WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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1

A Word for the New Year.

THERE is something very touching in the last chapter of second Timothy, the last inspired epistle Paul wrote. It contains also much that is suitable for the times in which we live, and when we are just beginning another period of time and passing another milestone on our road heavenward.

In the days of second Timothy declension had already set in in the church, and the exercise of patience, endurance, and earnestness, was more than ever needed in order to carry the servant of God through all the discouragements of the times and the opposition of the enemy.

The apostle's charge to Timothy was most grave and solemn; it was before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom. *Then* everything would come out in its true light and the rewards would be given for service and testimony here.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season." Here there is no laxity, no giving way to despondency, no hanging down of the hands because of the evils and troubles abroad. Surely we, too, much need this stirring up, this energy and devotedness in the testimony of the Lord; and we need it all the more because in a day of difficulty it often happens that the love of many grows cold. But Christ is still the same and the great truths of the gospel are as true now as ever they were.

But there is one word in particular to which we should like to draw attention; that is the word "watch" in verse 5, or, as it is better translated in the New Translation, "be sober"—it reads, "But thou, be sober in all things." The note in this translation is instructive. "It (*neepho*) implies that sober clearness of mind

resulting from exemption from false influences—not muddled with the influence of what intoxicates."

In the hurry and bustle of christian activity, is there not much need of this sobriety? We can hardly take up the religious papers of the day without being struck with the want of a calm and godly discernment of the mind of God. There is much of what we might expect from "teachers heaped up" to please itching ears, or new ideas to catch the popular taste, but, oh, how little of that Spirit-taught ministry, which is meat in due season for the household of faith!

Both the hearers and readers, as well as those that minister, need to take these things to heart. Have we really an appetite for the truth of God as it is found in His word, and for a solid and spiritual ministry of Christ? Lot, as he sat in the gate of Sodom, accepting honours and preferments in that polluted place, was in no way in a position to receive or value what was of God. How could he, breathing as he did the polluted atmosphere of Sodom?

Abraham, on the other hand, in separation from the world and enjoying communion with God on the mountain top, was just in the place to receive and to value communications from God; and even to intercede for the guilty cities of the plain. And, oh, how true it is! —it is in the measure in which we are separated from the world and its allurements, and have Christ as the Object before us in our walk, that we shall have a relish for the heavenly manna as well as for the old corn of the land.

May the Lord, in His grace, enable us to see everything in the holy light of His presence and thus to know more of that sobriety to which the beloved apostle exhorted his son Timothy and which is so lacking in our day!

3

My Joy and Your Joy.

"These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full" (John xv. 11).
"But I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." . . . "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 22, 24).
"And now come I to Thee: and these things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John xvii. 13).

THE Lord Jesus found His joy in obedience, as He says in John xv. 10, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"; which is followed by the verse cited above: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might be in you and that your joy might be full." He came to speak the Father's words and to do the Father's works and He did both perfectly. He could say in the language of Psalm xl. 9, 10, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation; I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth from the great congregation."

And this leads us to understand the joy of John the Baptist, as expressed in John iii. 29, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled." John had previously borne witness to Him, as related in chapter i., without hearing Him speak, but now he hears His voice, the voice of One who comes from above and speaks of heavenly things, which John could listen to with great delight.

And if John could rejoice at hearing the Bridegroom's voice, surely we can also. In one sense we have heard it already, as the Lord says in John x. 27, 28, "My

sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand."

But we wait for Him to come. We wait for Him who has been rejected by the world, but who has promised to come again for His own. Then our joy will be full; but in the meantime we can rely on His further promise and find joy in asking in His name. In John xvi. 23, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." This is for the present time, during our Lord's absence, and we may well find comfort and joy in so doing. G.K.

"Looking for that Blessed Hope."

(Titus ii. 13).

WE have come to the dawning of another year, passed another stage on the way to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away," and chronicled a further epoch in the pilgrim path. We may well, especially at this time, remind one another of what is recorded by the apostle, writing by inspiration in his day, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

But how does this hope find us? In what way does it appeal to our hearts? What kind of response does it call forth towards Him who is our Saviour and our Lord? He has loved His church and given Himself for it and has declared in His last message from heaven, "Behold I come quickly." When just about to depart from this world to the Father He left with His disciples the blessed hope, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

It is to be noted that the Lord gave no date; He simply said, "I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again." The interval between the two has lasted all these years and we are awaiting the fulfilment of His purpose in the call of His heavenly bride. But if His coming was put before His disciples in that day to cheer their hearts, how much nearer is that blessed event to-day!

Are our hearts in unison with the Lord's own desire? Are we, not only waiting, but "looking" for that blessed hope? The word seems to suggest an appeal, and reminds us of Romans xiii. 11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

These are salutary reminders to which we do well to take heed—a bracing up for our souls in the midst of the increasing gloom of apostasy, which, like an octopus, is enveloping Christendom.

It is evident from the solemn warning notes of the Lord in His address to the church at Sardis (Rev. iii.), that that church had lost touch with "that blessed hope," hence His word, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee." But He graciously accompanies this with a word of counsel to rouse her from her supineness, "Remember therefore *how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent.*" We emphasise these last words, for they have a special voice for all who have grown slack as to the "blessed hope."

Revivals amongst the people of God have taken place as the effect of the faithfulness of God towards those He never ceases to love, in spite of the poor response they give to His love to them. But when the Holy

Spirit works in such revivals two things occur—the conscience and heart are brought under conviction of sin in such a way that it produces a repentance that needeth not to be repented of—a sorrow which bears its fruit according to God (2 Cor. vii. 9-11); and God's own guidance is sought according to His word, which had been neglected (2 Chron. xxxiv. 15, etc.).

We may gather useful instruction from the course pursued by Moses when the people had corrupted themselves in falling into idolatry—the sin of associating the name of Jehovah with the worship of the golden calf (Exod. xxxii. 1-6). It is a marvellous episode in the history of God's ways with His failing people. • He could have cut them off in His righteousness, but instead of that He restored them in His mercy.

On this occasion Moses shines as a brilliant type of our faithful and gracious Lord, who, by His intercession on high, prevails on our behalf. And there is surely a lesson for His church in all this. He says, "As many as I love (not those who love Me—alas ! that love had declined) I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent."

But someone may say, "What has all this to do with 'that blessed hope'?" It has much to do with it. It is a *sanctifying* hope—this is how it is enjoined upon us in Titus. The doctrine of God our Saviour is to be "adorned"; we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts—things ever dangerously near us. And the apostle's teaching is positive as well as negative: if, however, self-denial be not put in practice, our testimony as to godliness, sobriety, etc., will be blurred (ver. 12). Here it is that the words, "Looking for that blessed hope," come in so suitably after the exhortations to righteousness, godliness, etc.

A dear servant of the Lord, the late G.V.W., who, though rich when converted, gave up the world in one step for his Master, once said, "The Lord does not

let the prospect of glory into the heart that settles on its lees, it is better to be poured from vessel to vessel and find it to be all Christ and Christ alone."

As we look for the rising of the Morning Star, let us ask, Has it got possession of *our hearts* already? (2 Peter ii. 19). The evil servant it was who said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming" (Matt. xxiv. 28), and the consequence was that he is found beating his fellow servants and eating and drinking with the drunken—it is the sad history of the moral state of Christendom, which is now drawing towards its doom; and that at the very zenith of its seeming prosperity, but, alas! of its apostasy also (Rev. xvii-xviii.).

In conclusion, we would ask the reader to ponder over 1 Thess. v. 1-11, which contains a blessed safeguard against the spirit of the age, and much to comfort and help our souls in times of spiritual declension from the truth. H.L.

Gideon and His Times—1.

(Judges vi.—viii.).

THE church is the fruit of God's counsels for the delight and glory of Christ His beloved Son. Each member of it was chosen by Him from before the foundation of the world; and wonderful but ever gracious are His ways in respect of them. He has manipulated the complexities of a whole people's history, spread over centuries, to furnish them with "ensample" and "admonition" in their pilgrimage through this world to a heavenly country (1 Cor. x. 11).

With a deep sense in our souls of the reverent attention any and every part of that history demands from us, we would wait upon the divine record of Gideon and his times for some of its instruction.

Israel had been oppressed by the Midianites for seven years as a consequence of practically rejecting the rule

of Jehovah. Have we not here a warning that if believers of to-day refuse, practically, the Lordship of Christ, they will get into spiritual bondage?

The Midianites destroyed Israel's crops. Our spiritual enemy also attacks that on which we feed. If, to-day, he cannot destroy it out of hand, as he is still seeking to do in some countries, he will try to poison it, as is manifestly his effort in others. How many modern cults bear lamentable witness to this? What need there is for vigilance to preserve our spiritual food from the activities of Satan's malice.

A British force was once decoyed from its base and surrounded. By nightfall the commander perceived its critical position. Knowing the value British soldiers attach to their food, he told them their breakfast was at the base; there they must go for it. This one object so dominated their energies that they fought their way through the enveloping foe until their goal was attained and disaster turned to victory.

How much more should we value and contend for our spiritual food!

Israel cried to the Lord under the oppression of the Midianites, and He sent a prophet. The prophet having aroused the consciences of the people as to their disobedience and ingratitude, Jehovah Himself (vi. 14) came as the angel to announce deliverance and to appoint the deliverer. What interest attaches to His choice of Gideon! Despite enemy occupation, Gideon had saved and was threshing some wheat—not barley, merely. He had also preserved the winepress.

