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." But whether we realize it or not, it is a fact that this awful combination is still characteristic of the world, "Your hour *and* the power of darkness." Doubtless these two characteristics of the world are as apparent to-day, perhaps more apparent, than ever they were. How far are our life's interests and hopes linked up with a world which so treated the Lord of glory? [Ed.]

"Meditation of Him."

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Ps. civ. 34).

I JOURNEY through a desert drear and wild,
Yet is my heart by such sweet thoughts beguil'd,
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I can forget the sorrows of the way.

Thoughts of *His love*—the spring of every grace,
Which find in this poor world a dwelling place,
The sunshine of my soul, than day more bright,
And my calm pillow of repose by night.

Thoughts of *His coming*—for that joyful day
In patient hope I watch, and wait, and pray:
The day draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee;
O, what a sunrise will His advent be!

Thus, while I journey on my Lord to meet,
My thoughts, my meditations are so sweet,
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I can forget the sorrows of the way.

“Soberly, Righteously and Godly.”

Titus ii. 12.

THE same grace of God which “brings salvation” teaches the Christian how to live; namely, “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

Sometimes, when insisting on the former, that is, the “salvation” which grace brings, we are only too ready to forget the latter—the *practical* side of the question.

What testimony do we bear for Christ in our every-day life and walk? What have those we meet with in the workshop, the office, or the home, got to say about us? These are practical questions which we do well to consider.

“SOBERLY.” How important it is that we should not be carried away by the impulses of our own mind and will, but walk as those who feel the weight of things in the presence of God. Timothy was told to be “sober in all things”: not easily carried away by his own desires or ideas, or by the current around.

“RIGHTEOUSLY.” This, too, is most important; for we are responsible to act righteously towards others; and that not only in the payment of our just debts, but in every other way as well.

“GODLY.” Godliness, or piety, is to mark the Christian in his path here. “Piety is profitable unto all things,” and “Piety with contentment is great gain”; so said the apostle to Timothy. It is a sure mark of one who is living, not merely so as to please man, but in the light, under the eye of God.

Alas, how often Christians have given the enemy occasion to blaspheme, as David did (2 Sam. xii. 14), by their unwatchfulness and inconsistent conduct!

And in these days of widespread profession, practical godliness, uprightness and consistency in our everyday life and walk, is what tells in the long run.

May we remember this and seek grace to walk in humility and self-judgment, and to witness for Christ during the little while He leaves us in this world.

F. G. B.

The Word of God and Prayer.

Ephesians vi. 17-18.

“**T**AKE the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Having been formed by the Word so as to resist the enemy, we have now to take up that same Word, as a sword, in order to compel him to give way.

It is important to remark that Christians do not obtain any real effect from the Word, they cannot gain any victory by it, and scarcely know its use, if they have not experienced its efficacy for themselves, and if it has not formed them individually in such a way as to enable them to resist the seductions of Satan. We must have inward and personal experience of the power of the Word in order to be able to make use of it in favour of others. The rivers of water only flow out from our inmost parts when, having thirsted ourselves, we have come to Jesus to drink.

It is the same thing in the 1st Epistle of John: “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” The young men were strong; they were “strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” The *Word of God abode in them*: they had taken up the defensive parts of the armour, and

experienced the lasting effect of the Word of God in their heart, *before* taking the sword. Thus they had *overcome the wicked one*—it is the sword, the offensive arm, which follows personal preparation.

This same inward preparation is expressed in Ephesians iii. 16 in these words: “Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” We see then (verses 18–19), that on this powerful action of the Holy Ghost within us, depends our highest enjoyment as to the promised land, and as to the knowledge of Christ, His love, and His glories.

Chapter iv. of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows us that this sword is the Word of God. After it has exercised its action in our heart, as we have already seen, to teach us to judge ourselves thoroughly, we can take it up as an arm to reach the conscience of others. It is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit alone can give to it its keen edge and cause it to penetrate into the hearts of others as it has already entered into ours. It is by it that we can make bare the designs of Satan, of which we would be ignorant, in such a way that the “simple” may be safeguarded from his attacks. And finally, it is by it that we can render nugatory the subtleties and lies put forward in order to hinder us from maintaining our position in the heavenly places, or from conquering new ones.

However, let us repeat, that the warfare of the Epistle to the Ephesians has for its principal object to assure to Christians the possession and enjoyment of their heavenly inheritance.

* * * * *

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. vi. 18).

*

Prayer is the expression of *dependence*; it is also the expression of the *Spirit in us*, going up to God by our means in order to bring about results which He alone can produce. Prayer takes all kinds of forms, from the simplest requests to the most urgent supplications. Such were the forms which the prayers of our beloved Saviour Himself took, even to His "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" in Gethsemane.

Daniel took the same attitude when he contended in favour of his people. He said, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." In running over the Psalms we find all shades and forms of prayer; and, in fact, this book might, for a great part of it, be entitled the book of prayer.

Philippians iv. 6 tells us the same thing, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Only that, in this case, prayer has, as its subject, our personal needs; whereas in the Epistle to the Ephesians, its object is to sustain the saints—"all saints"—in the conflict; and even Paul their captain, under the Commander-in-Chief, Christ Himself. Paul needed boldness in the Gospel, and prayer, the arm which the Spirit uses, was at the disposal of all the saints, to ask that he might be strengthened in the combat.

Do we sufficiently think of the value of prayer? Do we give ourselves to prayer as we ought? By it we can join in the conflict *with* the Lord's servants, as well as *for* them (Rom. xv. 30). It was thus that Paul contended for the Colossians. Epaphras did the same (Col. ii. 1; iv. 12). Prayer certainly formed a part

of the conflict in which the sisters were associated with the apostle in the Gospel (Phil. iv. 3).

Prayer is, then, together with the sword of the Spirit, an arm to be used on the offensive, *par excellence*. Are not the two pillars of Christianity the Word of God and prayer? The Word is the testimony before the world and is addressed to it; prayer is that which is addressed to God alone.

H. R. (Vevey).

A Booth in a Vineyard.

“ Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah ” (Isa. i. 9.)

AMIDST the moral ruin of Judah and Jerusalem the prophet recognizes a reserved remnant, preserved, no doubt, in divine grace, from the sins and wickednesses of the masses of the people. This small remnant of godly men and women, or some of them at least, would probably constitute the prophet's chief companions. He would often be meeting these friends as individuals, and sometimes, perhaps, a little company of them would be meeting together with him for prayer. In passing, we may just notice that the apostle Paul is led to apply this Scripture to the “ Remnant according to the election of grace,” saved through faith in Christ from among the Jews in his own day.

It is possible to take too despairing a view of the spiritual condition of things in our midst, as Elijah did when he said, “ I only am left.” The Lord replied to Elijah's pessimism by announcing to him that He, Jehovah, had reserved to Himself seven thousand men, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the above words, in Isaiah i. 8, are not the language, merely, of a despondent prophet; they are part of a divinely-given

vision to Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet is divinely inspired to present a true picture of the state of things in and around Jerusalem in his own day, though in language which applies to other periods of Israel's life. None the less, we may be sure there were men who lacked the vision which Isaiah possessed, and who regarded him as a very narrow-minded man. The false prophets of Israel were prone to bolster up the people with false hopes, to promise them victories over their enemies which were never won, and to delude them with a false security, which, in the end, proved to be their ruin.

Though not prophets in the full sense of the word in which Isaiah was, it becomes the servants of the Lord in these days, to be divinely instructed as to the true state of things in their own day and generation, as they are called to labour for the Lord. The New Testament, and in particular the letters to the seven Churches in Rev. ii. and iii., leave us without excuse if we are found lacking the true vision. Isaiah wrote in the power of the Spirit, and *we* ought to be guided by the Spirit of God in what we say, or else to hold our tongues.

It would seem that verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah i. ought to be taken together, and verse 8 may be understood to apply to the godly remnant of verse 9: "The daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers."

Now the owner of a vineyard would not put a booth in such a place merely for pleasure or residential purposes. Nor would the cultivator of a garden of cucumbers or melons choose such a spot for his abode. These poor and temporary screens from the weather, which a strong wind might easily blow down, were

erected in view of the care and protection needed for the ripening fruits of the earth. Those who are familiar with the East often meet with such temporary structures in summer-time, in country places. They furnish shelter for the time being for labourers and watchmen.

Might not the prophet and his companions well regard themselves as labourers and watchmen? They laboured, and watched over the nation's weal. They loved righteousness and hated iniquity. They mourned and wept over the departure of the masses from the truth of God. They keenly felt the sins of the professing people of Jehovah. And if they compared themselves to a booth in a vineyard, they thereby expressed a sense of their own feeble and pilgrim character.

It is with those who are truly God's servants and pilgrims, that the vision of God abides in these days. They are not to be deceived by false appearances, just as Isaiah was not to be taken in by the false prophets. They know that there are tares among the wheat, foolish virgins among the wise virgins; and that the leaven of wickedness is most surely working out its own predicted course. A form of godliness without its power cannot mislead such persons as these. Having learned that such a state would be fatal to themselves, they are in the best position to judge in relation to others. They know that even orthodox religion without holiness is unbearable to the Lord. Like Isaiah, they feel they must plead for true repentance on the part of those who would be partakers of divine mercy; for mercy, as well as judgment, forms part of this vision. But it is mercy to those who are willing and obedient. And oh, what mercy! Mercy to men whose hands are stained with blood, mercy to the most advanced hypocrites, mercy to the men who compose the city,

which, figuratively, is called Sodom and Gomorrah, if they will only repent.

May God's word search our hearts, break us down if need be, and lift us up again to a fuller enjoyment and appreciation of His forgiveness through the blood of Christ. And may we share, in our measure, God's own vision of the state of the world, and of the Church, and be enabled to pass it on to others; and may we be found of Him without spot and blameless.

T. H. (China).

The Ministry of Angels.

THE subject of angelic ministry is one that does not seem to have been dwelt upon to any extent by those who are gifted to minister the Word.

Angels appear to have been those through whom divine action was frequently manifested or divine messages transmitted. The Jewish system was inaugurated by the instrumentality of angels, and the law was communicated by their means. The angels of God, creatures near to Him, holy beings, agents of His power and government, were used to convey the mind of God, they were the agents through whom men learned the ways of God. Although beings of so exalted a nature, they stood in relation to God as His servants. They never acted on their own initiative. They were sent as representatives to carry out the will of God.

As it would be impossible in a short paper to point out all the incidents in Scripture where angels were used to carry out the will of God, a few of these may be mentioned. It was through the medium of an angel that God stayed the hand of Abraham ready to slay his son Isaac (Gen. xxii. 11), and brought the children of

(Continued on page 121)

Israel out of Egypt (Num. xx. 16). It was an angel whose hand was stretched out to destroy Jerusalem when the Lord stayed his hand, saying, "It is enough" (2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17). It was an angel sent by Jehovah who shut the mouths of the lions (Dan. vi. 22).

When we come to the New Testament we read that the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin whose name was Mary (Luke i. 26-38). Previous to this incident, we find an angel appeared to Zacharias with an announcement (Luke i. 11-20). And again, "an angel went down at a certain season into the pool (Bethesda) and troubled the water" (John v. 4). There is no doubt that the two men referred to as appearing in white clothing when the Lord was taken up and a cloud received Him out of sight, were angelic beings (Acts i. 10, 11). Peter's release from prison is a striking instance of the carrying out the will of God for the deliverance of His servant through the medium of an angel (Acts xii. 7-10). We find that the Revelation was also given through angelic ministry as stated in Rev. i. 1: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him . . . and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."

Now since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, men have the mind of God conveyed to them by *His word* in the power of *the Holy Ghost*; as the apostle Paul so clearly puts it, "Now we have received . . . *the Spirit which is of God*; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak . . . which *the Holy Ghost teacheth*, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," or, as it should be rendered, "Communicating spiritual things by spiritual means" (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13).

When God introduced the First-begotten into the

world He said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. i. 6). In the language of another, "The highest of created beings must, when God introduces His First-born into the world, cast themselves at His feet. The angels of God, the creatures that are nearest to Him, must do homage to the Firstborn." This is said of the Son of David, "I will make him my *firstborn*, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxxix. 27). The angels are called upon to worship the Man of God's choice, and this they will do when they accompany and surround Him in the day of His earthly power and glory.