Threshing is the subject of promise and direction in scripture (Lev. xxvi. 5; Deut. xxv. 4), so that "he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." In God's judgment on Israel in David's day, the "sword of the Lord" was stayed by the threshing-floor of Ornan.

Gideon was lowly-minded, fully sensible that his family was poor in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house. Moreover, he was in deep exercise about the condition of Israel, recognising it as a judicial dealing of the Lord, but comparing it with His rights and power.

Such was Gideon, whom the Lord so strikingly addressed, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," and, looking upon him, commissioned him to save Israel from the Midianites; sealing the commission, as it were, with the challenge, "Have not I sent thee?" He thus made Gideon solely responsible to Himself.

Gideon's sense of his own weakness leads him to raise a doubt as to his ability to fill the rôle appointed for him. The Lord meets this with the magnificent assurance, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Gideon asks for confirmation by a sign, and the Lord allows Himself to be detained by him. In the kid and the unleavened cakes made of flour we have a reminder of the "burnt-offering and his meat-offering." The Lord brings fire out of the rock to consume it, thus manifesting His presence and Gideon's acceptance. The declaration of peace follows, and then the building of the altar. Gideon calls it Jehovah-Shalom as denoting the ground of his worship. This altar is consecrated by the Lord, though in other than the appointed national place; just as, in a later day, was the one set up in the threshing-floor of Ornan.

But there must be the abolition of false worship, and the work must begin at home. A needful lesson for us (see also Mark v. 19). The work does not end at his home. Energised by the Spirit of the Lord, Gideon blows the trumpet. What a stir it causes amongst the dry bones! The despairing, the despoiled, the down-

trodden Israelites rise up until a host of thirty-two thousand is gathered after him.

The blowing of the trumpets was God's gracious provision for Israel (Num. x.). It was His testimony to gather the people; and which, in case of war, had the pledge of His help. The priests, as in nearness to God, sounded them; but in that day of failure, Gideon was the one in communion with God.

However overwhelming the enemy may seem to *us*, we, too, are told that the testimony sounded by His feeble ones will have His aid (Rev. iii. 8).

A. J. H.

Eternal Punishment.

IT was said by the Bishop of Liverpool and the Archbishop of York at the Church Congress recently, that the presentation of religious truth to the multitude, which had been largely educated, must be cast into an entirely different form from that which was salutary to the people of the epoch of the industrial revolution. Both speakers declared that the compelling influence of fear induced by the prospect of eternal punishment must give place to an insistence on the good in human nature rather than the evil. Dr. David referred to the doctrine of perpetual suffering as a "symbol" that has "gone"; while the Archbishop of York went even further in asserting that the centre of gravity in religion had shifted from authority to experience.

There is no particular reason for taking up these statements, save that they give expression to the views of many people in Christendom at the present time. Is it, then, the case that the truth of God must bend to human experience, and because the masses are more educated than they were, therefore the facts of Christianity must be adjusted so as to suit them? God

forbid!—this would be to set man on a pinnacle and to make him a judge of what is right—in fact, to make man judge God, instead of God judging man.

But it shows how far men have gone, when the momentous subject of eternal punishment can be brushed aside as not being even a matter for consideration at all—it is a "symbol" and has "gone"! Ah! such is not the teaching of scripture, of God's word, which carries *His* authority, whatever men may say. It is indeed a grave and most serious subject, affecting the whole truth of Christianity and of the gospel.

Mere human reason and sentiment may come to its own conclusions and argue that God is too loving, too merciful to punish anyone so; but this is, after all, mere sentiment, ignorant alike of the character of God and of what sin is in *His* eyes. Scripture declares that "God is light" as well as "God is love." As light He is infinitely holy and cannot look upon sin; it is abhorrent to His holy nature; as love His heart goes out to the poor sinner in pity and compassion.

Both these parts of God's nature are demonstrated, and, indeed, harmonised, at the cross. His holiness was shown in the judgment of sin in the person of the Sinbearer; His love was shown in the provision of a sacrifice—the Lamb of His own providing, needed and adequate to meet all the requirements of His justice.

Let us follow the Saviour, Son of God, into the garden of Gethsemane and behold His agony of soul as He prayed that if it were possible "the hour" might pass from Him. Let us follow Him on to the cross and listen to His cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And let us consider the answer to that question, "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

Who else but the Infinite could sound the depths of that cup of which He was about to drink, and which He did drink, in that solemn hour of the cross? And

who else but He, the Infinite, having drained that cup to the last drop, could say, "It is finished"? But our Lord Jesus accomplished this; and so completely was God glorified by that wonderful sacrifice, that He raised His Son from the dead and crowned Him with glory and honour in heaven (John xiii. 31, 32).

At the cross there was a public demonstration, before the whole universe, of God's absolute abhorrence of sin and of His infinite holiness. Was it for nothing, then, that the Son of God died amidst the agonies of Calvary, and is the impenitent sinner who refuses the offers of His grace, turns his back upon such a Saviour, and rejects the testimony of the Holy Ghost to escape? Impossible. Such must bear the consequences of neglecting or rejecting so great salvation "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 44; Heb. ii. 3).

Much effort has been made to prove that the word translated "eternal" does not mean eternal in an unlimited sense. It is not proposed to go into the matter at length in this short paper; but it is sufficient to say that the very same word is applied to the eternal blessing of the saved, as to the eternal misery of the lost (Matt. xxv. 46); also to the eternal God, the eternal Spirit, to the things which are not seen and are eternal in contrast with seen things which are temporal. Indeed, there is no other word more suitable than this one (*aionios*) to convey the idea of unlimited duration; it is used about seventy times in the New Testament.

As the question is of much importance it may be well to quote a remark made by one well instructed in the truth:—"That examples may be found in which the word *when connected with another*, may have the sense of unchangeableness during the whole existence of that other, is true; but that in nothing alters its own proper meaning, where used to express that. Thus, in Eng-

lish, if a child asks me, have I lent him something or given it him for ever—I may say, I have given it you for ever; yet the perishable thing will not last for ever; it means that the gift is not to be recalled; it is given with a constant and unchangeable purpose, as long as the thing lasts.

"Does that produce in the mind of any English person any doubt as to what *for ever* means as to the proper sense of the word? It confirms that sense, though there be a modification of it by the application of the words. So it is in Greek, *aionios* means Eternal; it is used in a way which can leave no doubt of this."

The Bishops speak of "the compelling influence of fear induced by the prospect of eternal punishment giving place to an insistence on the good in human nature rather than the evil." The apostle Paul says, speaking of the solemn fact of judgment, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It was one of the motives which urged him to preach the gospel; the other was the constraining power of the love of Christ (2 Cor. v. 11, 14). And as to "the good in human nature," the same apostle says, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth *no good thing*"; hence the *absolute necessity* for the new birth.

When the light of God's word shines in it dispels the darkness; it shows us man in his true condition as fallen and a sinner, utterly estranged from God and dead in trespasses and sins. But on the other hand it shows us what God is both as light and love, and His wonderful provision for the sinner in the cross of Christ. And the issues and results of that cross are *eternal*—eternal in blessing to the saved, and in punishment to the lost. Let us take God's word, and *believe* it.

F.G.B.

14

The Warrior's Shoes.

WE are surely passing on *to* Immanuel's land, but we are not yet passing *through* it. We are still in an enemy's land. That enemy's business is to trip us up, to stumble us, to drive us back, or at least to thrust us out of the way. And he is powerful and subtle, too.

I believe one of the chief causes of our defeat is ignorance, ignorance of the fact that we have this powerful enemy to deal with; forgetfulness, too, that we are called "Soldiers of Jesus Christ," and that "enduring hardness" is, or should be, a large part of our christian experience.

If we ignore these things we are not prepared for his onslaughts and down we go. But our God has seen our danger and our need. He has provided not only armour for His warriors (Eph. vi. 13) and spiritual weapons for our offence and defence (2 Cor. x. 4) but also shoes for our feet.

It is said that Edinburgh Castle was nearly captured in the early days by the savage Northmen, and possibly it would have been, had not one barefooted warrior trod on a Scotch thistle as he stole up to the castle in the dead of night.

So also many of us would have been "more than conquerors" on many occasions but for the sad fact that we had been walking through an enemy's land barefooted; the result being that, treading on sharp stones and walking along a rough road, our feet have been hurt, and we have either chosen an easier path or else gone right back; whereas if our shoes had been on our feet, we would have been able to tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon would have been trampled under our feet (Ps. xci. 13).

Turn with me to Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25, "Let Asher . . . . dip his foot in oil, Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." We may surely draw from this imagery

some useful instruction for ourselves. What a remarkable contrast we have here—oil and iron. Figures, of course, but of what? Oil speaks of the Holy Spirit, and dipping the foot in it speaks of what we have in Galatians v, 16, 17, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

When we are walking in the Spirit, He takes up the conflict on our behalf and we, as it were, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." The Lord will never do for us what we are responsible to do for ourselves; but the moment we look up and say, "O Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me" (Isa. xxxviii. 14) that moment He comes in between us and the enemy and He does for us what we have proved, through sad failure, we have not been able to do for ourselves.

"Let him dip his foot in oil"—may we not take from this the fact that the Holy Spirit is provided for us by God to be our salvation in a practical way from the sad workings of the flesh in these hearts of ours? Thus we read, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

It is not good to be over much occupied with our shoes, for God would have us to look *up* rather than *down*. Nevertheless, we do well to earnestly inquire into the matter whether our shoes are on our feet, or whether we are walking barefooted. It is to be feared, alas! that some of us will not need to look down very much to find this out.

Do we not know from sad experience that we have been meeting the temptations, trials and difficulties of life in our own strength instead of (to use another figure) "running into that strong tower" provided for us by an all-wise and loving Father, who knows our every danger and need? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Prov. xviii. 10).

Oh, to be absolutely convinced on this point that, "the battle is the Lord's" and He will fight it for us if we only trust Him. But as long as we struggle on in our own wisdom and strength, so long will the victor's song, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place," be withheld from us. Instead of this will be heard the sad groan, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me?"

May it be ours, then, to lean hard upon God and to find all our strength and our resources in Him who strengthens us—in the Lord Himself!

J.S. (*New Zealand*).

Christ's Position Ours.

A word on Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 7-12).

WHATEVER links our position with Christ, as an example and pattern, is in truth a blessing to us; for was there ever one that went through all with such unfailing, lowly, faithfulness to God as He did? Look at the contrast of His lowly path with that of Elijah, and what do we see? Elijah was going on ministering with great outward power, bringing down fire from heaven to destroy the prophets of Baal, and thinking himself to be the only one that was left who was true to God; whereas God had 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal, whom Elijah had not found out; while Christ was content to be nothing in a world where man was everything, and God was shut out.

He was content to be treated as the very offscouring of the earth; and yet, at the same time, there was not one single lost sheep of the house of Israel that His voice did not reach as the voice of the Good Shepherd; that His eye did not discover. Thus, in virtue of His

very humiliation, He puts those who now have but this "*little strength*" into the very same place which He Himself took, and then, as the porter did for Him, He opens the door for them, *which none can shut.*

We are waiting for the glory, "*The glory Thou hast given Me I have given them*"; and while thus waiting we have to pass through that which has "Ichabod" written on it—the glory hath departed. The testimony of this dispensation in its public power is gone, never to be recovered.

What the Lord is pressing upon them is, that they are not to suppose that the evil, such as that of Thyatira and Sardis, can be put in order; but He says, "Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown"; that is, keep the word of My patience till I come.

Thus we find ourselves in circumstances analogous to Christ; for when the Lord says, "Behold I come quickly," it is to the end that we may get into greater likeness to Christ's position; and although trying and humbling, yet one of blessing, finding ourselves just in the same position which Jesus took; with the same promise—an open door which none can shut. That is present faith; it is not much strength that we want, but the thing we most want is greater conformity to the *position* of Christ. J.N.D.

Death from the Scientist's Point of View.

IN a recent lecture, Sir Oliver Lodge, speaking from the point of view of *Science*, is reported to have informed his hearers, that "*death. . . is an episode that is bound to come.*"

How true this is! but Sir Oliver does not seem to have told them why. Scripture, however, which is the revelation of God's mind to man, furnishes the answer.

It tells us that "we must needs die, and be as water spilled upon the ground;" and it also tells us why. It is, that "death passed on all men, *for all have sinned.*"

But, another important inquiry is also raised; and that is,—"*Is death the end?*" The lecturer says, that *Science,* sooner or later, "will be bound to answer this question."

We do not need to await the answer of *Science*, for the Word of God reveals the fact that "death" is *not* "the end"; for, "after death the judgment." Ah, dear reader, it is this unwelcomed fact that must be faced.

Sir Oliver further assured his hearers, that "death" is "*something we may be ready for*"; "*welcome,*" when it comes, and, "*not be afraid* of."

Again we are left in the dark by the lecturer, how all this may come about. But, what Science cannot reveal, the Word of God can; and it it just *that* we need to know.

The only answer is to be found in the "wondrous cross" of Christ. Apart from the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, we could have "no hope," never be "ready" for death, and never "welcome" it.

Now, what was it that came out at the cross?

Our sins were there, borne by the spotless Victim, "the Lamb of God." Sin reached its climax there also. Would the Jews have their Messiah? No; "away with Him"; "crucify Him!" Would the Gentile honour the Son of God as their Saviour? No; the Roman handed him over to be crucified.

Thus, "the Son of man lifted up" became the expression, under satanic energy, of the malice of man's heart against God. Truly, at the cross, "*sin abounded*"; and the immeasurable distance between the holy God and sinful men was revealed.

But we find something else coming out at the cross. "The Son of man lifted up" became the expression of

the boundless love of God's heart for the sinner; so that, "where *sin abounded*, grace did *much more* abound." "*In this*"—note well the words, dear reader—"*in this* was manifested the LOVE OF GOD *toward us;* God sent His only-begotten Son into the world,"—Why? "*that we might live* through Him." What blessed news! Life, life, eternal life, for every believing sinner; for, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" [and, He has been "lifted up"], that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should have eternal life."

With the eye of faith turned towards the cross of Christ, the apostle Paul came to the conclusion that "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." And, long years afterwards, in full view of threatened martyrdom, the same apostle was able to say:—"I am *ready* to be offered. . . . I have finished my course. . . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Yes, "death" is "something we may be *ready* for"; and, if Christ be our Saviour and our Lord, that we *are* "*ready* for."

"Awaiting for a general resurrection," may be "mediæval superstition," as Sir Oliver Lodge asserts, but the doctrine of "a *general* resurrection" is nowhere to be found in the holy Scriptures. The Lord Jesus spoke of *two* resurrections; one as "the resurrection of life," and the other as "the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 29 R.V.).

"The first resurrection" affects all that are Christ's; the second resurrection affects those who, not having bowed to Christ, must stand before "the great white throne."

Each resurrection (as did also the resurrection of Christ) answers the question, "Is death the end?" by an emphatic "*No*."

Referring to "the first resurrection," "the resurrection of life," we learn that "the dead in Christ shall rise," and "this corruptible will put on incorruption"; and "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Referring to the second resurrection, "the resurrection of judgment," we learn that "*death* and hades, having delivered up the dead which were in them," were "cast into the lake of fire." In other words, "*death*," as we see it all around us, *will* "come to an end"; and then will be experienced by the rejecters of Christ, what is termed "the second death"; that which, to mortal eye, is unseen; and is therefore "*eternal*"; for, "the things which are seen ("*death*," as we see it all around us; etc.) are temporal; but the things which are not seen ("the second death," etc.) are *eternal*."

In view of "death," may your earnest prayer, dear reader, be, that of General Taylor, at one time one of our best and most daring cavalry officers, who was led to Christ by reading the following lines in Lord Roden's library:—

"In peace, let me resign my breath,
And thy salvation see;
My sins deserved *eternal death*,
But Jesus died for me!"

Sir Oliver Lodge, scientist and spiritist as he is, advised his hearers to "think about the grave as little as possible."

The sinner who has claimed the risen Christ as his own Saviour and Lord, can well do this. The martyr Stephen was seen, amidst the death-dealing stones, "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; and, it is the privilege of all true Christians to exclaim joyfully with the apostle Paul,—

"O, death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?"

N. L. N.

A Book of Remembrance.

MALACHI, the last of the Old Testament prophets, gives us the closing message of inspiration before the book ends. The two tribes which had been brought back from the captivity had then lapsed into a state of hardness of heart and indifference as to the claims of Jehovah, and there was little or no response to His love to them.

The very fact that this was so made the faithfulness of the little remnant who feared the Lord so much the more precious to Him. They "feared the Lord," that is they had a deep reverence for Him; they "spake often one to another," being drawn together by a common object, and they "thought upon His name."

Outwardly everything was in ruin. Judaism as a system in the hands of man had failed; the chief priests and leaders of the people were amongst those who helped on this apostasy. But the Lord took notice of this remnant, He hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that even *thought* upon His name. They were precious to Him and He was their resource.

This reminds us of Isaiah xliii., where God says, "I will not remember thy sins," and immediately adds, "Put Me in remembrance." There is that which He will *not* remember—His people's sins, they are blotted out; but He lovingly asks them to put Him in remembrance of themselves. So in chapter lxii. He speaks of the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, the Lord's remembrancers, who were never to rest, day nor night, till the full blessing came.

May we not say that much the same state of things is found in Christendom now as in Israel of old? And we have the same resource, only in a deeper and fuller

measure. It is, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Ecclesiastical position, church authority, and human arrangements are like a reed which only pierces the hand of him who leans upon it; and God allows us to learn by experience that this is so.

What marks the one who is in the secret of the Lord is, that he finds more and more the exceeding preciousness of Christ, and hence he loves and values the word of God which speaks of Him. "Thou hast kept *My* word, and hast not denied *My* name," says the Lord to Philadelphia (Rev. iii.). This is what He values so much, especially in a day when His word is being given up by many, and when His name as the holy and the true is little thought of.

But if, through grace, we are enabled to follow His steps—to keep His word as He also kept the Father's word, and to maintain what is due to His name as He confessed the Father's name—what a privilege and blessing it is! But we may be assured that this will not lead to that pride or self-occupation which thinks that *we* alone stand for the truth of God, forgetting that even in Elijah's day, God had reserved for Himself 7,000 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

On the contrary, the one who finds in Christ his *all*, will be the most humble, because he realises how little he follows in the path of separation from the world and devotedness to Christ which is his true place here. Let us remember then, for our soul's joy and comfort, that the names of His own are inscribed in God's book of remembrance—they are ever in His thoughts, as He could say of Zion of old, "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me."

F.G.B.

23

"Christ is all, and in all."

IT was on the eve of giving up the leadership of God's people Israel, that Moses, the "man of God," informed them that "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet . . . like unto me: *unto Him ye shall hearken*" (Deut. xviii. 15).