Another thing is said of the angels, "He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire," and then He turns to *the Son*, saying, "Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (Heb. i. 7, 8). He will have an earthly throne, but *this* will be an eternal one. Angels have no part in government or judgment, the sceptre will be in the hands of Him of whom it is said, "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (Heb. i. 8). The world to come is not put in subjection to the authority of angels. The execution of the sentence of judgment will take place in their presence (Rev. xiv. 10). This government will be in the hands of the One chosen by God for the purpose, He who is Messiah and will be King in Zion. He is, and will be, the sole authoritative arbiter of the eternal destinies of the human race—angels have no part whatever in this. Angels, authorities and powers are subject to that blessed One at the right hand of God (1 Pet. iii. 22). It was never said to any angel, "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Heb. i, 13). They are servants, on God's part, to the heirs of

salvation. We have seen how angels are worshippers and render praise (Heb. i. 6 ; Ps. xlviii. 2).

The dangers that beset the early Christians in not holding the Head, are dangers that characterize the Lord's people in the present time. Paul found it necessary to warn the believers in Colosse against men who were trying to introduce a "semblance of humility and self-denial as regards the body," with which was linked the worshipping of angels, putting them into a false mediatorial position (Col. ii. 18). This would be resented by angels themselves, as we read in Rev. xxii. 8, "And I John saw these things and heard them, and when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not ; for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book : *worship God.*"

We read in Scripture that angels excel in strength (Ps. ciii. 20 ; 2 Pet. ii. 11 ; Rev. v. 2), and they were witnesses of the Lord's resurrection (John xx. 12) ; they even ministered to Him at various times (Matt. iv. 11 ; Luke xxii. 43) ; but it would appear that, as to knowledge, they are limited. There are things, as we are told, which they desire to look into (1 Pet. i. 12). These were, no doubt, things in connection with the new covenant, and God's purposes and counsels centred around the One of whom, and of whose sufferings, prophecy spoke. This was the ministry of the prophets, which they did not understand themselves, and about which the angels desired to be informed.

Thus while we have dwelt somewhat upon the blessed service of these holy beings who do, and will do, homage to the Man of God's purposes and counsels, it does not

seem to be recorded that they praise God *in song*. Referring to that portion of Scripture which is often taken as stating what is thought to be the praise of angels in song, it reads, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and *saying*, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill toward men" (Luke ii. 13, 14). Again, in Revelation v. 11, 12, we read, "And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne . . . and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, *saying* with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

It is given to a redeemed people to sing a song of redemption, as for instance the children of Israel redeemed from Egypt (Exod. xv.). The nations will sing in a time to come (Psalm lxvii. 4). Then we have the song of those redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as we read, "And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Rev. v. 9). Angels are not redeemed beings. There are also songs in Scripture of thanksgiving for mercies vouchsafed to one and another which the reader can search out for himself.

In conclusion, it might be stated that angels are witnesses of divine order; so that the man, who is the image and glory of God, when praying or prophesying, is to uncover his head, and the woman was to be covered on account of the angels, who are looking on; and who, as another has said, are spectators of the ways of God in the dispensation of redemption, and of the effect which this marvellous intervention was to produce.

J. P. (Montreal).

King Joash.

2 Chronicles xxiv.

THE history of this king teaches us some important lessons. At his birth it seemed as if he would perish by the cruel hand of Athaliah, who slew all the seed royal. But the infant king's aunt, Jehoshebeath, stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and he was hid in the house of God six years. Thus God, in His providence, watched over the line of those from whom Christ was to spring. Also Joash was a type of Christ, brought out at the right moment as the Messiah, to reign.

For twenty-three years or so, during the lifetime of the high priest Jehoiada, Joash did that which was right before God. He seems, however, to have walked in the faith of another rather than in his own. Yet he acted with energy, insisted on the collection of the money required for repairing the breaches in the house of God, which had been desecrated during the reign of the wicked Athaliah, and saw that the work was duly carried out.

True, it was a time of much evil and corruption in Israel, yet in the midst of it all the maintenance of that which was connected with the owning of God and His worship, was right and pleasing to Him.

To-day, it is a day of ruin in the church of God, this is apparent to any spiritual mind ; yet we are responsible to maintain and confess the truth, and seek to forward the work of the Lord, as much and even more than in days of spiritual power and progress.

But after the death of Jehoiada the priest, his faithful guide and instructor, Joash fell under the evil influence of the princes of Judah. The consequence was that he

turned completely away from God and served groves and idols. God sent warnings through His prophets and through Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who had succeeded his father as high priest. But, having taken one downward step, Joash went on to the terrible wickedness of commanding him to be stoned in the court of the Lord's house.

Can anything be worse than listening to evil counsellors? We have only to look at the history of the Church of God, to see how much harm has been done by such, and probably we have all suffered from the effects of wrong counsel in some way or other. Let us remember that the only safe place is to be truly dependent on the Lord and to be guided by His word. This *direct reference* of the soul to God about everything, is as much needed now as ever.

But judgment, swift and solemn, fell upon Joash. At the end of the year the army of Syria came up against him, and *the Lord delivered* a great company into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. These Syrians were the rod in God's hand to execute His judgment against Joash and his advisers. And this was not all; for his own servants conspired against him and slew him on his bed. Thus ended the sad history and reign of forty years; begun well, but ruined by that weakness which lent an ear to the enemy.

What a solemn thing it is to have to do with God! How many people to-day—even true Christians—treat the things of God lightly, and fail in separation from the evil influences of the world! However great His patience and forbearance may be, yet “Our God is a consuming fire,” ready to deal with all that is opposed to His holy nature. In view of this we can surely say, with the prophet, “O Lord, correct me, but with

measure ; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing " (Jer. x. 24 ; comp. chap. xxx. 11 ; xlv. 28).

F. G. B.

Four Crowns.

FOUR crowns are presented in Scripture as rewards to those who, in the path of faith, strive lawfully for the mastery.

Grace gives to the *undeserving* ; *righteousness* rewards the deserving. *Now* is the time to run so that we may obtain ; *now* or never. The presentation of the prizes will be at the coming great day. The present is " man's day ; " the " day of the Lord " is after man's day is over.

1. AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN. " Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible."

2. A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This crown, the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to Paul, that veteran runner in the race, in the day of His appearing ; and not to him only. The qualification for this reward is to " love His appearing."

3. THE CROWN OF LIFE. For " enduring temptation," going through it with God, not overcome by it. The Lord has promised this crown to those who love Him, those who have been sustained and made more than conquerors in the trial.

4. A CROWN OF GLORY. This crown is for those who " feed the flock of God," who are " ensamples to the flock." We have an object-lesson in the way the apostle Peter was trained and commissioned by the Lord Himself to " feed My sheep," " feed My lambs." This is a service of the highest order. " Food convenient," " meat in due season," appear to be rather

rarities and scarcities with the scattered flock to-day. May many be raised up by the Chief Shepherd, and in love to Him go forth to shepherd the lambs and sheep of His flock, and thus obtain the crown of glory that fadeth not away !

These four crowns are promised in order to encourage, energize and stimulate, in all circumstances, in pursuing the path of faith.

U. G.

He Leadeth Me.

ALL the way my Saviour leads me ;
 What have I to seek beside ?
 Can I doubt His tender mercy,
 Who through life has been my guide ?
 Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
 Here by faith in Him to dwell !
 For I know whate'er befall me,
 Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me ;
 Cheers each winding path I tread,
 Gives me grace for every trial,
 Feeds me with the living bread.
 Though my weary steps may falter,
 And my soul athirst may be,
 Gushing from the Rock before me,
 Lo, a spring of joy I see !

All the way my Saviour leads me—
 Oh, the fulness of His love !
 Perfect rest to me is promised
 In my Father's house above :
 When my spirit, clothed immortal,
 Wings its flight to realms of day,
 This my song through endless ages—
 " Jesus led me all the way " !

Watch and Pray.

Mark xiii. 33.

THIS is a most suitable and needed exhortation to the disciple, and especially to the servant of God. The word here translated "watch" contains the idea of remaining awake at night, and indicates that attitude of sleepless vigilance which is on the alert against whatever danger may arise. It is just the opposite of the condition of being drowsy and overcome by sleep.

A recent correspondent writes, "How is it that there is so much *lukewarmness* amongst many of the Lord's dear people? Something seems to have crept in with some of us that acts just like a narcotic."

Yes, it is too true; many things have crept in which challenge the place Christ should have in the hearts of His people. This is one of the causes of lukewarmness. Besides this, there is also the danger of getting weary because of the way—the constant pressure of trials and difficulties, the wear and tear of life, the warfare against those things which oppose us in pursuing the path of faith.

Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. We have a heavenly Saviour who never ceases to care for His own; a High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us and who is able to sustain us in passing through this world, which is, spiritually, a dry and thirsty land.

And if we are disposed to be cast down and feel our want of strength, let us have recourse to *prayer*. Prayer places us in contact with an infinite source of supply, in the living God Himself. In prayer we can lay down our burdens at the throne of grace and find seasonable help in our need.

Witness the blessed example of our Lord Himself. He passed a whole night in prayer, He rose up early in

the morning to engage in prayer; and when the dark shadows of the cross fell upon His path and the anticipation of the cup of which He was about to drink pressed in upon His soul, then He prayed "more earnestly."

May we, too, in our small way, find our resource in prayer—the expression of dependence on the God of all grace—so that, whatever the trial may be, or however much we may realize our weakness, we may find relief and comfort, joy and strength, in God Himself. F. G. B.

"But their eyes were holden."

Luke xxiv. 16.

ONE of the most beautiful and instructive incidents in which Scripture abounds is that of the journey of the two disciples of the Lord to Emmaus. On this resurrection morning, instead of remaining at Jerusalem where blessing was in store for them, these two disciples were turned aside by events which had such a crushing effect upon their spirits, that they appeared to lead them to put a distance between themselves and the place and surroundings that had been the scene of such terrible acts.

To one carefully reading the narrative, it is clear that disappointment at the course of events so contrary to their expectations and desires, prompted them to take the journey recorded.

But they were not to be long alone. Their conversation had been *overheard*! Does not this remind us of those of whom we read, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord *hearkened* and *heard* it" (Malachi iii. 16)? The One they were conversing about drew near and went with them, "*but their eyes were holden so as not to know Him*" (verse 16, New Trans.).

What was the film that covered the vision of these dear men? Was it not the film that covers the vision of the majority of the Lord's people in the present day? As another has said, their minds were lingering round the thought of an *earthly* kingdom. "But *we* had hoped that he was the One who is about to redeem Israel" (verse 21, N.T.). Their thoughts were of an earthly character, they failed to see in the One who had become their journeying companion, a risen man. His death had separated Him from them, and their hopes were shattered as to His being the Redeemer of Israel. He had died on the cross. Occupation with earthly hopes had dimmed their vision and had hindered their knowledge of the heavenly stranger now risen from the grave; it was this occupation that had "holden their eyes so as not to know Him." This film covered their vision, and the result was shown in their condition of soul.

The majority of the Lord's people in our day have not very much more light in their knowledge of the truth of God than these two sorrowful and downcast disciples. That which occupies the mind of the majority of believers in the Lord Jesus is the erroneous idea of a general resurrection, followed by a judgment at the great white throne; and a hope of going to heaven when they die. The main cause of this ignorance of coming events is, of course, a lack of the prayerful study of the Word of God.

There is to-day in Christendom much of that which will be an actual fact in a future day, as we read in Amos viii. 11—a famine "*of hearing the words of the Lord.*" The resurrection of the dead was a common belief in our Lord's day, with the exception of the Sadducees (Luke xx. 27), and also in the days of the Apostles (Acts xxiii. 6, 7, 8). Although the Lord

*

clearly stated the fact of two separate resurrections (John v. 29). He was not understood. The disciples Peter, James, and John, who had been on the mount with the Lord, were much perplexed when He "charged them that they should tell no man what they had seen till the Son of man were risen *from among* the dead"; "and they kept that saying, questioning among themselves what the rising *from among* the dead was" (Mark ix. 9, 10, N.T.).

They understood a resurrection *of* the dead, in a general way, but did not understand a separate resurrection of the just and of the unjust.

In 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18, we get a clear account of the revelation made to the Apostle Paul of the coming of the Lord for the living and the sleeping saints. The wicked dead are not included in this blessed event and will not be raised until after the thousand years, spoken of in Rev. xx, are finished (ver. 5).

We see, then, how the *eyes are holden* so as not to see the truth, when the mind is obscured by error concerning future events. To be unduly occupied with what mainly concerns the Lord in connection with the place He *will* occupy when the prophecy contained in the second Psalm has its fulfilment, is to fall very far short of the truth that places the believer in the present enjoyment of what the Spirit of God opens up to him in the Word. Before the Lord deals in any way with what the Scriptures foretell in connection with God's earthly people, He will first remove His Church from the earth to meet Him in the air, as is clearly stated in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

How few have their eyes open to receive comfort from this very precious portion of the Word! The consequence of this is that *their eyes are holden* from knowing the Lord fully as risen and glorified. In the

language of another, "True spiritual growth and spiritual enjoyment are dependent upon two things, the daily meditation of God's Holy Word and prayer." Both go together. These cannot be separated. Real meditation on the Word is communion with God. He speaks through His Word to our hearts, and by far the best preparation for praise and prayer is the reading of it. If this is neglected, neglect of prayer follows, and then there is no spiritual growth and enjoyment.

These films over the spiritual vision can only be removed by the Lord Himself. Although the Lord expounded to the two disciples the Scriptures relating to Himself, beginning from Moses and all the prophets, their eyes were closed to the glory of His Person until He removed the film. By a simple action, probably well known to them in their previous intercourse with the Lord, "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (ver. 31, New Trans.).

There are films of various characters that cloud our spiritual vision—legality, worldliness, looseness of walk, etc. May the Lord lead all our hearts to be, not only *waiting*, but *watching* for His coming. In every chapter in both Epistles to the Thessalonians, there is a reference to this blessed event, either His coming *for* or *with* His saints. May we, one and all, be able, in the communion of the Spirit, to respond to His own words, "Behold I come quickly," and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

J. P. (Montreal).

The Gospel.

"Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15).

EVERY Christian should be, in some way at least, a preacher of the Gospel. That does not mean that all are called to stand on a platform and address

an audience: it may be teaching in a Sunday-school, or distributing Gospel magazines and tracts, or a simple believer speaking to a friend.

It is true that there is much to discourage workers in the Gospel field if we look at things as *we* see them—the prevailing indifference, carelessness, etc.; but, from God's side, there is everything to encourage.

The preacher of the Gospel tells of a God of love, who desires that all men should be saved, of a God who beseeches men to be reconciled to Him and who rejoices in the blessing and salvation of the lost. If our hearts and desires do not go out in active sympathy with God's heart of love, we shall soon get into a dried-up and barren state of soul, and we shall become narrow and sectarian in spite of ourselves.

But does it not encourage us to remember the preacher's mission? He carries a message of peace into a world of strife, turmoil and discord. He speaks of a Saviour whose blood shed on the cross is efficacious to cleanse the vilest sinner who repents and believes. He proclaims to the weary and heavy-laden one, that rest and peace which can be found in Christ alone.

The sphere of his work is as wide as the poles. It is not confined within the limits of any race, nation, people, or religious denomination. It is to "all the world," "every creature which is under heaven." To anyone who will hear he speaks of a once crucified, but now risen and glorified Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them.

And oh, how important the message! how momentous the issues at stake! The destiny of immortal souls hangs in the balance—an eternity to be spent in the everlasting joys of heaven, or the everlasting sufferings of hell.

Surely the thought of these things should arrest us. The burden of unsaved souls around us should be laid upon our hearts. It should bring us into the presence of God in earnest prayer that sinners might be saved. Time is slipping away quickly, the night cometh when no man can work. There are needy and thirsty ones around us if we could only find them out and gain their confidence and their ear.

Above all, let us get into touch with the Lord Himself. His heart goes out after the wanderers and the lost : let our hearts beat in sympathy with His, who wept over Jerusalem, and said, "How often WOULD I . . ." even if, alas, He had to add, "But ye WOULD NOT."

The Antichrist.—1.

Revelation xiii. 11-18 ; 2 Thessalonians ii.

It cannot but be apparent to the thoughtful reader of the following article that the same principles and elements which will be fully manifested under the Antichrist in a future day, are being increasingly developed in the world to-day. We may see them plainly in the socialistic, lawless, and infidel spirit of the age. God tells us these things in His Word so that we may be forewarned, and thus forearmed.—[ED.]

THERE are two great instruments of Satan which we find in Revelation xiii. and which are manifested after the Holy Spirit, with the Church, shall have left the scene of this world. These instruments are the beast which arises out of the sea (ver. 1, etc.), and the one which arises out of the earth (ver. 11, etc.). This latter is seen, in this chapter especially, as a political power whose authority is exercised in Judea, and as a religious and moral power whose influence will extend over all the earth.

The Antichrist will possess a kingly power, recognized by the apostate Jewish nation ; for this terrible personage is called "the King" who "will do according to his

will " (Dan. xi. 36 ; Isa. lvii. 9). His Jewish origin is indicated in the words, " Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers " (Dan. xi. 37) ; that is to say, that he will be apostate as regards the promises made to the fathers. The prophetic words of Jacob as to Dan reveal to us, possibly, his origin, " Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward " (Gen. xlix. 17). In this same passage the godly remnant expresses its confidence in God in its distress, " I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." This will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. xxx. 7) ; a period of unequalled anguish (Mark xiii. 19, 20), which must last 1,260 days, and from which the faithful ones will be delivered by the glorious appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven (Mark xiii. 26, 27).

Various passages in the New Testament show us the moral traits of this formidable instrument of the enemy. Thus, he is called " the Antichrist " (1 John ii. 22) and " the man of sin " (2 Thess. ii. 3). In him are manifested all the fruits of the Fall in their full maturity, all the characters of the sin of man in open rebellion against God—his pride, his iniquity and his apostasy. He is also " the son of perdition," who has rejected the salvation offered in the Gospel of God's grace, and who drags down to perdition those who follow him. He will sit down in the temple of God (2 Thess. ii. 4), the place set apart for worship according to the Jewish system then restored, where he will present himself, showing himself that " he is God."

Such will be the honours claimed by this rebellious creature, and accorded to him—one in whom is personified all the iniquity and apostasy of man at the instigation of Satan. What a contrast between the treatment which he will receive and that which was meted out to

(Continued on page 137)

the holy Son of God, who was crucified at the place called Calvary (Luke xxiii. 33), a place defiled by heaps of the skulls of criminals who were executed there.

Even now, at the present moment, one finds these two currents in the world. On the one hand, hatred against God and His Christ; of which we have the expression in Ps. ii., and which shows itself in mockeries and insults against God and those who bear testimony for Him: on the other, the exaltation of man in his pride and his apostasy. Monuments are even raised to wicked men who corrupt and mislead their fellows.

Thus everything is preparing for the moment when evil will reach its climax on the earth, and when the lie of Satan to the first man, "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen. iii. 5), will be fully declared. When the fallen creature aspires to make himself equal with God, seeking to arrogate the glory which belongs to Him alone; he draws down upon himself the swift judgment of the One who will not give His glory to another (Isa. xlii. 8).

This second beast arises "out of the earth" (Rev. xiii. 11); the first arises "out of the sea" (ver. 1), the latter (the sea) being an image of the chaos which will characterize the scene of this world when the Roman Empire is re-established. "The earth" is an image of the state of things organized according to the Jewish model. In that new social order everything will be put under the sway of this Satanic power. It is out of that state of things that "the king who shall do according to his will" shall arise in Judea.

He will be the representative of the political head of the Empire, the first beast; his intense activity is accompanied by miracles which are the fruits of the powerful working of Satan, and which will have as their object to lead the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed (ver. 12).

This second beast is viewed as having "two horns like a lamb," that is to say clothed with the double character of king and prophet. It is in this latter aspect that he will exercise his moral influence over all those who "have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved." "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a *lie*"; this lie, which will be supported by "all power and signs and lying wonders," will have for its object to make the Antichrist pass before men as the true God.

There are upon this beast two horns "like a lamb"; he will present himself to the apostate Jewish nation as their promised Messiah, as the Lord said, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43). But his voice betrays who he really is, for he speaks "as a dragon" (xiii. 11). There is therefore found in him the imitation of the characters and glories of Christ, who will be King and Priest on His throne, exercising authority on God's part over the earth and bringing down blessing from heaven as the true Melchisedec, High Priest, and King of righteousness and peace.

J. B.

The Power of the Spirit.

"And see the Spirit's power
Has ope'd the heavenly door,
That leads me to that favour'd hour
When toil shall all be o'er."

A VALUABLE instalment of blessing is this, but it is far from all that the Holy Spirit has done, and is doing, in this the day of His special presence upon earth. It is of inestimable value to have the future rest and glory opened to us in a way that not only

dispels doubt and anxiety, but fills the soul with joy and peace in believing. But besides all this, His power is to mark the present day in such a way as to entitle it to be regarded as the *Spirit's* "day."

Did not our Lord Himself say, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you . . . and when He is come, He will reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xvi. 7, 8)?

To comment briefly on this passage, with much besides which the Lord said of the Holy Spirit in that memorable last discourse, would require more space than is at our disposal. It may be sufficient to call attention to the three things He was to do in the world when come—to convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And three things He would do in, or for, the disciples—"He will guide you into all truth" . . . "He will show you things to come" . . . "He will glorify Me" (John xvi. 13, 14),

The presence of the Holy Spirit on the earth was to be the demonstration to the world of the first three things mentioned above. Of sin, because God being fully revealed in love in the Son, man would not receive Him. Of righteousness, in that Christ went to the Father and the world saw Him no more. Of judgment, because Satan, the prince of this world, who led man to reject the Son of God, was judged. His power was broken by the death of Christ (Heb. ii. 14).

The blessedness of the second three was to be the enjoyed portion of the disciples, and of all believers, in common with them, as those who should receive the Holy Ghost.

Passing on to the Acts, we find the actual descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and the great consequences that follow. As Peter says, "He (Christ) being by the

right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts ii. 33). This prepares us for what we find throughout this book; the evidences of the presence on the earth of this divine person—the Comforter and the Testifier.

We read of acts of power such as the death of Ananias and his wife who lied to the Holy Ghost; of men filled with the Spirit for power in their testimony to the risen Christ; of Philip, first instructed for his message to the Eunuch, and then borne away by the Spirit. Of Peter and others personally spoken with, and of Jews and Gentiles baptized (spiritually) into one body. Also of apostles warned and forewarned of things to come, and of assemblies of believers formed, edified, and multiplied.

But even this is not all; for no sketch, however brief, could omit the added testimony of the epistles. And although we write by way of exhortation, rather than exposition, a word must be added as to the evidence contained in the epistles of the marked results of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit on the earth, in the day of Christ's present session at the right hand of God.

Here we find the Spirit's power as dwelling in the believer to be the prominent theme. He is the "seal," "unction," and "earnest," in every true believer; in fact what is there of all that the precious work of Christ has effected for us that we are not, more or less, indebted to the Holy Spirit for, as to the apprehension and enjoyment of it? Our Lord's words give us a comprehensive summary at once, "He shall be *in* you" (John xiv. 17), "He shall be *with* you" (John xiv. 16), "He shall be *upon* you" (Acts i. 8).

Romans viii. 11 adds yet another blessing, still future. If the Spirit dwells in us, God will accomplish in us that

which He accomplished in the Christ, because of this same Spirit. He will raise up our mortal bodies. This is the final deliverance, the full answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

And so we might go on discovering, one after another, in all the epistles, the varied blessings connected with the Spirit's presence. But what is the moral of all this? Is it not to awaken in us the enquiry, Why have we so little evidence of the working of this mighty power in the Church and amongst Christians generally to-day?

It would not, perhaps, be beyond the mark to say that nine-tenths of professing Christendom to-day have lost the sense of the actual presence of the Holy Spirit (if they do not practically deny it), notwithstanding all the weight of Scriptural evidence to this truth. Listen to the prayers of the grave and godly men in the "United prayer meetings" of our day. Why is it that we constantly hear earnest pleadings for the Spirit to be sent down, and the frequent request for another Pentecost, and such like petitions? Is it not because they lose sight of the fact that the Holy Ghost is here? And where better things might be expected, how often we feel the lack of unction and spiritual power in preaching and worship, although knowledge of truth is not wanting. And how often we hear, too, of many well-intentioned efforts that do not bear the stamp of the Spirit's initiation and control.