Centuries after these words were spoken, "that Prophet" appeared upon the scene; and, on "the holy mount," Moses was privileged, together with Elijah, to find himself in His glorious company.

Wonderful it was that, on this eventful occasion, an incident should have occurred that gave emphasis to those long ago words of Moses, "*Unto Him ye shall hearken*"; for we read that upon the unintelligent suggestion of Peter, as to building three tabernacles,—"one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias,"—a "bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him (Matt. xvii).

Had Peter but remembered the words, "My glory will I not give to another" (Isa. xlii. 8); and that there could be but *one Tabernacle* and *one Cloud* (Deut. xxxi. 15), he would hardly have given utterance to such a remark, necessitating, as it did, the immediate withdrawal of the heavenly visitants; so that, when the disciples looked round about, "they saw *no man* any more, save JESUS ONLY" (Mark ix. 8).

The Epistle to the Colossians teaches us the same lesson, namely, the danger of going outside of Christ to the empty philosophies of *men;* whether they be of so-called christian professors of religion or any other, for the purpose of what has been called, "embellishing 'the truth of the Gospel.'" The believers at Colosse were in considerable danger of resorting to *"man's* wisdom"; just as is largely done to-day by using

literature and science as "expedients to give lustre to Christ."

Jealous that the glory of the Redeemer should remain unsullied, the apostle Paul warned saints everywhere (Col. ii. 1), lest *any man* should beguile them with enticing words (v. 4); and lest *any man* spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition *of men* (v. 8); and against *any man* judging them in meat and drink, in respect of a holy day, etc. Also that *no man* beguile them of their reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels (v. 18); and as to their being subject to ordinances after the doctrines and commandments *of men* (v. 20).

To guard against all this, the Holy Spirit of God, whose office it is to glorify Christ (John xvi. 14), led the apostle to dwell upon Him as the all-sufficient Pre-eminent One both in the wide sphere of Creation (Col. i. 15-17), and in that of Resurrection (v. 18). The One through whom alone the future reconciliation of "things" (v. 20) will be universally effected; as well as the present reconciliation of "persons" (v. 21).

In this way was the attention of these christians recalled to the fact that *"Christ is all and in all"* (Col. iii. 11); and that they were "complete in Him" alone—that wonderful Saviour, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

In a day like the present, when men consider themselves "sufficiently educated" as scientists, etc., to be Modernists, Spiritists and such like, it behoves God's people to "beware" (Col. ii. 18) of the defective faith and mutilated Christ presented by these men, whose theories appeal to the human intellect—a poor substitution indeed for the Son of God's love, "full of grace and truth," presented by "the Spirit of Truth," in the scriptures, for the *conscience* and the *heart*.

"JESUS, Thou art enough
The heart and mind to fill!"

N. L. N.

God Manifested—The Father Revealed

"GOD was manifested in the flesh": such is the inspired testimony of the Spirit, borne by the apostle in 1 Timothy iii. 16. All honest readers of the scriptures need no other testimony of the incarnation of the Son of God in perfect human nature, though many could be quoted both from prophetic announcements and New Testament revelation.

Thus, amongst many other facts recorded, is this great "mystery of godliness"—a divine mystery unfolded in Him who took His place in this world as Son of man. It was confessed by Peter, through a revelation from the Father as, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is this truth that constitutes the foundation of the believer's blessings.

Then as we read such a word as, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father," how it sets aside all speculation about the Person of our adorable Saviour! and how it puts to the test and exposes the folly of all the human reasonings and philosophic conclusions of the mind of man! Well may we ask the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"; yet God has given a revelation of Himself, otherwise He would have remained in His own unseeable majesty (1 Tim. i. 17).

God has been pleased, in the fulfilment of His own eternal counsels of grace towards fallen man, to manifest Himself in the Person of Jesus: the babe in the manger, the child of Bethlehem, is none other than God manifested in flesh. To reject this, to explain it away by human argument, is to deny the only manifestation of Himself that God has been pleased to give to men.

Angels also are witnesses; "seen of angels." Strange that man—poor fallen man, for whom the blessed Son of God took manhood (Heb. ii. 14) in order that He might accomplish redemption on his behalf—should deny this supreme, this indisputable fact of divine

revelation. Surely it is but a proof of the utter darkness of the human mind, controlled by the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. vi. 12).

To the child of faith this wondrous fact is the ground of peace, the basis of assurance. We look back to the Gospels and we discover that there has been in this world of sin, sorrow and death, a Man of divine origin, in perfect humanity, without sin, the son of a virgin, who was the chosen instrument of His conception; and yet He who was such, was one with the Father, the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. He came down from heaven to be lifted up on the cross, in order to accomplish the work of atonement for sin.

This is the Saviour of sinners, the only Saviour. By His work alone salvation—eternal salvation—is secured for all who, in simple faith, put their trust in Him. This is the One of whom it is written, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). The Word became flesh for this very end.

It is Christ, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (all creation)." Thus He, in the infinitude of His Person, takes precedence in all things; so we read, "He is before all things, and by Him all things subsist" (Col. i. 14-17).

It is indeed a wonderful mystery, but one which is now revealed, that the Son of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, became man, that He might, by the shedding of His blood, bring about a purification for sin—a redemption to God for lost sinners.

We have been struck with the wording of Hebrews i. 3, "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when *He* had by Himself

purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Of whom else could this be said but of Him who is "God manifested in flesh"? The consecrated Victim of Calvary is He who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God; and His blood alone purges the conscience from dead works to serve (worship) the living God (Heb. ix. 14).

But Christ is, not only the manifestation of God in perfect manhood, but, as Son, He reveals the Father. This revelation is confined to the New Testament and to Him who gives it. God had not thus been known hitherto to men. To Abraham He was the "Almighty God" (Gen. xvii. 1); to Israel He revealed Himself as Jehovah (Exod. vi. 3); but His relative title to those to whom He is *now* made known is *Father*. Such are *born* into the family of God, and to such God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba Father (comp. John i. 12, 13; Gal. iv. 6).

It is instructive to note the crisis in Matt. xi. which brought forth the announcement of this from the Son Himself. He had come to His own people Israel as Emmanuel, their promised Messiah; but in their unbelief they refused Him. This was notably manifested in those cities of Galilee where most of His mighty works had been done, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum; and so to speak, He closed His mission among them with solemn woes of coming judgment.

But in another sense His mission had accomplished blessed results; and here it may be apposite to quote Isaiah lvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And so it is written, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou has hid these things from the wise

and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

"All things are delivered unto Me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). And then follows the blessed invitation, the true source of rest to the burdened heart, given in verses 28-30. Thus "Wisdom is justified of all her children," the wise and prudent of this world are confuted and condemned by Him who is "God manifested in the flesh," the Revealer of the Father. H.L.

Gideon and His Times.—2.

Judges vi.-viii.

GIDEON had promptly obeyed the Lord but his trust in Him was not yet perfected. He had been witness of the miraculous acceptance of his offering, the gathering of the host after him, and he had received the direct word of the Lord; yet he attaches an "if" to "what Thou hast said," and seeks a further sign, even a double one. This failure only brings out the marvellous patience and loving-kindness of the Lord. (He is just as considerate to our weakness, blessed be His name!) He gives Gideon what he asks, but causes him to realise the difference between human and divine resources. At the first offer twenty-two thousand of his host leave him. Ten thousand remain. Even then further sifting is needed; and the Lord directs a test which reduces Gideon's followers to three hundred.

The three hundred retained would not go down on their knees to creature-comfort. They will only have a lap by the way and then follow Gideon. A salutary example for us in this ease-seeking, pleasure-loving day. They have Gideon's mind, too, in taking victuals

and trumpets. May it bring home to us the importance of food and testimony according to the mind of the Lord.

The tenderness of the Lord's grace is now seen in giving Gideon to hear a Midianite's dream and its interpretation. Thereby his confidence in God is strengthened and he worships. He then goes forth, strong in faith, to nobly fulfil his part in that gracious deliverance of God's people. He was content that he and his three hundred should be as the humble barley loaf.

Simplicity and lowliness become followers of the Lord Jesus, who, though Lord of all, was "meek and lowly in heart."

What blessed encouragement is here! And the assurance given to the christian to-day is no less unequivocal than that granted to Gideon, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Moreover, he may detect an undertone of fear as compared with the world's confident boasting.

The world would despise Gideon's little company and its equipment as a means for attacking a powerful foe. He who is the Captain of our salvation was and is despised and rejected of men. But He is ever victorious over Satan, over the world, over death and the grave (Jno. xvi. 33; Rev. i. 18; iii. 21.) Wherefore faith can look forward and appropriate the triumphal note, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Even His final triumph over opposition to His earthly reign, in which we also share, is made known to us. Well may *we* worship and with exultation sing,

"Lead on, almighty Lord,
Lead on to victory."

Assured of victory. Gideon's handful advance against the innumerable hosts of Midianites, etc., with trumpets and pitchers with lights in them. Divided into three companies, every man stands in his place with his eyes on Gideon, eager to do as he does. Then with

one heart and mind, they blow their trumpets, break their pitchers, exalt their lights, shout their battle-cry announcing it to be the Lord's cause, and rush upon the confused and discomfited foe. For the Lord's word could not fail and the Midianites are smitten as one man.

"Every man stood in his place." This has a special voice for each one of us to-day. The fewer the number, the greater the need for it. And may we heed the exhortation to "walk even as He walked," and to "follow His steps," ever remembering the "treasure is in earthen vessels."