We were talking recently of these things to a retired missionary of the China Inland Mission, and he related to us the following incident connected with the introduction of the electrical tramway system into Shanghai as an illustration of our subject. The great day for opening the new system had arrived, and vast numbers of people were congregated together, both Europeans

and natives, to celebrate the events. The tramways had for some time been laid, poles and wires were complete, and the decorated cars stood on the lines ready for the start. But to the consternation and surprise of everybody, when the signal was given not a movement took place. Officials rushed to and fro, brakes were examined, and every effort put forth, but all in vain. There was a break somewhere between the powerful dynamos in the generating station and the waiting cars, and without the current there could be no movement.

Is there not a lesson for us here? The dynamo of God is the Holy Spirit. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," said our Lord, "until ye be endued with power from on high." How many well-made, and well-intentioned plans; how much religious effort, seems to have little power to move either sinner or saint. Everywhere we hear the same regrets expressed, more or less, as to the dearth of spiritual power for conversion, and the effectual service of the converted.

Doubtless some of the societies for reviving spiritual life have been prompted by the felt need of this, but is it not the recognition of the Holy Spirit's presence counted on in faith, and His power and ability to do these very things that we desire, that is lacking? Let us leave room for Him, wait upon Him, expect Him to glorify Christ in us, and by us. "*Grieve* not the Holy Spirit," "Quench not the Spirit," are the exhortations we need to give ear to. His power is not exhausted, or the purpose of His coming altered, but how often it is treated with neglect and doubt. May the Lord graciously arouse His people to the sense of the resources of faith, not to be found in human strength or wisdom, but in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit.

T. R.

“My Yoke.”

Matthew xi. 25-30.

A GOOD deal in the history of the soul, and in our progress in divine things, depends on a due and Spirit-taught apprehension of the Person of Christ. We do not say that it depends on a mere *theological* knowledge, but such an acquaintance with Him as the Scripture gives to the dependent and humble believer. The more we learn of Christ in this way, the deeper will be our reverence for Him; and the whole tone of our worship, our prayers, our thoughts, will be affected by it.

In the previous part of Matt. xi. the Lord speaks of having been rejected by the cities where His mighty works had been done. Instead of being owned and received as Messiah, He was rejected and refused, although He had given the most adequate testimony as to who He was.

But this very refusal of His testimony only opened out the way for the setting forth of a wider glory which belonged to His Person and which went far beyond the limits of Israel. The great ones of the earth—the wise and prudent—could not understand it, it was hidden from them. Those to whom the Father revealed these things were the “babes”—those who felt their own weakness and depended on Him for strength and wisdom.

Humbled as He was, yet who amongst men could understand or comprehend the mystery of His being? None of the mighty or the great ones could fathom it. Though truly and really man, having taken the lowly form of a bondservant, yet was He the One who could say, “Before Abraham was, I am”; the Eternal Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

No one, therefore, could fully know the Son, save only the Father who sent Him.

But, although His Person was so glorious and so inscrutable, yet was He come down here in perfect grace. And, having come, He invites the weary, heavy-laden sinner to come to Him, in order that He Himself may give to such an one *rest*. And this necessarily opens the door of blessing to *all*, Jew or Gentile, no matter who or what they might be.

To the weary sinner—it is nothing but grace: He *gives* rest, it is no question of merit at all.

To the believer, He says, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” In taking up His yoke, we *find* rest. Grace *gives* to the sinner rest of conscience; and, in obedience, the believer *finds* that rest of heart which he needs in his path here.

The yoke that Jesus bore was not a heavy one, it was “easy” and “light.” It was the yoke of obedience and submission to the Father’s will.

What is it that sometimes makes us chafed and irritable? It is because we want to do our own will, and perhaps we find we cannot do it. But there is no path so happy as the path of obedience, though we often fail to walk in it. Our blessed Lord walked “the path of life” (which, for Him, lay through death), and He found in that path of dependence and obedience the constant sunshine of the Father’s love. What an example for us!

F. G. B.

Our Times.

AS we look abroad upon the world as it is to-day, we cannot but feel how serious is the fact that these countries, to which God gave such a remarkable deliverance from being crushed under the oppressive power of militarism, should be so little affected by His merciful preservation. The race for pleasure and amusement is greater than ever. Godlessness and unbelief are rampant, and the spirit of lawlessness and anarchy abounds.

The well-meant efforts to stem the tide of evil do not attain their purpose. The League of Nations and the Peace Societies have not been able to bring the desired peace to a groaning and troubled world. The evil is too deep-seated, it is within the heart of man himself; acted on, as it is, by Satan. Instead of peace we have anarchy and threatened revolution, but the world does not turn to God in repentance.

In the face of all this evil, how unavailing human plans and associations have proved to be! The resources of the man of God are not found in human confederacies or leagues, but in God. As the prophet says, "Rage, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries, gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. . . . Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us" (Isaiah viii. 9-10).

Here, then, is the sure resource of the people of God at a time when all human resources fail—"God is with us": or, as the apostle Paul says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

Let us not deceive ourselves with the idea that times of "peace and safety" are about to come soon. God's Word shows us the very reverse, and many Christians, even now, feel the pressure of the times; in their business, their means, their dealings with fellow-workmen, and in the general state of turmoil that is abroad. But others, in bygone days, have suffered much more than we do. The early Christians had more to endure in the way of outward persecution and trial than we have; and perhaps we look for too much, in a world which has crucified Christ.

However, let us not be cast down or discouraged, but pass on in peace, trusting God our Father. The Lord Himself said to His disciples, just on the eve of His departure, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but He added the encouraging word, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." *Now* He is the victorious, crowned, and glorified Saviour in heaven. Let us, therefore, look up to Him in faith, and utilize the little time that remains to serve Him and testify for Him in a world which is fast ripening for judgment.

F. G. B.

Prayer.

MANY assemblies of Christians have a stated prayer-meeting once a week. This is very good and needed. If we come in simplicity of faith, apart from formality and routine, free to express our needs before God, we know we have the ear of One who is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

But there are times of special need, and surely the present is one of such. If we think of the state of the Church of God, of the need of revival amongst the people of God—what ground for humiliation and prayer! Then consider the great need of the world

around, the need of revival and blessing in the going forth of the gospel to poor sinners, besides the serious state of the world through which we pass—surely there is much call for earnest prayer and supplication !

Is it too much, considering the times, to suggest to assemblies a week of prayer ? It may cost us something, and it may require energy to come out every night, or as often as we can, for a week. But, is there not a call for effort at so solemn a time in the history of the Church and of the world ? [ED.]

The Lord's Supper.

THE surpassing love of Christ in laying down His life for His own upon the cross—bearing ignominy and shame, and shedding His blood in atonement—is a fact which comes home to us in a very special way when partaking of the supper. On the very night of His betrayal, He gathered His apostles around Himself and instituted this feast, saying, “This do in remembrance of Me.”

His heart of love was not too much weighed down by the anticipation of all He was about to pass through, to prevent His thinking of His Church all through the ages till He should come again. And oh, what a love was His ! Far stronger than any human love—we shall still be learning its depths even in that coming eternity when we shall be with Him for ever.

And what of His disciples ? Alas, they were sleeping in the garden when they ought to have been watching, and they all forsook Him and fled. They had not yet received the power needed to testify for Him—the power of the Holy Ghost. Afterwards, with great power they gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

*

In due time God raised up the apostle Paul to make known the truth of the assembly, the body of Christ, united to the glorified Head by the Holy Ghost. That apostle tells us that he received from the Lord that which also he delivered to us—that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread and the cup saying, “This do ye in remembrance of Me.” And in taking the supper, we announce, in the world, the Lord’s death, “*till He come.*” *Then* we shall not need to be reminded, for we shall be actually in His presence, surrounding the slain Lamb in glory together with the whole Church of God, and praising Him worthily as we would.

And how blessed that these truths have been recovered to us in this, the last century of the Church’s history on earth. We can gather to Him *now*, realizing His presence in our midst, before we gather around Him in glory.

And so, whether we think of our remembering the Lord as ordained by Himself on the night on which He was betrayed according to Luke; or as revealed from glory to the apostle Paul—His love is just as good, just as true, just as real to us now, as it was in the first century; only that *we* are so much nearer the realization of the blessed truth contained in those words, “till He come.”

(Thoughts suggested by a note communicated.)

“The Eyes of the Lord.”

“And He entered into Jerusalem and into the temple; and having looked round on all things, the hour being already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve” (Mark xi. 11, New Trans.).

THE sequel to this account is found in the same chapter, verses 15–17, where we read what took place the following day. It may be asked, What was

it that met the *eyes of the Lord* when, in the temple, He “looked round”? All was confusion and disorder, such a collection of things and people, so opposite to, so unlike, the beautiful divine order in Solomon’s day, when “The glory of the Lord filled the house of God” and “The priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chron. v. 14; vii. 1, 2).

What a change from all that was orderly according to God, to a den of robbers! But now, there in the midst of it all, stood the One who possessed all the prerogatives of the Son of David, the King of Israel, the Lord of the temple. Here indeed we behold the Son of God who could, by one word, have cleared the scene of the changers, and sellers of chattels and doves. But He does not act—He waits (ver. 11). There is little doubt that, the hour being late, He graciously considers those who would be distressed by His contemplated action of punitive measures at so late an hour: He therefore decides to withdraw for the time being. Here we see the light, in the midst of the darkness in which those were walking who had created disorder in His Father’s house. He leaves Jerusalem and goes out to Bethany.

The next day, upon His approach to the city, He weeps over it and again He enters the temple. This time the Lord exercises His authority, and, as another has said, the Scribes and the Pharisees draw back before the ascendancy that His word had given Him over the people, and He leaves the city, unmolested.

This portion of the inspired word is often used as an excuse for stern and harsh measures in dealing with those who have aroused indignation by unscriptural conduct. In pursuing the narrative, however, we find

this to be a very unscriptural thought. The first time the Lord cleansed the temple (John ii. 14-17), He made a scourge of small cords. The word seems to indicate that the cord was made of rushes which the Lord, no doubt, used on the animals. It was very rarely that He did anything that could have the appearance of violence. We do not read of sheep and oxen being in the temple when the Lord cleansed it a second time (Matthew xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 11; Luke xix. 45, 46). This was at the end of His ministry a week before He was crucified. The zeal He had for His Father's house (John ii. 16) led Him to do what He generally refrained from doing; and yet in a gentle, merciful way.

In the sixth chapter of Luke we find the blessed Lord grieved at the unbelief and hardness of heart of those who were constantly withstanding His works and His words. It was the Sabbath, and the Pharisees murmur on account of the disciples plucking the ears of corn. He replies, simply referring to what David did when he and they that were with him were hungry, and tells them that the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath. Then, upon another Sabbath day, He entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man who had his right hand withered. The Scribes and Pharisees watch Him to see whether He would heal the man, so as to be able to accuse Him of having broken the Sabbath. Jesus knew their thoughts, and it is recorded that, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts (Mark iii. 5), He "*looked round about upon them all,*" and, in the sight of a full synagogue, He restored the hand that was withered; thereby, however, arousing the enmity and hatred of His opposers.

This blessed Person is the same One of whom we read

in Proverbs xv. 3, "*The eyes of the Lord* are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And again, in 2 Chron. xvi. 9, "*The eyes of the Lord* run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." In Proverbs v. 21 we read, "The ways of man are before *the eyes of the Lord*, and He pondereth all his goings." And in Hebrews iv. 13, "All things are naked and opened unto *the eyes of Him* with whom we have to do" (even the hidden acts of our lives).

May we more than ever realize the fact that the eyes of the Lord are *always* upon us, and may the knowledge of it tend to give the desire that our ways and walk may be pleasing to Him. J. P. (Montréal.)

"Is Faith Dead?"

SUCH is the startling question on the placards with which a new theatrical play is announced, which is supposed to help to a solution of certain problems between the soul and God, raised by the effects of the Great War.

With the playwright's attempt to answer this question we have nothing to do, and the readers of this Magazine are not likely to be affected by it, although "leaders of thought" in the Church and in various walks of life were invited to see the performances and express their opinions. But the occasion may serve for a few remarks on the nature and character of faith which may be helpful to some who, through grace, possess a living faith in God, and are passing through trials that exercise their hearts deeply.

It was hoped that the late Great War would lead many to faith in God; now it is confessed that it has tended rather the other way, and some have made shipwreck of what little faith they possessed.

We are reminded of the words of our Lord Himself, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). Such is His closing comment on a parable spoken to this end—"that men ought always to pray and not to faint"; and the evident import of the parable is, that notwithstanding an apparently delayed answer to prayer, God *does* hear, and will avenge His people; yet faith will be rare to find.

But the day of the coming of the Son of man is not yet. The Lord Jesus, as the rejected One of this world, is seated at the right hand of God, waiting for that time in the counsels of God so tersely expressed in the words, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psa. cx. 1). Meanwhile the work of grace goes on in the world, and the testimony to the risen Christ is maintained by the Holy Spirit—the effectual power for sending forth the glad tidings of God which is addressed to man on the principle of faith, "from faith to faith," wherever it may be found.

How idle, then, is the discussion of such a question as, "Is faith dead?" It is the very principle of life both now and through all ages, in those that fear God. Three times over, from various standpoints, and speaking of believers in different epochs or dispensations, Scripture affirms that, "The just shall *live* by faith." In the patriarchal days of Job, who suffered as few have ever done, we see true faith prompting the memorable words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15). And in the three Hebrew companions of Daniel, the equally striking reply to the angry monarch of Babylon is, "Our God whom we serve *is able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if*

(Continued on page 153)

not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. iii. 17, 18).

What a contrast is this to the petulant cry of unbelief because God allows man to taste the fruits of his own self-will and independence.

If we turn to New Testament times, we find also that faith is tested in various ways, and moreover, in suffering for righteousness sake. This is a phase of the subject that raises another and deeper question altogether, viz., Why do the godly suffer? Here we learn that the path of faith is a path of trial, and the Lord Jesus prepares His disciples for it by declaring that persecutions for *His Name's sake* would be the greatest testing of faith, as they passed through a world that had rejected Him; while He, as ascended to heaven, would only be known to faith.

Nevertheless there is no other way to walk with God, and no other path so full of blessing for man. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God, must believe that *He is*, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This faith being *from* God and *in* God, no war or other circumstance can kill it, but there is, we may suppose, a *feigned* faith, since Scripture speaks of *unfeigned* faith (1 Tim. i. 5). "Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith *unfeigned*."

While there are any believers in Christ on the earth, faith will be found here. But it is evident enough that these questions emanate from the enemy of Christ who, alas! finds man only too willing to listen to his subtle suggestions of God's indifference to His creatures' sorrows. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds

of them who believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . . should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 4).

The question, how persons without faith can teach us anything about it worth knowing, may be left to those who seek light from such a doubtful source to answer. One thing is clear in all these efforts, and that is, that the God of the Scriptures is the God that is thus rebelled against. The God that is there revealed, and in a fuller and more blessed way manifested in His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, is the God that man turns away from; while he fashions for himself a god more agreeable to his own wisdom and will. The late J. G. Bellett beautifully said, "Faith has a world of its own."

And is it not declared that, "After in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"? None can by wisdom find Him out, but it has pleased God to reveal Himself, and "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." This is connected with the very important fact that, "No man hath seen God at any time"; and our Lord emphatically commends true faith in the words, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

Peter describes the trial of faith as "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Pet. i. 7), and the faith of the Christian he states in the same terms as being "precious faith," in the first verse of his second epistle. May the Lord graciously grant that His people may be found "rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. ii. 7).

T. R.

The Antichrist.—2.

Revelation xiii. 11–18; 2 Thessalonians ii.

It cannot but be apparent to the thoughtful reader of the following article that the same principles and elements which will be fully manifested under the Antichrist in a future day, are being increasingly developed in the world to-day. We may see them plainly in the socialistic, lawless, and infidel spirit of the age. God tells us these things in His Word so that we may be forewarned, and thus forearmed.—[ED.]

IN support of his pretensions, the man of sin does “acts of power and signs and lying wonders,” even to such an extent as to “make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men” (Rev. xiii. 13). As a judgment upon the apostate people of Israel, God will allow that a miracle like that which Elijah did, should take place, so that a judicial blindness might fall on those who rejected His Son. The terms used by the Spirit of God to describe the acts of power of the Lord Jesus here below, are applied in 2 Thess. ii. to the acts of the Antichrist; but these latter serve to support “the lie” and to drag men down to perdition, whilst the former accompany the testimony of divine love towards sinners. (Compare Acts ii. 22; Heb. ii. 4 with 2 Thess. ii. 9.)

The Antichrist will cause an image of the first beast (Rev. xiii. 1–10) to be set up in the temple at Jerusalem. “And he had power to give breath unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak . . .” (ver. 15). It is this image that Daniel calls “the abomination of desolation” (Dan. ix. 27; Matt. xxiv. 15). On account of this dreadful idolatry, God will send on the apostate nation of Israel a “desolator” (Dan. ix. 27), that is to say, the Assyrian or king of the north, the last enemy of Israel, the rod of God’s indignation against His rebellious people (Isaiah x. 5). This rod, however, will be broken

“without hand” on the mountains of Judea, “he shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (Dan. xi. 45).

The covenant between the apostate Jewish people and the Roman beast, formed in order to escape the Assyrian, is called by the prophet, “a covenant with death” and “an agreement with hell” (Isaiah xxviii. 15). But this covenant will not hinder the judgment of God from reaching the rebellious people; “When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it” (xxviii. 18). Thus the land of Israel will become the theatre of the struggle between the “Assyrian” confederation of powers, and the Roman confederation; God gathering together the nations there in order to enter into judgment with them.

The wilful king is presented to us, then, in his implacable opposition to the divine testimony here below. The aim of Satan is to obliterate the name of God from the earth. He cannot reach Him in His heavenly abode, but all his efforts are directed towards causing the authority of Christ to disappear, and towards setting aside His rights.

During the time when evil will reach its climax on earth, God will watch over, at Jerusalem—that is to say even at the focus of the apostasy—a little nucleus of faithful representatives: the two witnesses of whom the book of Revelation tells us (xi. 1–13). They stand before “the God of the earth,” they claim the earth for Him, and declare that His royalty and His priesthood will be exercised in power for the deliverance and blessing of this scene in which the power of the enemy now holds sway.

The godly remnant (whose feelings under trial the

Psalms express) in the city itself where the kingdom is to be established, claim also, by the prophetic Spirit, the rights of the Lord to the possession of the earth. “*The earth* is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. xxiv. 1). “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all *the earth*!” (Psa. viii. 9). “Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of *the earth* for Thy possession” (Psa. ii. 8). On the other hand, the Psalms often describe for us the iniquity and oppression of the Antichrist, calling down the judgment of God upon him; “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” (Psa. xciv. 20).

Now, laws are made for the protection of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, but *then*, power will be in the hands of one Satanic authority, to which those who fear God must refuse absolutely to submit. There may be many abuses and injustices at the present time, yet, in principle, the “powers that be” are “ordained of God,” so that, “whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” But, under the reign of the beast, all the power of the throne will be made use of to cause evil to triumph, to “frame mischief by a law.”

The Antichrist will compel all to “receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads,” as a sign of submission to the authority of the Roman beast. This demands that all the intellectual faculties (the forehead), as well as all the actions (the right hand), should be entirely surrendered to him. All who resist will be put to death. Nevertheless, God will take care of a remnant, which the fury of the beast will not be able to reach.

In principle, this tyrannical acting is already at work in all the associations which are formed and to which one must belong in order to make one's way in the world. Let us resist this current of iniquity, remaining in entire separation from this present evil age, as the faithful ones will do who will pass through the great final tribulation; many of whom will seal their testimony with their blood (see Rev. xv. 2). J. B.

Re-union of Churches.

AN appeal to all Christian people has been issued by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Communion asking that efforts should be made for a reunion of the Churches. Its conciliatory language shows that it is intended to concede as much as possible in order to overcome, if possible, the differences which cause separation between the various sections of Christendom, so as to "meet the demands of a new age with a new outlook."

One thing which strikes us in this and similar pronouncements is, that the promoters of the movement do not take account of the need of being "born again," in the sense in which Scripture speaks of it. No doubt most of the 252 bishops who met at Lambeth believe that we are "born again" and made members of Christ in baptism, and therefore they speak of all who *profess* the name of Christ as being Christians, in the only sense in which they use the word.

But Scripture shows, not only that unless a man is "born again" he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God, but that new birth is the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit by the word of God (John iii.), and that the "water" spoken of in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus is not baptism but the word of God (1 Peter

i. 23 ; James i. 18 ; John xv. 3, etc.). It shows also that at new birth an entirely new life and nature is communicated to the soul by faith, and without this we are still "dead in trespasses and sins"—we have indeed no relationship with God at all, save of course as His responsible creatures. Hence the urgency of the word, "Ye MUST be born again."

But, apart from this, it is evident to any spiritual mind that the present divided state of the Church of God is the consequence of its sad departure from the truth as found in Scripture. True unity can only be brought about by a genuine owning of this departure, in a spirit of repentance and self-judgment before God. To try to make a unity which, in its greatness, attracts the eyes of men, is only to ignore the present ruin of the Church as a united witness for Christ on the earth and the consequent need for repentance. It is but the fruit of pride and self-will.

The truth is, we have not to *make* any unity, but simply to acknowledge, practically, the unity which *God has made* by uniting all true believers to the glorified Head in heaven, and to one another, by the Holy Ghost. Taking care, at the same time, that those with whom we walk in fellowship are godly in walk and sound in doctrine, as becomes the truth.

Moreover what, let us ask, was the unity for which our Lord prayed when He said, "That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" ? (John xvii. 21). Here He prays concerning those "who shall believe on Me through their (the apostles') word." These believers, having received the Holy Spirit and being born of God, possess a new and divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) ; hence

it is their privilege to have communion with the Father and the Son, and with one another (1 John i. 3).

This is not an outward unity brought about by "agreeing to differ" or by waiving certain things so as to come to terms with others: it is a unity which belongs to and characterizes the new nature and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And let us remember that these two blessed facts are the common portion of all true believers.

But when we come to the actual carrying out of these truths in practice, even amongst true Christians, we have to acknowledge our failure in this, as in many other things, and the need for mutual forbearance and patience. Those who truly own the Church's failure before God, can find a resource in the word of the Lord, always true to faith, "Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus the humble soul finds in that word, a sufficient resource, no matter how great the disruption and confusion of the day may be.

We think it quite possible, however, that the union which the Episcopal and non-Episcopal leaders, both in this country and in America, are working for, may be realized; though as a political expedient rather than a true scriptural unity. But, since it will not have Christ as its centre and His glory as its basis, nor take its character from what is due to Him, it can only develop into something which, like Laodicea, is "neither cold nor hot"—a failure both as to holy separateness from the world and true devotedness to Christ. From a lukewarm spirit may we, and the people of God, be preserved.

F. G. B.

“The Mark.”

“**I** PRESS toward the mark” (Phil. iii. 14) : this was the experience of the apostle Paul as he ran the race towards the glory of God. Reached by divine grace when he was a bitter persecutor of the church and an enemy of God, he was now the most ardent runner in the heavenward race. What a total change !

No doubt the sight he got of the glorified Saviour that day on the road to Damascus must have had an immense effect on his whole life. He could say, not only, “What things were gain to me, those I *counted* loss for Christ”, but, thirty years or more afterwards, “Yea, doubtless, and I *count* all things but loss”, etc. This is true Christian experience, however far short we may come of it.

Let us remember that Paul is not giving his experience here *as an apostle*, but *as a Christian*, and therefore as an example for us. One object governed his life, and that object was Christ.

We have all to pass through the world, to meet its trials and temptations, to do our work or business in it : but what is our *object* ? Is it to seek a name or a place here, to amass money, to look for the world’s esteem ; or is it Christ ? Even apparently harmless things may be used to divert us from pressing towards the mark or winning-post.

And what was “the mark” ? It was Christ. What a destiny ! Perfect conformity to Christ in glory ! This, and nothing less it was which imparted such energy to Paul in the heavenward race.

May we, too, press on towards the goal, sustained and energized by the attractive power of the object set before us.

Gleanings.