The men of Ephraim, in response to Gideon's appeal, take the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan, and slay the princes of Oreb and Zeeb, but chide with him sharply for not calling them earlier. Gideon has now to deal with friends. He meets these in grace; and, by taking the low place in his wise "soft answer," turns away their wrath. The men of Succoth and Penuel refusing to supply sustenance to his "faint yet pursuing" followers was a different matter. There is a time to be gracious, esteeming others better than ourselves, and there is a time to rebuke. But, whatever the trials from our brethren, we must go on with the work of the Lord.

Gideon is asked by Israel to rule over them; and here, again, his attitude is exemplary. But in seeking for his services a memorial, which became a snare to his family and to Israel, he is a warning of *our* danger in the hour of victory, namely, that of becoming a victim to the exceeding subtlety of Satan.

Perhaps, the happiest lesson to be learned from this episode in Israel's history is, that the Lord's love for His people is not quenched nor diminished by their unfaithfulness. Israel will afford a yet fuller proof of this in the future. But the church is a far surpassing testimony to the Lord's unfailing grace. Blessed with higher blessings, brought into nearer, more tender

relationships than Israel, her failure has been far deeper. Left here to witness to her absent Lord she has embraced the world that rejected Him, becoming herself an important part of the worldly system. She boasts of riches, being stupified by her worldly position. Alas, how her poverty and nakedness are displayed in her Babel of tongues, her grandiose ritual, her shameless infidelity! Yet, in the end of her earthly period, in the climax of her disloyalty, the Lord reminds her of His love for His own (Rev. iii. 19) though its activities must be in rebuke and chastening. It is love at its source; and from its infinite depth issues the tender entreaty, the patient, persistent knocking at the door of the estranged assembly, until the rapture of "His own" involves the utter rejection of what has become mere corrupt profession. But to anyone who hears and opens, He gives the blessed privilege of communion now, and enthronement with Him in the kingdom hereafter

A.J.H.

Conscience.—1.

A CORRESPONDENT has asked us to say a little on this subject—an important one it surely is. The word "conscience" is not found in the Old Testament, though we know men had consciences then as well as now, as is shown in Rom. ii. 15, "their consciences also bearing witness," etc., and other scriptures.

Conscience has been said to be "my own mind judging of good and evil in myself as God does." This explanation, given by one well taught in the truth, helps us in understanding what conscience is. Conscience came in at the Fall; God took care that when man was driven out of the garden of Eden, he came out with a conscience—that inward monitor which ascertains what is good and what is evil.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE. The apostle Paul, speaking before the Jewish counsel said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," and again before Felix he said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man" (Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16). Even in his unconverted days, when persecuting the church, he did it with a good conscience; for, as he said himself, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," etc.

Now this at once shows us that conscience is not a safe guide as to doing what is right, though it is a valuable check to prevent us from doing what is wrong. Conscience can only act up to the light we have, hence when Saul of Tarsus consented to the death of Stephen and held the clothes of those who stoned him, he thought he was doing right and his conscience was not defiled thereby.

The Lord Himself told His disciples that the time was coming when "whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service": in their blind ignorance they knew not Him nor the Father. But conscience was either seared or dead to all true sensibility of right and wrong. It may also be the case with a true christian that he may do things to-day, which he could not do in a month hence with a good conscience, because he has got greater light from God's word and discovers that such things are contrary to the truth.

A good conscience is mentioned six times in the New Testament: we have already referred to two of these. To Timothy Paul speaks of it several times, also a pure conscience, which is very much the same thing. It was very important for that beloved labourer in the gospel to preserve a good conscience, because if we have not this, we are weak and powerless before the

enemy. We need to have our loins girt about with truth and to have on the breastplate of righteousness, or we shall be laid open to the assaults of Satan and have no power to withstand his attacks.

Some may think that an extensive knowledge of the Bible will preserve the soul, but even this, valuable as it is, will not keep us in the day of testing and trial. We require "faith *and* a good conscience," which latter some, having put away, made shipwreck concerning the faith (1 Tim. i. 19). To traffic in the truth of God and preach to others, if the conscience is not good, may lead to the most disastrous results. The history of the church of God in all ages records many sad failures and shipwrecks due to this very thing—the lack of keeping a good conscience before God.

At the close of the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul (no doubt it was he who wrote it) asks for the prayers of the saints because he had a good conscience. Walking and serving in the light with God, he could desire the prayers of others, for his single motive was the glory of Christ and the progress of the gospel.

Peter, writing to the Jews of the dispersion, who had much to endure from their fellow-countrymen, also exhorts them as to having a good conscience, so that their accusers might be ashamed, having nothing to say against them and consequently making false accusations.

Is it not, then, a very practical question for every christian, Do we walk and act from day to day with a good conscience before God? If not, there must be something wrong, something needing self-judgment and restoration. But it is our happy privilege to live in the unclouded sunshine of His presence with a clear conscience before Him. We hope to continue the subject next month (D.V.). [Ed.]

34

Prayer.

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. v. 16-18).

REJOICING, praying and giving of thanks are among the last things with which this epistle closes, and are, perhaps we may say, the atmosphere in which the believer should live. Rejoicing and thanksgiving make manifest the state of our souls. Prayer betokens our need, and casts us on One who can minister to it. We do not hesitate to say it is of the last importance, for at the close of this epistle Paul asks of the saints prayer for himself. If one should ask, "Why is prayer of such priceless value to us and so acceptable in our Father's eyes?" we reply, because it makes manifest our dependence upon Him in a land of cold friends and watchful enemies.

In this attitude we are surrendering ourselves to the guidance of divine love, and to the care of almighty power. Thus, self-emptied, God can fill the vessel with His wisdom and His grace, that it may become a vehicle of blessing to ourselves and others. We may observe this fruit in the lives of Moses, Samuel, David and the prophets, and, infinitely above all, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sufferings of Jesus on the cross, His rejection by Israel, and the wrath of God on Him as the sin-bearer, were preceded by the agonizing prayers of Gethsemane. There, there was comfort for Him and instruction for us in the supplication, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Beloved reader, mark the contrast, in the disciples. They could not watch, and as a result, could not pray. Little wonder, when their Lord was delivered up to His enemies they all forsook Him and fled.

Prayer is what closes up the armour (see Eph. vi. 18), making all tight and ready for conflict and for victory. Prayer is waiting upon God, and, let me assure my readers, it has its present reward, and answer in blessings.

Beloved, let me call your attention afresh to a few of the Spirit-given prayers in the Scriptures, thus commending them to us by the example of men who walked with God. Abraham intercedes for Sodom. Though judgment overtook it, yet the one righteous man and his daughters were removed before it came upon the wicked city. Moses, God's mediator for Israel in the wilderness, in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, passes before us, as the man of prayer, when all else fails. In the Psalms, David, Asaph and Moses are God's intercessors for a failing people, and for blessings upon them until Messiah should come. After the seventy years of the desolation, follows Ezra's prayer in the ninth chapter, and Daniel's confession and prayer also in the ninth chapter, with its marvellous answer in the four closing verses of the prophecy.

In the New Testament we would refer to the following: Acts iv. 24-31; Ephesians i. 16; Colos. iv. 2-3; James v. 13-18. The Revelation has five prayers in the midst of its prophetic unfoldings of judgment.

It is worthy of note how God makes His servant Job, after his bowing under God's hand, a source of blessing to his friends. He says to the three of them, "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job and offer for yourselves a burnt-offering, *and my servant Job shall pray for you,* for him will I accept" (Job. xlii. 8): and in the 10th verse it is said, "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." Thus the blessing of all the actors in this scene, hinges on their humiliation, and their repentance, of which the burnt offering was a proof, and the prayer of the patriarch-priest, used of God to speak words of peace and pardon to the guilty.

In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple in 1 Kings viii. we have the Spirit-given prayers and supplications for Israel and for the stranger, that Jehovah might dwell among them. Eight times in this prayer Jehovah's *name* is mentioned in connection with Israel's house of worship and for his refuge in distress. It was to be a house of prayer for all people (Isaiah lvi.); they were to be joyful in it and their sacrifices accepted. Well could one who knew the Lord Jesus sing:

How sweet the name of JESUS sounds
In a believer's ear;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

Prayer and supplication in that name (which is as ointment poured forth) is God's appointed way of blessing, and when failure comes in there is forgiveness that He may be feared (Psalm cxxx. 4).

In the sixth chapter of Ephésians, prayer is the last of the six pieces of defensive armour, and follows immediately after the one piece of offensive armour, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It is to be noticed that the rest of the armour is *personal,* so to speak. Prayer covers not only our own needs, but the needs of the whole family of God. "Praying always, with *all* prayer and supplication in the Spirit, *and* watching thereunto with *all* perseverance and supplication for *all saints.*"

In the last chapter of Colossians there is a beautiful example of praying without ceasing, in the Lord's servant Epaphras, of whom the apostle says, he "saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayer that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Ah, beloved reader, we need men of this earnestness and devotion to the Lord and His people now. *Are you one of them?*

In closing these thoughts on prayer the writer would suggest a few practical questions.

1st. Considering the important place the Spirit gives to prayer, Do we realise the need of "giving ourselves continually to prayer" (Acts vi. 4) as the apostles and ministers of the Word did in the days of the assembly's power and glory? (Acts iv. 33).