THE Holy Ghost cannot be the subject for the Church, as such, to ask for now, seeing He has been already given. We pray *by* and *in* the Holy Ghost, not *for* Him now. We should pray for more of the working of the Spirit in us, and desire to be filled with the Spirit—poor little hearts indeed, but they may be filled. It does not at all follow that we are filled with the Spirit because sealed with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit would keep out evil thoughts. It will not take away the evil nature, which ever remains, but thereby that will be kept down.

* * * * *

THERE may be gathering, but if not “*with Me*” it is scattering. We are by nature so essentially sectarian that we have need to watch against this. I cannot make Christ the centre of my efforts if He is not the centre of my thoughts. It is a great thing for a man to say: “I have no other object but Christ, no other activity in my heart but for Christ”; not only that He is the chief object at bottom—every Christian has that—but there may be a quantity of middle things in our hearts between the inside and the outside. These must be judged in the soul.

* * * * *

TAKE the truth of the Lord’s coming: If He is precious to me I shall be waiting for Him with affection; and if not so, the bare truth will soon be given up. J. N. D.

Spiritism.

DR. C. A. MERCIER, some time examiner in psychology in the London University, etc., in a recent book entitled, *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver*

Lodge shows the importance of not taking for granted conclusions reached respecting spirit manifestations and alleged communications from the dead, just because these bear the names of men eminent in the world of science or literature. He says: "In these days 'science' and 'scientific' are words to conjure with. They are invested with glamour. They inspire awe". Such men, he says, are not necessarily qualified to judge of matters such as mediumism and spiritualism; they may be thoroughly deceived themselves, and they would certainly lean towards attaching credibility to spiritist beliefs of which they are themselves the chief promoters and propagandists.

The thoughtless multitude, however, are easily led astray. They readily believe what is said by men of note, especially when the subject is one which appeals to their curiosity and to the cravings of the mind to penetrate the unseen. In all ages the occult has had an attraction, and the loss by many of dear ones in the war has given a large impetus to the spiritist movement, which professes to put those who have been bereaved into touch with the departed.

Much in the way of warning against having anything to do with spiritism has appeared in religious papers, as well as from the pens of medical men of standing, who have seen its fatal results in some cases. The Scripture itself is most emphatic, but we will only quote in detail one passage out of many: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [consulter of the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination

*

unto the Lord : and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them [the nations] out from before thee " (Deut. xviii. 10-12). This command is so very full and complete that it is unnecessary to say anything on it.

But our object in this short paper is to show, not so much the unreliability of the alleged spirit manifestations and the doings of mediums, etc., but to draw attention to what we believe to be the great purpose Satan has in view in this present-day movement. That it is destructive of Christianity no spiritual Christian can doubt for a moment ; indeed, Sir C. Doyle says : " It must be admitted that an acceptance of the teaching brought to us from beyond would deeply modify conventional Christianity ". The fact is, that it would not only " deeply modify " but " utterly destroy " Christianity as found in the New Testament.

The central truth of Christianity is the truth concerning the person of Christ. What does spiritism say on this subject ? It " confirms the existence of higher beings, whom we have called angels, and of an ever-ascending hierarchy above us, in which the Christ spirit finds its place " (*New Revelation*, p. 69). It teaches that the Christ spirit is one of the spirits that have to do with this earth. Christ's miracles were all, it alleges, powers of psychic law and on exact lines of such law. It is needless to quote more, for the cult denies the true Deity of Christ, and is, throughout all its arguments, entirely at variance with it.

Now when we turn to God's Word we find the true test of the working of a false spirit. " Try the spirits whether they are of God . . . every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God " (1 John iv. 3, N.T.). To " confess Jesus Christ come

in flesh ” is to own the truth of His person, truly God and truly man ; as it is said elsewhere, “ The Word was God ”, and, “ The Word was made flesh ” ; again, “ In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” This truth, a false spirit, a “ spirit of error ”, will never own. Such will never confess the Deity of our Lord. It is thus proved to be “ that spirit of Antichrist ”, which is already in the world. *The Antichrist*, when he appears, will “ deny the Father and the Son ”, and the spirit of Antichrist is now here, working through false prophets, false teachers, mediums, etc.

It is a remarkable fact that many of these present-day cults, which disagree about other things, are agreed on this point. Millennial Dawnism, for example, alleges that when men die they cease to exist ; though, very inconsistently, they profess to believe in the truth of the resurrection of the body. Spiritism, on the other hand, insists on existence after death, seeking to prove it in its own speculative way by apparitions, etc. But they are both agreed in setting at naught and denying the true Godhead of Christ. And the same might be said of Christian Science, which denies a personal God.

Along with the denial of this great foundation truth as to Christ’s person, goes, as it necessarily must, the truth of atonement. If Christ were not truly and really God, His sacrifice on the cross was invalid. His Deity was as necessary to the accomplishment of that work as His pure and spotless humanity. All the value and efficacy of His sacrifice depended on His being “ Jehovah’s fellow ”—His co-equal—though smitten with “ Jehovah’s sword ” (Zech. xiii. 7). Hence one reason why the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews—an epistle which brings out so fully the surpassing worth of the sacrifice of Christ—opens

with an exordium which sets forth in so remarkable a manner the personal glory of the Son of God. He is there viewed as the Son, Creator of the worlds, the true Messiah of Israel, and is designated by the title "God" (ver. 8) and "Jehovah" (ver. 10). All this is proved with consummate skill and wisdom by quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Now this foundation truth is completely set aside, and even treated with contempt, in the records which come from the false spirits, their mediums and their dupes. These teachers of spiritist dogma say they "can see no justice in a vicarious sacrifice", and utterly refuse such a thought as being "cleansed by the blood of the Lamb". But God says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission", and, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience". And, we may add, "Let God be true, but every man a liar".

As we might expect, the fact of the eternal punishment of the wicked also disappears entirely from this new spirit system of doctrine. These "crude ideas", as Sir C. Doyle calls them, "such as an Eternal Hell, have already gently faded away within our own lifetime". Such an unpalatable truth would not suit the authors of spiritism, either for their own comfort or for that of those who believe their propaganda. But they overlook the fact that the justice of God, who in divine love spared not His beloved Son, cannot, and will not, spare the impenitent sinner who despises His offers of grace and refuses the salvation which He has provided at such an infinite cost.

It would be too long a subject to take up in detail, but the activity of lying spirits and demons is a fact

largely brought before us in Scripture. In the case of king Ahab (2 Chron. xviii.) we find that God allowed a "lying spirit", working through false prophets, to persuade him, so that he might go up to Ramoth-gilead and perish for his iniquity. In a future day the Antichrist, "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders", will do great miracles and signs. He will be the greatest instrument of Satan—we might say the greatest medium—that ever appeared in this world. Who is to say that Satanic spirits do not work through mediums, spiritists, etc., to-day, in order to deceive the unwary?

Quite possibly the great majority of the manifestations and communications which profess to come from beyond are the work of conjurers who act as mediums and are well paid for it, but there can be little doubt that some are due to evil spirits who personate the departed and so deceive the living. But Satan's great aim, in this as in all else, is to dishonour Christ, whose deadly enemy he is, and to set aside the value of His atoning work. When it suits his purpose, he can assume the garb of an "angel of light", and his ministers can do so also. As an example of this, we may remark that spiritism professes to help the churches by proving the survival of the spirit of man after death; and some leading prelates, who have been deceived by this, have countenanced it. But our Lord, when on earth, would not receive testimony from demons, and why should we? We have God's Word—Moses, the prophets, and the whole New Testament—if men will not believe this, they would not believe though one rose from the dead.

As we draw to the close of the present dispensation, we may expect that men will be all the more ready to

lend their ear to "seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies" (1 Tim. iv. 1, R.V.)*. It is but the dark foreshadowing of that day when judicial hardening and blindness shall fall upon Christendom—when *God* shall send a "strong delusion" (2 Thess. ii.), allowing Satan to deceive those who would not receive the truth in the love of it. May the reader be preserved from in any way countenancing this evil delusion called spiritism.

F. G. B.

"The Word of the Lord."

IN both Old and New Testament times, holy men and women of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The word of the Lord came to them conveying His mind and will, and to-day the whole canon of Scripture is complete (Col. i. 25); so that there is no subject connected with our sojourn here, no question or difficulty that the Scriptures, as we have them, cannot decide for us, if we are subject to them.

We read of one, amongst others, to whom the word of the Lord came and who, to his sorrow, disregarded it. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai." We find him referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew xii. 38-41; xvi. 4; and in Luke xi. 29, 30, as a sign to a wicked generation—a sign which, however, the mass of them never heeded, though what happened to Jonah when swallowed by the whale was typical of the fact that the blessed Lord was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Jonah had refused to carry out the mission entrusted

* Here the Holy Spirit identifies the speaker and the evil spirit which speaks by him, as commonly in the New Testament, and passes from one to the other. (See note new trans.)

(Continued on page 169)

to him ; pride of heart made him turn away and flee from the presence of the Lord. His knowledge of the gracious ways of God led him to think that God might relent ; for judgement is God's strange work (Isa. xxviii. 21), and His mercy, in this case, would make nothing of Jonah in the eyes of the people of Nineveh. What he was afraid would happen was precisely what did happen.

Every Christian has likewise, from the Lord, some peculiar duties, and it is most important that each one should know what they are, and should endeavour to fulfil them faithfully in the fear of his Master. We see, for instance, the charge of the apostle Paul to his son Timothy. How very solemn it is ! It should be a warning to every one of us. That which is so striking in this charge is that it was not made in view of privileged hopes of future blessing, but in view of future judgement (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2). He then adds : " Preach the word ; be instant (urgent) in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine ".

We must particularly note that the apostle did not tell others to do what he did not faithfully carry out himself, so that at the end of his life he could truthfully say, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ". How important then it is that, in our service, we should imitate this faithful servant of Christ. We can only do so by having the blessed Word hidden in our hearts and by walking in the power of the Spirit, which will enable us to impart to others what we have made our own.

We are not all able to preach publicly, but we can all seek opportunities for disseminating the precious Word. The neglect of studying the Word, and meditating upon it, is very sad, and is a primary cause of the

lack of spiritual growth of believers in the present day. Prayer is absolutely necessary to enable the believer to take the Word, the sword of the Spirit, and wield it with successful results.

. It is a solemn thing to think that in our day, with a Bible in nearly every home in Protestant Christendom—in some indeed, alas, only as an ornament on the parlour table—there is a greater ignorance of the Word of God than when men and women had to walk for many miles to go and read the precious Bible which was kept chained to a desk in a church. A number of others often arrived there before them, waiting their turn to peruse it, or listening to one who read aloud from the holy book, so rare were the copies of Scriptures in those days. To-day there is in our land no dearth of copies of the Word of God, and therefore there is no excuse for its neglect.

The following incident shows how people may have copies of the Scriptures without ever opening them. Quite lately an old man living in New Jersey, United States of America, discovered about five thousand dollars in bank notes scattered throughout a family Bible left to him by an aunt of his at her death in 1874. One clause of her will was as follows :—

“To my beloved nephew, Stephen Marsh, I will and bequeath my family Bible, and all it contains, with the residue of my estate after my funeral expenses and just and lawful debts are paid.”

The estate, amounting to a few hundred dollars, had been soon spent, and for about thirty-five years afterwards the nephew's chief support had been a small pension from the government. He had thus lived on in poverty, while, all the time, he had in his actual possession the precious Bible containing thousands of dollars that would have been sufficient for all his wants.

He had passed that Bible by. His eyes had rested upon it, perhaps even his hands had occasionally handled it, *but he had evidently never opened it once!* At last, when packing his trunk to remove to his son's house at a distance, where he expected to end his days, he discovered the unknown riches that had been idle for thirty-five years!

In just the same way there are believers to-day whose neglect of the study of Scripture leaves them stunted in growth, and who, when the Lord comes, will only then know the value of what they ignore to-day. What an awakening it will be when they discover what they have missed and all they have lost through their lethargy and neglect!

The apostle tells us that, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). These wonderful things are ours *now*, but we must dig for them, that is to say, we must persevere in the study of and meditation upon the Scriptures and give ourselves to private prayer for needful help. While it is true that we possess all these things, does it not behove us to *enter into* our possessions, and to be thereby better enabled to glorify our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ?

Should this paper come under the eye of some unsaved nominal church members, may the Spirit of God impress these solemn truths upon their hearts. And may they remember that, though they may be honest, upright, and educated men or women, the Word of God says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema" (that is, accursed).