2nd. When we pray are we looking for answers, and are we waiting for them? In Isaiah xxxviii., Hezekiah prayed twice (see verses 2 and 9-20) and at the close of this perseverance there was praise. Not only was his *body* healed but he says exultingly, "In love to my *soul* Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." David also received a wonderful answer by waiting for it, "I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me and heard my cry" (Psalm xl. 1-3).

(H.B.W. *New York*).

Simple Answers to Prophetic Questions.

What is the meaning of the words in 1 Thess. iv. 14, "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"?

The Thessalonians had only recently been converted; they were waiting to see the Son of God return from heaven immediately; but, whilst waiting, some of them had died. The enemy sought to trouble the minds of these warm-hearted saints, who were not yet completely established in the truth, by suggesting to them the thought that their brethren who had died would not fully participate in the joy and glory of the coming kingdom.

You err, says the apostle, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Then (passing over the parenthesis embraced in verse 15 to 18) he adds, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you" (chap. v. 1). It

was as much as to say that, when God would bring Christ back into the world to reign in His kingdom, He would bring with Him your brethren who have fallen asleep.

The verses in the parenthesis speak of what will have taken place *before* He comes to reign, namely, the dead in Christ will be raised and the living changed, and they will be caught up together to meet the Lord *in the air.* It is *after* this meeting in the air that God will bring back Jesus and the saints with Him to the earth.

What do the words signify, "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. iv. 16)?

The point of contrast in this verse is between the dead in Christ and the living in Christ, and certainly not between the righteous dead and the wicked dead, as some have strangely sought to expound it. The context here, as elsewhere, decides the point. We see at once that it is a question here of the dead in Christ, who will be raised *before* the living are changed. The priority is given to those who sleep, but all will take place in the twinkling of an eye.

The first, then, who will answer to the shout (ver. 16) and the voice of the Lord will be the *dead, "then* we which are alive and remain" (ver. 17). Such is the divine order and such appears to be the sense of this declaration: "The dead in Christ shall rise first."

From the French.

Able and Suitable.

THE late illustrious British statesman, the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, is reported to have observed that, "It is the preaching of *Christ,* our Lord, which is the secret and substance and centre and heart of all preaching, not merely facts about Him."

A Christian doctor, a native of India, once told a personal friend of ours that the great need in that

heathen country was, not an attack upon oriental philosophies, as is so often the case, but the preaching of *Christ.*

When that devoted servant of God, the late Mr. Hay Macdowall Grant, of Arndilly, was dying, he said, "I think, if I were raised up again, I would only preach for twenty minutes instead of for an hour, and just set *Christ* before the people as directly and simply as ever I could."

Turning to the Scriptures we find that when the midnight earthquake, the shaking of the foundations of the prison at Philippi, the loosed bands of the prisoners, the unhinging of the huge iron prison doors, revealed to the jailer that by ill-treating Paul and Silas he was insulting One who, not only was far above all pagan gods, but whose power and authority were resistless, the cry of distress was forced from his heart and life, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and this cry was at once met by the presentation of a living, personal Saviour, One both *able and suitable,* "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts xvi. 31).

The weeping sinner-woman we read of in Luke vii. found that He was a suitable Saviour, exactly *the* Saviour she needd, when she heard Him say of her, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." The dying thief discovered that He was a suitable Saviour, when he received the assurance from His lips, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." The aristocratic chancellor of Queen Candace's exchequer also found He was exactly the Saviour he needed, when Philip "preached unto him JESUS," thus sending him "on his way rejoicing." And we hear the apostle Paul saying, "And I . . . . who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor . . . .I obtained mercy . . . . This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Oh, truly, "the Lord Jesus Christ" is a SUITABLE Saviour.

But the answer to the jailer's question taught him that He was also a *mighty* Saviour, "ABLE to save."

Man gave Him the lowest place, the place of shame, the CROSS; but God has given Him the highest place, saying "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." As "Conqueror both of death and hell," "all power" having been given Him "in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii), God has made "this same Jesus," whom men had crucified, "both LORD and CHRIST." He is the One "who liveth, and became dead, but is alive for evermore,"—"Christ," the anointed man and the risen "Lord." He is "exalted a Prince" (Acts v.); that is, One who has power; and there is no power in all this wide universe so great as His. But, He is "exalted a Prince *and* a Saviour", so that His power is exercised in saving the lost; for it is the *lost* that need a *Saviour*.

The day is coming when "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, that He is LORD." To be made to bow in "that day" will mean "eternal judgment." But, before the advent of "that day," the glad tidings is issuing forth, that "*whosoever* shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13).

How sweet thus to see the name of "Jesus," that tells of His humiliation and His cross, occupying the place between His two great resurrection titles, "Lord," and "Christ"!

It is recorded that the late eminent Lord Kelvin, who was considered to be one of the greatest mathematicians and scientists of his times, when asked what was the greatest discovery he had ever made, replied, "The greatest discovery I ever made was when I discovered Jesus to be an Almighty Saviour."

Oh, truly, "the LORD JESUS CHRIST" is a Saviour "able and suitable." Dear reader, is He yours?

The Cross and the Crown.

THE sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow" (1 Peter i. 11, R.V.). These words of the apostle Peter to the believers amongst the Jews of the dispersion to whom he wrote, were well calculated to encourage them amidst the "manifold trials" through which they had to pass. The two things answer the one to the other—the cross and the glory; and if there never had been the former there never could have been the latter, for us at least.

We who now believe the gospel stand between the two, we look back to the sufferings of Christ and we look on to the glory. Those sufferings were the theme of many Old Testament prophecies; though the prophets themselves did not fully understand their own prophecies, which they gave utterance to by the Spirit of Christ speaking through them.

The "sufferings of Christ" is a subject which must deeply touch the christian's heart and awaken a response in praise and adoration to the blessed One who went through all that God might be glorified and that sinners might be saved.

We find the Lord Himself, during His earthly sojourn here, speaking constantly of His sufferings, telling His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem there to suffer and to die, and nothing could turn Him aside from that path. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" said He. When Peter, out of what appeared to be human kindness, said, "Pity Thyself, Lord," the Lord, who knew perfectly what the glory of God demanded as regards the putting away of sin, treats it as the voice of Satan.

Had He not undertaken, long before the world was, to do the will of God in the body prepared for Him

(Heb. x. 5-9), well knowing that no sacrifice of inferior worth could take away sins? And He would do it perfectly, whatever the cost might be.

So it was also on the mount of transfiguration. The gospel of Luke tells us what was the subject of converse between Jesus and Moses and Elias. We might, perhaps, have thought that it would be something connected with the coming kingdom; but no! it was concerning His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31).

Those two remarkable men of Old Testament times, entering into the mind of God for the moment concerning that on which the whole of the purposes of God for eternity turned (the cross), are guided by the Saviour Himself as to what was the great burden of His thoughts, namely, His coming decease at Jerusalem.

Surely it is ours, too, now that that blessed work is done, to have communion with Him about it! We share in its blessed results, but He drank the cup alone, and amidst the sufferings of Calvary made a full and complete atonement for sin. Do the shadows of the cross fall upon this world for us, or are we seeking place and honour in a world which crucified Christ?

And what about the glories that should follow? Of these, too, Christ is the centre and the worthy object. When here His glory was veiled, the time had not yet come for its display; though there was always with Him a *moral* glory, to be discerned by faith. *Now* He has entered into His actual glory; having glorified God by His death, God has glorified Him in resurrection, before the day of manifestation comes (John xiii. 31, 32).

When the day for the kingdom on earth comes He will sit upon the throne of His glory and His saints will be associated with Him in His reign. But let us wait for our blessings and our participation in His kingdom till then. If we seek the world, or live in ease

and self-pleasing, as the Corinthians were doing (1 Cor. iv. 8), we are antedating the millennium, shirking the path of suffering and rejection in which we are called to walk.

And how rightly all the glory belongs to Christ! His was the cross, the suffering, the bitter cup of death; but His shall be the glory, the crown and the kingdom :—

"Every mark of dark dishonour
Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow,
All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow
Told in answering glory now."

Praise His name, it is so! Let us, then, wait for the day of glory when He shall have His rightful place, and when we, too, shall be associated with Him in it through grace.

F.G.B.

The Grace of God, and Our Need of it

THERE is a God, a Supreme Being: One who is the Author of the Universe. To deny this and say all came into being by accident as it were, and without a controlling power, is the height of folly. How can we know this God—how "feel after Him and find Him"? Man's wisdom, great as are its accomplishments, is finite, it cannot fathom the Infinite.

But what, if God be pleased to give us a revelation of, and from, Himself! Such a revelation we have in the Bible, in which God makes Himself known, in which the origin and destiny of the material heavens and earth are declared, the presence of death is explained, the future that awaits man after death is revealed; and, most wonderful of all! God's way of blessing for man for time and eternity, is made known.

And what is this way of salvation, which the Bible unfolds to me, and how am I affected by it? The fact the Bible brings before us is, that we partake of a sinful nature, we belong to a race begotten in sin (which the scripture shows to be lawlessness, i.e., insubjection to the will of God). We have got away from our true centre, and are morally at a distance from God. Helpless in our distance, too!

But He—blessed be His Name!—was not content that this should be so. Therefore He sent His Son, "by suffering to save," that by offering Himself, a victim of infinite value, justice and righteousness might be satisfied, and God might be free to bring into relationship to Himself, those who would bow to His word, and be content to owe everything to His grace. He is still beseeching men to be reconciled to Him. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

J.M.W.

His Mouth is Most Sweet.

THE work of the Lord Jesus has met our need as sinners under condemnation. God was glorified by that work, and our consciences thereby have perfect peace.