J. P. (MONTREAL).

“A Kingdom which cannot be moved.”

SINCE 1914, how many earthly kingdoms have been moved — yea, have been removed? Thrones have disappeared, crowned heads have lost their crowns and are exiles. Russia, bribed by false friends, is in the throes of terror, torture and tyranny. False friends are worse and more to be feared than open enemies.

This is “Man’s Day”. What a day he is making of it! The day of man’s power, the day when he arrogates to himself and for himself supremacy, superiority, and even sovereignty, boldly and daringly rejecting the claims of his Creator-God. He would, if he could, dethrone the everlasting God from His eternal throne. When the Son of God came, the husbandmen said among themselves, “This is the heir, come let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours”, and sent a message after Him saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us”. But He will return and receive for Himself a kingdom; God will give Him “a kingdom which cannot be moved”.

There is “the Day of the Lord”, He alone shall be exalted in that day; among all He shall have the pre-eminence. Then every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In this present day of grace, when grace reigns, all who now confess Jesus as Lord and believe in their heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, are saved, and are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. They are in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ and will share in the kingdom of the Son of man, who must

reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“ Royal robes shall soon invest Thee,
 Royal splendours crown Thy brow ;
 Christ of God, our souls confess Thee
 King and Sovereign even now !
 Thee we reverence, Thee obey—
 Own Thee Lord and Christ alway.”

U. G.

The Secret of Power.—1.

Mark ix. 9-29.

AFTER the glorious scene displayed on the mount where Jesus was transfigured before His three disciples (vers. 1-8), He was found alone with His own. The glory in which He had just been manifested before their eyes, had in no wise changed His heart. He is found again with His own and in the midst of men as the perfect Servant who must continue, in His humiliation, His work of love, and finish the work necessary for their salvation and the accomplishment of the counsels of God.

He was ready to descend the mountain where His rights had been proclaimed and His glory manifested, in order to meet, in the plain below, poor man, who was in misery under the power of Satan, and to deliver him. Now also, as ascended to the right hand of God in the heavens, He is always, in love, the Servant of men ;

always ready to come in, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to meet His fallen creatures in order to deliver them from the chains of sin and Satan.

Jesus forbade His disciples to speak of the scene of glory which they had just witnessed (ver. 9). It was a picture given beforehand of the results of the work of redemption : for the accomplishment He must needs go down into death. For the moment, He was the rejected Messiah ; it was useless to speak of His glory to a rebellious people who rejected the testimony of His grace. The unbelieving Jews must only await the time when the Lord's relationship with them would cease ; then would come the judgement which would be the consequence of their unbelief. However, the counsels of God must be accomplished on the basis of resurrection, which would be the glorious testimony of the complete victory of the Son of man, over all the power of Satan and of death.

The disciples questioned amongst themselves what the resurrection *from among* the dead was (ver. 10). It was a thought entirely new to them. They believed in a general resurrection of the dead " at the last day " (John xi. 24). Even at the present day, in Christendom, it is taught that there will be a simultaneous resurrection of all the dead at the end of the world. Such a thought has no foundation in Scripture. It denies the difference which God makes, at the present time, between the just and the wicked, that is to say, between those who have eternal life by faith in Christ, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

This false idea involves also a serious attack on the work of Christ, which separates believers from the rest of men and places them, even at the present moment, on the ground of those who are in the favour of God

in a risen Christ. The resurrection of the saints will be, like that of Christ Himself, a resurrection "*from among the dead*" (Phil. iii. 11, N.T.). It will be the glorious witness of God's good pleasure which rests on us, and of the full deliverance from the consequences of sin which has been won for us at the cost of the blessed work of the cross: "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23).

Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the just, but not of that of the wicked. As the perfect *Man*, He has gone forth from death, into which He had gone down in love and obedience. His resurrection has proved His own perfection, as well as His glory as Son of God. And further, we read that He has been "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead" (Rom. i. 4, N.T.). In resurrection from among the dead, God attests also the infinite value of His expiatory sacrifice, for, "He was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). The resurrection of the saints from among the dead will be the crowning act of that glorious work by which they will be brought into perfect conformity with the last Adam victorious over death.

What a contrast between the scene of glory which had been displayed before the eyes of the three disciples on the mount (vers. 1-8), and that which presented itself to the perfect Saviour when He went down again to the plain! He finds the disciples in discussion with the scribes and the multitude. When the Lord inquired what was the subject of their conversation, His own were silent. They felt rebuked in their conscience and ashamed of their lack of power in

presence of the alarming manifestation of the enemy's power (ver. 16).

"Master," said one of the multitude, "I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him". In Luke ix. 38 we read that the father added, "he is mine *only* child". Jairus's daughter was also "one *only* daughter"; it was also the same with the widow of Nain's son (Luke vii. 12). The power of Satan and of death do not spare the tenderest objects of our affections; but Christ, the *only* Son of the Father, has come to deliver them.

J. B.

The Spirit of Truth.

THE Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Truth" in three chapters in John's Gospel:—

Chapter xiv. 17, He is the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, given in answer to the prayer of Jesus. When the Lord should have gone on high, He would be, not only "with you", but "in you".

Chapter xv. 26, Jesus sends the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father. His office is to "testify of Me" (Jesus).

Chapter xvi. 13, when the Spirit of truth would be come, He would guide them into all the truth. He would not speak from Himself (as a witness independent of the Father and the Son), but what He would hear, that He would speak. And "He shall glorify Me" (Jesus), and "show you things to come".

Thus the glory of Jesus and the blessing and comfort of His own, is the great object of the coming of the Holy Ghost. And being the "Spirit of truth", all that He ministers is the pure truth of God as found in the Word. Anything that is not in keeping with that, is not the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

“Walk before Me.”

THERE is much for us to learn from the way in which God made Himself known to His people of old. To Abraham, in Genesis xv. He said, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”. It was just after the battle with the kings, in which Abraham was victorious, and after he had refused to receive anything in the shape of reward from the king of Sodom.

“After these things”, that is, when Abraham, the man of faith, had refused the world’s riches and honours, *God* says to him, “*I* am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”. Abraham had learnt of God in secret, in communion with Him, and he could afford to refuse the offers of the world. He had something infinitely better, for God Himself was his portion. How superior this to all that the world could offer!

Then in chap. xvii. we have another revelation of God to Abraham, “I am the Almighty God”. It was as much as to say, “You need not fear, Abraham, although you are a stranger and a pilgrim in the land of promise, I am the Almighty One, able to protect and guide”. Then God adds, “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect”.

How important these words are for us! If we walk *before God*, this delivers us from merely walking before men and trying to please men. At the same time the Christian is responsible to walk aright before his brethren and before the world. But he who walks *before God* will be sure to walk in a way suitable to God before both his brethren and the world around. And He adds, “Be thou perfect”. The word ‘perfect’

means 'upright' or 'sincere'. It would answer to what we find in the New Testament—a single eye: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light"; and it is just the opposite of "a double minded man, unstable in all his ways".

These are practical exhortations; let us ponder over them prayerfully. To be a witness for God in this world we must walk before God, under His eye and in the light of His presence. When the soul is really in the presence of God we are delivered from many pitfalls and snares—from self-pleasing, pleasing men, worldliness in its various shapes and forms, etc. If Christ and His glory is our one object; our walk and ways, whether in our dealings with the world or our fellow-Christians, will be in keeping with what is due to Him.

Abraham was the man of faith, the man of the tent and the altar, a stranger and a pilgrim and a worshipper. It is just in the measure that we, too, enter by faith into the heavenly portion we have in Christ, that we shall realize what it is to be a stranger here; satisfied, and more than satisfied, with Christ. It is in *walking before Him* that the light of His presence shines into the soul, that we can rejoice in the Lord alway, and that we can testify for Him to others. F. G. B.

The Scripture.

THE simplest believer can reckon on the word and Spirit of God. This honours Him and His word, and is for us the humblest, holiest, and safest ground.

In vain do men argue that there are many things in the Scriptures which the writer might have known, and probably did know, by ordinary means; that for some

things they must have been supernaturally endowed ; and that other things again required nothing less than direct revelation. The aim of this is unconsciously to lower Scripture, and bring it as much as possible within man's capacity.

Now no believer need question God's use of means, if He pleases, or rising above them if for His glory. But "Every Scripture is inspired of God" settles all questions. We have there wicked men's hypocritical words, and their rebellious ones ; we have even Satan's temptations and his accusations in Scripture ; but "every Scripture is inspired". To present the least fact, to record the simplest word in Scripture, was as truly of God's inspiration, as to reveal 'the mystery' or to disclose the future glory of heaven and earth. Documents or none, the insertion in Scripture was God-inspired : else the apostolic rule were infringed. But as our Lord said (John x. 35), "the Scripture cannot be broken".

As Jehovah magnified His saying above all His name, so did our Lord take His stand on the written word, the Scriptures, as the most authoritative of all testimonies. All Scripture, every part of it even, is God-inspired for permanence, and the true end of controversy for those that believe ; while such as believe not, must learn their sin and folly in the judgment. The question is in no way whether the writers knew or did not know what they wrote (for both are found abundantly in Scripture), but whether they were inspired of God to write it. And 'every Scripture' is so inspired. This also makes it God's word ; not its known truth or usefulness, but His inspiring it ; and this we have in every Scripture.

Some writers may be sublime and others simple ;

*

some may be pathetic and others severe ; but all are God-inspired ; and the plain proof is that they are part of the Scriptures. In the New Testament we have differences as wide as sever the Epistle of James from those of Paul, and the Gospel of Mark from that of John. But inspired they *are* equally, as their writings are part of the Scriptures. Inspiration of God is a fact, and does not admit of varying degrees.

It is quite within the power of the Holy Spirit in giving God's word to adopt the style of each individual writer. But no effort on a writer's part could make his words to be God's. Even before the adversary the Lord told the twelve to have no anxiety how or what to speak, for in the hour of need it should be given. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 20). How much more was that divine energy wanted and given, when not their vindication was in question, but the communication of God's mind and will for His own and for ever ? Indeed it is no more than the certain fact ; for every Scripture is God-inspired.

Speculation into the 'how' of inspiration is a prying into what is not revealed, and therefore unwise and unbecoming. We are not told how God inspired the writers of the Scriptures. It is probable that none could know save those who were so energized. Theories 'mechanical' or 'dynamical', so called, are out of place and explain nothing. As 1 Cor. ii. maintains the principle, the necessity, and the fact of Spirit-taught words, so 2 Tim. iii. 16 speaks, not of the relations before the mind only, but of 'Scripture' ; and decides for it as inspired of God.

This is the all-important truth conveyed. It is God Himself in Scripture removing all doubt about Scripture,

and even about every part of it. One can conceive no other communication more distinct and conclusive. The language is as plain as its aim is spiritually momentous, and its intimation is of the utmost practical interest and value.

W. K.

Forgiveness and Freedom.

IT may be said, without fear of contradiction, that the majority of believers do not enjoy, experimentally, the blessing of *freedom*, or what is sometimes called *deliverance*.

To have the knowledge of the *forgiveness* of sins, and salvation through faith in the precious blood of Christ who died for us on Calvary's cross is most blessed. This is as far as the majority of believers attain, but, blessed as it is, it is yet far from being all that the cross of Christ has done for the soul. Often, after a soul has got the enjoyment of the knowledge of forgiveness, there is disappointment on account of the discovery of indwelling sin. The thought of such an one, when in the first joy of conversion, often is, that it would not be possible to sin again.

To give a simple illustration, it is not a new one, but will be helpful to a proper understanding of the truth. We have a fruit-bearing tree in our garden, and annually we gather all the fruit from it; but the tree itself that produced the fruit still remains. So it is with that evil principle, *sin*, from whence come the fruits, *sins*. Our sins are *forgiven* when we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are put away for ever. The blessed Lord was delivered for our OFFENCES and raised again for our justification (Rom. iv. 25).

On the other hand, with regard to the evil principle

within us—*sin*; *this* has not been *forgiven* but judged in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, “For He (God) hath made Him *sin*, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. v. 21). Thus the tree (*sin*) that produced the fruit (*sins*) has been dealt with root and branch. What a blessed thing then to know that the believer has died with Christ and is altogether out of his old Adam standing! For as *He* died unto *sin* once on the cross, so, in the sight of God, *we* died with Him. The believer is no longer a slave of *sin* but has complete *freedom* from it, and is now a bondman to righteousness (Rom. vi. 17, 18).