But our heart's affections have a need, as well as our consciences, and nothing can satisfy those affections but a Person. This, too, God in His grace has provided for in the gift of His dear Son. That is why we are able to sing—

"We praise Thee, and would praise Thee more,
To Thee our all we owe;
The precious Saviour, and the power
That makes Him precious too."

It is written that grace was poured into His lips (Psa. xlv. 2). And, truly, for poor sinners who learnt

His worth, nothing but grace ever came forth from those lips.

See how He commenced His ministry, as recorded in Matthew's gospel, chap. v. It was all blessing, blessing, blessing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; "Blessed are the meek"; "Blessed are ye that mourn," etc. It was nothing but blessing. And, on leaving this earth for His seat in glory, it was with uplifted hands He ascended; but still, it was as blessing His people (Luke xxiv. 50-51).

See Him in Nazareth, the only place in Galilee where they endeavoured to put Him to death—a city of such an evil reputation that it was questioned if any good thing could come out of it (John i. 46). He entered the synagogue there, and read one of the sweetest portions of God's Word (Isa. lxi. 1-2), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor . . ."; and, instead of continuing to read respecting "vengeance" therein, referred to (Luke iv. 19), He closed the book at the comma; and we are informed His audience expressed wonder "at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth."

The poor sinner of Luke vii., weeping tears of repentance at His feet; the widow of Nain of the same chapter; the paralytic of Matthew ix. (suffering, perhaps, as the result of sins committed); the disciples on the troubled sea (John vi. 20); the woman of John viii.; all these, and many others, could surely add their witness to the emissaries of His enemies, who gave as reason for not arresting Him, that "Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46).

Consider, too, when He was being crucified, and the executioners were driving in the nails, and the people reviling and blaspheming Him. The words He uttered on this awful occasion were, not an appeal to His

Father for twelve legions of angels; but simply, in all tenderness and compassion, "Father, forgive them . . ." How truly, "His words are most sweet"!

Then again, after His resurrection, note the gentle way in which He dealt with His erring servant Peter. Not a frown; not a word of reproach; but just a thrice-repeated appeal to the heart: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" then, "Follow Thou Me" (John xxi).

From the glory it was just the same. His servant Paul He encouraged with the words: "Be not afraid . . . I am with thee, and no man shall . . . hurt thee" (Acts xviii. 9). And to each of His own blood-washed ones He still says: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5). "I, Jesus . . ." is how He presents Himself to us in the last chapter of Holy Writ; "Jesus"—the One we know as our Saviour and our Friend. His last loving message to His Church on earth is in full keeping with all this, in which He says: "Surely, I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 20). Truly, "His words are most sweet"!

Thus, at every turn, we find grace poured from His lips, for He was "full of grace and truth." He is seen to be "the same Jesus" throughout: "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

"Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright REALITY;
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any earthly object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."

N. L. N.

Conscience—2.

LAST month, in reply to a correspondent, we took up the question of "conscience," and said a little as to a "good" conscience; let us now proceed to con-

sider other aspects of this question mentioned in scripture.

AN OBEDIENT CONSCIENCE. In Romans xiii. 5 subjection to the powers that be is made a subject of conscience; this is important in these days when men want to be a law to themselves and to do just what they like.

A WEAK CONSCIENCE. Truly it is better to have a weak or over-sensitive conscience than to have what we might almost call, no conscience at all. In 1 Cor. viii., we have reference to this matter: it was a question of eating meats offered to idols, and we know that in those days most of the meat sold in the shambles was so offered. There were many whose conscience was defiled if they ate this.

But the apostle lays down that the believer who had a weak conscience was not to be stumbled by the liberty in which others walked who had knowledge that an idol was nothing in the world. It is the same mutual love and consideration for one another as we find in Romans xiv., respecting the observing of days, which a Jewish believer especially, might consider very essential. This consideration for others and mutual forbearance, is as much needed in the church of God now as it was then.

A SEARED AND DEFILED CONSCIENCE. Those who, in the last days, would depart from the faith are said to have a seared conscience. Giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons speaking lies in hypocrisy, the conscience became hardened and and closed against all that should appeal to it (1 Tim. iv. 2). Such was Judas; a terrible case of hardness of heart owing to habitually giving himself over to the deceitfulness of sin. How solemn, too, when the conscience becomes "defiled" by the allow-

ance of evil—little, perhaps, in its beginnings, but gradually becoming worse and worse!

A PURGED OR PERFECT CONSCIENCE. This is indeed a bright and happy theme to dwell upon, as the epistle to the Hebrews brings it out. There, the contrast is markedly dwelt upon between the sacrifices under the law, which needed to be repeated continually, and the one sacrifice of Christ done once for all and never needing repetition.

The Jewish ritual never could give a purged or perfect conscience because the work of atonement was not yet done. But what a contrast we have in chapter ix. 14! There we find that, through the efficacy of the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, the believer has a "purged conscience"; or as chapter x. 2 puts it, "no more conscience of sins." The veil is now rent, the way into the holiest is opened up, and the believer has boldness to enter into the holiest at all times, through the blood of Jesus.

It is of all moment that we should clearly understand that this is not through any efforts on our part, but absolutely and entirely on the ground of the one sacrifice of Christ, offered once for all and never to be repeated, and which alone can give a purged conscience before God. How could sins be imputed to the believer in Jesus seeing that all was imputed to his Substitute upon the cross?

Not only so, but the fact that that atonement has been accepted by God Himself is borne witness to by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who is seated at the right hand of God. It is plain, therefore, that the ground or basis of a perfect conscience is not something *in* me, but a work done *outside* me, and *for* me, which has satisfied the justice of God and glorified Him in such a way that it would be impossible to impute

sin to the one who believes the testimony of His word.

Does this give liberty to the believer to sin or to be careless in his walk? God forbid! "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Besides this, the believer is now a child in the family of God, and if he does sin, he comes in for the Father's discipline and chastening. So that, through the blessed service of his Advocate on high, he may confess his sins and be restored to that communion which had been interrupted by the allowance of sin.

It is, therefore, our privilege to have a *purged* or *perfect* conscience through the work of Christ; and a *good* conscience because we do those things that are pleasing in His sight. [ED.]

The Lamb of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

THE Lamb of God is the Son of God, set apart in the counsels of the Godhead as, "a Lamb . . . . foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter i. 20). None other could possess such a title, none other could accomplish such a sacrificial work for the glory of God and the redemption of man. In His expiatory work, the *complete* removal of sin is in view, so that God might establish His eternal rest in a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii. 13).

This mighty work was undertaken by the only One who could accomplish it, Christ, the Seed of the woman, the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot. These counsels concerning Him began to come into evidence the moment sin came in and ruined the first creation (Gen. iii. 14, 15). thereby breaking up God's rest in that creation after He had pronounced it "very good."

How could God rest in that which sin had spoiled? So we find the Lord saying, "My Father *worketh* hitherto and I *work*." This He said when charged with breaking the sabbath, because He had made a poor cripple completely whole on that day. Let us bear in mind that the moral, and indeed we might say the physical, ruin of man was complete the moment he committed the act of disobedience to the Creator's command, in response to the tempter's lie.

It was then that, so to speak, through the subtlety of the serpent, the clay was spoiled in the hands of the potter—to use a scriptural figure. Not that the Creator had anything to do with the spoiling, for "God made man upright," but man listened to the voice of Satan and so fell. God gave a command (Gen. ii. 17) and He had a perfect right to test the obedience of His creature whom He had morally fitted to obey; just as a father might test the obedience of his child by telling him to refrain from an act which he did not wish him to do.

Infidels may argue, Could not He have prevented the ruin? We would reply in the words of Romans ix. 20, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" And behind all were the hidden counsels of God—the utter defeat of Satan, the peopling of the new earth with a redeemed family, and the establishment of His eternal rest founded on the victory of the cross, and God making His tabernacle with men (Rev. xxi. 3-5). All this God does for His own glory and His infinite and eternal delight.

If those who question God's ways and traduce Him because they do not understand Him, would but bow to His wisdom and adore His grace, they would not be found in company with the "disputers of this world," whose wisdom "comes to nought." We, on the contrary, take our key-note from what was learned by the exile in Patmos—a man who was there "for the word

of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"—and whose soul was so filled, not only with the glory, but with the love of Christ that he breaks out in that beautiful doxology, "Unto Him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i. 5).

It is this same exile that has written, with an indelible pen which eternity cannot erase, those words of the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And here we may note that this proclamation is accompanied with an assemblage of glories which testify with an unequivocal witness, *Who* (not only *what*) He is.

No mere creature, whatever his dignity might be, could possess those qualifications needed to meet the claims of divine justice in relation to the question of sin and its condemnation—He alone could and did (Rom. viii. 3). Even the archangel could not have endured such a test; hence, as we read in Rev. v. 5-6, when the whole universe is challenged to take and open the book for the final execution of the judgments which prepare the way for the kingdom and the new heavens and the new earth, we behold "A Lamb as it had been slain," in the midst of the throne. Thereupon the worthiness of the slain Lamb is proclaimed by all heaven, the living creatures, the elders, and an innumerable host of angels.

And it is worthy of remark that John, the beloved disciple who had the privilege of being with the Lord on earth, should thus behold Him in heaven, prior to His manifestation to the world as given us in Rev. i. 7. We may discriminate Christ's glories as "essential" and "official"—those connected with His Deity and His manhood—Son of God and Son of man. They are, so to speak, clustered around Him in John i.; forming a circle in the midst of which His servant John the Baptist proclaims Him as God's appointed Victim, the Lamb of Calvary.