So then, in the cross of Christ, we not only see how Christ died *for us* and put away all our sins, but also that in the same act we died *with Him*. We read in Rom. vi. 6, that, “Our old man (all that I was as a child of Adam) is crucified *with Him*”, and in verse 7 “For he that is dead is *freed* (justified) from *sin*”.

The apostle then proceeds with this marvellous argument in the following words (verse 11), “Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be *dead* indeed unto *sin*, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Account it to be a fact that, in the cross of Christ, you have met your death as to *sin*. Decide in your mind, consider it to be the case, that *sin* has no longer any place in your existence here in this world. As another has said, there is, for faith, an end to our state and standing in the flesh. The flesh is still there, it is true, but we are not to give it any quarter, since, in the cross of Christ, we have died to it. According to our chapter, verse 12, “Let not *sin* therefore *reign* in your mortal body”, and verse 14, “For *sin* shall not have dominion over you”.

There are three great principles opposed to the believer in Christ—*sin in the flesh, the law, and the world*. We have already seen how the first has been dealt with. We now come to the second, namely, the law (Rom. vii.). Before we became believers the law held us in its grip, it appealed to us as men in the flesh and was a standard for our conduct as such. But since becoming believers in Christ, in whom God sees us, the law has no application to us as a rule of life; we have become dead to it and have *freedom* from its grip.

The next great thing from which we have obtained *freedom* in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that huge system called 'the world', of which Scripture tells us Satan is the god. It is like the octopus whose tentacles reach out to clutch and draw in its victims; young believers especially should be particularly wary of the wiles of Satan, who is ever seeking to get them away from Christ. The god of this system, called the world, throws out his bait especially to the young believer; offers his attractions, allures by his blandishments, and displays its glory to the unwary soul. He is ever the same deceiver as he was in the garden of Eden, saying, "Yea, hath God said?"

The apostle Paul, in Gal. vi. 14 states very clearly his position as to the world, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world". The believer should, in no way whatever, be associated with that world whose hands are imbrued with the blood of a murdered Christ. By standing our ground according to the word of God, we are delivered; we have *freedom* from the world.

There are three modes of temptation which Satan

has used from the beginning (Gen. iii. 6)—“ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh), and that it was pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life), she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ”. Now, as ever, “ All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world ” (1 John ii. 16).

If the believer takes the Scriptural ground of being a dead man, having died with Christ, none of the things mentioned can successfully appeal to him.

It is impossible in a short paper such as this, to follow up these precious truths fully, but we trust the foregoing remarks may lead us all to think over them, and may enable us to pursue, with the word of God in our hands, the subject of freedom from the power of sin, freedom from the law, and freedom from the world.

J. P. (MONTREAL).

The Secret of Power.—2.

Mark ix. 9-29.

THE father of the child who had the dumb spirit appealed to the compassion of the Lord, who reproved His disciples because they knew not how to make use of His power although it was at the disposal of faith. His power and grace are infinite, but, as was the case with the rebellious people of old, the disciples, by their unbelief, “ limited the Holy One of Israel ”—they hindered the display of His power. This is a serious warning to us.

“ If Thou canst do anything,” said the child’s father, “ help us.” The powerlessness of the disciples, mani-

(Continued on page 185)

fested a little before, led him to doubt the power of the Saviour. Such is the sad effect of our unbelief and want of faith. The dishonour of it reflects on Him whom we profess to serve, and whose glory we obscure, instead of being living testimonies to it. This it was which led the Saviour to say to them, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" It is a solemn thought that the unbelief which the Saviour met with here below, obliged Him to leave the scene of this world.

Moreover, so it will come to pass in like manner—unbelief will bring on the close of this present economy of grace. The fall of the church is so complete, its ruin is so irremediable, that God must interpose in judgement with respect to it, and cause a testimony which has become corrupt in the hands of men to disappear. He will do so because it has not been maintained by those who were the depositaries of it, therefore it has become useless and will be brought to an end. The redeemed ones will be gathered to the Lord in glory, but the professing church will be spued out of His mouth (Rev. iii. 16).

The terrible state of the child (Mark ix. 22) was a figure of that of the Jewish nation at the close of its history. Having rejected all the calls of God and crucified the Son of His love, they have fallen under the power of "a deaf and dumb spirit". The effect of their unbelief will be fully manifested in the last phase of their history of rebellion against God. Not only is this people *deaf* to the appeals and to the warnings of the Gospel, and *dumb* instead of proclaiming God's glory, but they will soon fall under a 'strong delusion' so as to 'believe a lie', in the same way as apostate Christendom (2 Thess. ii. 11). The Lord Jesus said to

the Jews, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43).

The father of the child, whose heart was torn with grief, had confidence in the Lord's love, but not in His power. "Jesus said to him, The 'if thou couldst' is [if thou couldst] believe" [ver. 23, N.T.]. The hindrance to blessing was not on the Lord's side, for His power is infinite. It was to be found in the father's unbelief, as well as in that of the disciples. That it is, also, which hinders the sinner from laying hold of the value of the work of Christ, and of appropriating it to himself.

When, as was the case with the father of the child, one is led to say, "Lord, I believe", the blessing is complete; for "all things are possible to him that believeth". Every divine blessing—eternal life, salvation and glory, become the possession of the believer. The deliverance given to the poor victim of the enemy is absolute. Satan cannot reconquer the prey which has been taken from him by his powerful Conqueror. "Come out of him, and enter no more into him," said He. What a comfort it is to us to know that no one can pluck the sheep out of the hand of the good Shepherd, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand" (John x. 28).

The Lord then gives His disciples serious instruction, on which we do well to meditate attentively "This kind", said He, "can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." It was a question of a manifestation of quite a special power of the enemy, in relation to the end of the age. God allowed such a display of the malice of Satan, because His people had fallen into a state of complete hardness of heart and spiritual darkness.

The same will be the case with the professedly Christian world at the close of the period of God's patience. In our days, we witness a terrible development of evil—unbelief, despising the word of God, false doctrines of all kinds, a growing spirit of revolution—the apostasy and anarchy which surround us give ample proof that a 'deaf and dumb' spirit has taken possession of the men of this generation.

With what armour can we contend against such a torrent of evil? How can we be kept from the corrupting influences which are so active around us? How shall we overcome in such a state of things? *By prayer and fasting* (ver. 29). Prayer puts us in relation with God, the source of power, of grace, and of faith: spiritual fasting, that is to say, the realization of self-judgement, keeps us in dependance and enables us to realize the power of the Lord.

Let us watch and pray without ceasing, and let us remember that the promises are *to him that believeth*. If, on the contrary, we take our ease in a world filled with darkness, if we do not deny ourselves but walk with a trifling and worldly heart, we shall be, as were the disciples, powerless before the enemy. May God give us grace to have girded loins and burning lamps, and to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord".

J. B.

Work for the Lord.

HERE is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are true-hearted) because we have not the acknowledgement of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have

undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience, and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services (however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling that they devolved upon me), that I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at Jesus' feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of soul up into Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end.

It is most blessed to work for Christ, it is fruit-bearing; but if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am really working for Christ, and growing up into Him, sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find any one serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true and pleasing service.

If you begin with serving (as many do nowadays), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting there, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage; for it is at the sitting the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known. Hence there is damage done, and loss is sustained by the soul, when service pre-occupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where service is most prominent.

I never met with any one making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet. But, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting

at His feet above any service. And it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be competent to serve and most in His confidence, which after all is the clue to all efficient service.

J. N. D.

The God who hears us.

“**O** LORD, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! even cry unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!” Such were the words of the prophet Habakkuk, tried and agitated as he was by the state of things around. He cried to God about it, but apparently in vain, “Thou wilt not hear”. “How long”, he says. It is the same cry which we often find in the Psalms, coming from the godly remnant of Israel suffering under the oppression and persecution of their enemies, and seeing no deliverance as yet.

The world is something like this to-day. The spirit of anarchy, rebellion, even violence and bloodshed in some countries, is abroad. And there is no apparent prospect of a cessation of this state of things. The law is slackened, judgement not going forth, the wicked compassing the righteous, godlessness and infidelity rampant, etc. And—what seems unintelligible to many—God allows things to go on, apparently not interfering.

But this is just where faith, which gets light and guidance from God and His word, has the advantage over dark and gloomy unbelief. It knows God’s character, that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look upon sin. He must judge it when His time to do so comes. Faith looks at the condition of His people and of the world from *His* standpoint, and sees, not only that “the Lord hath a controversy

with the nations", but also that "the Lord hath a controversy with His people".

Faith listens to God's voice which says, "*Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation*", etc. Was it that the Chaldeans were righteous and Israel unrighteous? No, indeed! of the two probably the Chaldean was the worse. But they were the rod in God's hand which He was about to use in chastening His guilty people. And it is just this that the prophet now recognizes, "O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgement. . . . Thou hast established them for correction". He is no longer occupied so much with the rod, but with the hand that holds it, and this brings relief and sheds a calm into the soul. So it was with David when, in pride of heart, he numbered the people and, as a consequence, suffered under God's discipline (2 Sam. xxiv.).

Whatever apparent truth there may be in what is called "the silence of God", yet faith knows that God is over all, that His hand moves behind the scenes, and that He will surely carry out His own purposes of blessing, in spite of all man or Satan can do. Above all, He has lessons to teach us; it may be that sometimes they are painful and trying, but always for our good, whatever appearances may seem to suggest to the contrary.

Here the enemy seemed to prosper and have his way, "imputing his power unto his god". To-day also men worship false gods and believe they get help through them—the wafer-god of Romanism, the impersonal god of Christian Science, and many others; as well as the god of ambition, of pride, of money, etc.; all of which are so attractive to the natural man. Such is man: deceived by the enemy of souls, and a slave

to his lusts and desires—professing himself to be wise he became senseless, and his foolish heart was darkened.

But how does the prophet take this chastening? He says, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon my tower, and will watch to see what *He* will say unto *me*, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.” It is now no longer the cry, ‘How long’, or the restless and agitated state of mind which looks only at the rod God may use, or at the trying circumstances; he has got into the presence of God, and he waits to see what *God* has to say to *him* in it all.

Do we take up this attitude in times of trial and stress? Do we ask, What has God got to say to me in all this? We may be sure He has something to say, and we may rest satisfied that it is for our blessing, even though we have long to wait for the time of the accomplishment of His purposes of grace. So it was with Job in his day; the “end of the Lord” is that He is “very pitiful, and of tender mercy”. The ‘vision’ would certainly come and be made plain; and *we* too shall fully understand God’s ways when *His* time comes: meanwhile, “If it tarry wait for it”; and that too in the exercise of *faith*.

At the close we find that the prophet had thoroughly learnt his lesson. There is no complaining, no restless agitation because God apparently did not hear his cry about the perversion of judgement and the prevailing evil. His eye is fixed on God, not on the proud and cruel enemy, or on the circumstances. The result is the most perfect calm and tranquility. And not only so, but he can even rejoice—not indeed *because* of the trial, which would be unnatural and unreal—but *in spite of it*. He finds in God his resource, he rejoices *in the Lord*, and joys *in the God of his salvation*;

even though every outward resource—the fig tree, the vines, the olive, the fields, the flocks, the herd—fails utterly. May we be enabled to profit by the precious exercise of faith we see in him. F. G. B.

Scriptural Notes and Gleanings.

“**A**N HEART OF FLESH.” “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek. xxxvi. 26 ; xi. 19). Although this is spoken of Israel in a future day, is it not a thing which we, Christians, should desire for ourselves? Surely we may well pray: “Lord, take away the hardness and coldness of our hearts and give us an heart to love Thee, an heart which responds to Thy love for us, an heart which longs and waits for Thy coming, an heart which feels for souls perishing around us and goes out after them in deep desire that they may be led to find in Thee, life and peace and salvation.”

* * * * *

CHRIST'S HUMAN AFFECTIONS. “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke xxii. 14). It is like one leaving his family and first desiring a farewell meeting. When we see the divine glory in the person of Christ we find the human affections shining out. (Comp. Matt. xvii. 27.) It is this which gives Him a power and charm which no object else has, so that God can delight in man and man can delight in God.