Do we, dear christian readers, appropriate Christ thus in our meditations on such a theme? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"! What a marvellous and inexhaustible theme for our study, and one of infinite fulness! A few references to John i. might help us—"In the beginning was the Word"—the eternal *Logos,* before all time. In 1 John i. He is presented as the "Word of life"; the "beginning" there refers to His manifestation on earth; it is "from the beginning" not "in the beginning," as in John's gospel.

Then in ver. 2, "The same was in the beginning with God," His distinct personality in the Godhead is here affirmed. In ver. 3 He is seen as the Creator of all things, "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." In verses 4, 5, we have Life and Light in the world in the midst of death and darkness.

It is instructive to notice that in verses 6 to 33 we have, intermingled, John the Baptist's witness with John's own witness, closing with the declaration, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Four things are brought out in this united witness; (1) The Light—ver. 7, (2) The "Word made flesh"—ver. 14, (3) "He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," the Son of God, (4) The Messiah, the Christ—ver. 41. With this latter is associated Nathanael's testimony, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel," ver. 49 (see also Ps. ii.). And, finally, we have the title Son of man—a title which the Lord loved to give to Himself in the gospels (see Ps. viii).

Truly, with bowed heads and worshipping hearts may it be our constant delight to contemplate Him who is indeed the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, adorned with all the glories that are His, both in His own Person and in all the relationships in which He is found in the scriptures!

H.L.

53

The Creditor and his Two Debtors.

(Luke vii. 40—50).

"SIMON, I have somewhat to say unto thee." It is the Saviour speaking. His words, shedding divine light on two hearts before Him, reveal the reality to be the reverse of appearances. They also manifest His omniscience, His power to forgive sins, His perfect grace.

Jesus was answering an unspoken speech. It was only *within himself* that Simon had said, "This man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." But Jesus had heard it as plainly as if it had passed over the Pharisee's lips; and He answers it with the wisdom and grace that are only His. Our unspoken thoughts are likewise known to Him. Simon was clad in religious armour, which is, all too frequently, found to be love-proof. He had watched this extraordinary display of a woman's devotedness without being touched by it. However, he will listen to what Jesus has to say, and answers Him, "Master, say on."

Then Jesus brings before him the beautiful parable of a creditor who had two debtors, one of whom owed him ten times as much as the other, but who were alike in this, that they had nothing to pay. When the creditor found they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.

In our day, too, there are some who may appear as five-hundred, and others as fifty-pence debtors; but if they have consciously and rightly taken the place of having *nothing to pay,* all are forgiven in His infinite mercy. Every believer can find divine solace in His words, "He frankly forgave them both." What a powerful presentation of the pure, free, sovereign grace of God meeting sinners in all the depth and variety of their needs!

Simon had evidently estimated the woman's debt at the greater amount, and his own, if any, at very much less. What if the seeming inequality depend upon the ability to estimate aright? The apostle Paul, who could say of himself, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," estimated himself as the greatest debtor of all.

The Lord asks Simon, when the creditor had forgiven all the debt of these two debtors, "Which of them will *love* him most?" "I suppose," answered the astonished Pharisee, "that he to whom he forgave most." It was a new world set before him.

What a vista this question of the Lord opens out to us! He is, then, looking for *love,* and values the love of these poor hearts of ours!

The way the Lord applies this to Simon demands our special attention. "I entered into thine house," He says, (what an honour for Simon) "thou gavest Me no water for My feet, . . . thou gavest Me no kiss . . . My head with oil thou didst not anoint." Searching words, these!

How does this indictment, point by point, appeal to *our* hearts? No water for My feet—the elementary courtesy of the day, yet neglected by Simon. No kiss—the first thing in a greeting, then, but not given by Simon. The customary anointing, omitted by Simon. And if the Lord in precious grace has entered into our houses, is He not looking for these things from *us* whom He has so richly blessed? Can it be that *we* are ever guilty of neglect, that *we* ever withhold that which is so deservedly due, or omit to do that which He so rightly expects? Let each one of us test his or her own heart as to this.

Then, as gathered to His name and He in our midst, what is our welcome? what is our appreciation of Him? Does it burst forth in loving gratitude, worship, praise?

If the Lord values our love, He also feels the lack of it. How keenly he felt Simon's omission of the customary courtesy to a guest.

If we now turn to the "woman in the city which was a sinner," what a complete contrast do we find! A sinner! aye, but a weeping one; and how deep the fountain which impelled her tears! Let us listen reverently as we allow the appreciative testimony of this sensitive, perfect, gracious One to fall on our ears. "Seest thou this woman," He says to Simon—to us—"she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; . . . but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet, . . . but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much."

Gracious vindication! Lovely testimony! Honoured privilege allowed her, which angels might envy, but could not so feelingly or fittingly render! How she concentrated her attention on the Saviour. She had no eye or ear for anyone or anything but Him. The compulsion of love had carried her into the Pharisee's house, to Jesus, there to pour out her offering at, upon, His feet. How beautiful to her were the feet of the One who had brought glad tidings, who had published peace and salvation—the feet that had trodden every city and village in those parts in order to call sinners to repentance and preach the gospel to the poor! He noted her attentions and valued them all—the torrent of tears that refreshed, the precious ointment that comforted His feet,and the ceaseless kisses that solaced His heart; Jesus treasured every one.

The Lord contrasts all this with Simon's reception of Him. Can He contrast it with ours? May it, and the Lord's appreciation of it, stimulate our too-often slow hearts. What opportunities we have! Has He not said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto Me"? In

this way, in the smaller things as we speak of them, the lowly may have more opportunities than others. But each one of us can remember the "oil," and do all unto the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

He will soon take us to *His* home. He has told us of the welcome that awaits us there. He has told us He will gird Himself, make us sit down to meat, come forth and serve us there. Haste the day when He will bring His bride into the all-surpassing reception of the Father's house, when His own heart shall delight itself in her there, and when we, even we, as part of His bride shall enter fully into the joy of our Lord!

A. J. H.

Happiness—and Where to Find it.

HOW true is this in the case of multitudes around us to-day! True happiness and everlasting happiness can alone be found in the personal knowledge of Christ, and in the knowledge of Christ as a living Saviour.

Many imagine that religion can supply the needs of the heart, but this is not the case. Men and women may spend their lives in religious exercises, and yet possess no peace, no rest, no joy. But true peace of conscience is the portion of all those who in simple faith rely on the *finished* work of the Lord Jesus. True joy fills the heart of the one who knows the blessed Saviour as the living object of the soul in the glory of God.

Squire Brookes, as he was familiarly called, was well known all over the North of England as an earnest and devoted preacher of the Gospel. He was the son of a wealthy Yorkshire mill-owner, and his early life was given up to pleasure. A keen sportsman, an expert horseman, and ardent lover of every form of outdoor recreation, along with an ample fortune to gratify all his tastes, he might well have been an object

of envy to others, and had every reason to have been satisfied with his lot.

But true happiness is not to be found in the pleasures of this life. Man has an immortal spirit within him, which can never be satisfied with pleasures which vanish and pass away.

It does not appear that young Brookes had exactly made this discovery, but the eye of God was upon him, and that for his soul's eternal blessing.

Starting off one morning soon after break of day, with his gun and his dogs, he was tramping across the moors when he met a lonely man, intent upon his Master's business. No mere chance brought him along just at that moment, and as he saw the young Squire approaching his whole heart went out in longings for his soul. It was this that led him to give the strange and startling greeting as he passed, "Ah, master, you are seeking happiness where you will never find it."

The young sportsman went on his way. An arrow had been shot at a venture, but it had reached the very centre of the target, and had pierced his inmost soul.

"Seeking happiness," thought he; "yes, *seeking it.* Then I haven't found it. And more, this life of sport and harmless amusement will never give it to me. How true! All this will come to an end, but I shall live for ever. How then can these fleeting pleasures satisfy my heart."

These, and such-like thoughts, flashed through his mind. His day's sport was spoiled, nad he returned to his home a wounded, stricken soul.

A revival was going on in the village, one of those seasons of spiritual awakening which must be witnessed to be understood, and by means of which God ofttimes arouses whole districts from their state of torpor and indifference as to eternity. God is sovereign in His actings of mercy, and can use whom He will to carry

out His purposes of grace. It was a man in humble life, the very one who met young Brookes upon the moor that early morning, whose preaching was being owned of God in numerous conversions.

But "the poor" have the gospel preached unto them, and rarely have the rich, even in times of refreshing such as these, the courage to break through the cruel rules of society, and go and hear for themselves words whereby they might be saved.

Besides, a rigid churchman, the young Squire looked upon these cottage prayer meetings as some sort of spiritual quackery which it would be out of the question for him to sanction by his presence.

But the work which the Spirit of God had commenced in his soul, that same Spirit was carrying on. He was passing through deep exercise of heart, and his sinful state before God troubled him in a way that it had never done before. No relief could he get, and at length one night an irresistible power drew him down to the village to see for himself what had come over the people. But not until it was dark and the meeting had well commenced did he venture down, Nicodemus-like, and stood outside the house whence, through the open window, came the words of the well-known hymn :

"I do believe, I may believe
That Jesus died for me,
That on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

He returned to his home more wretched than before. Those people were happy, but he was miserable. They could sing, but he could not. That night he spent in agony before God. On bended knees he cried to God to have mercy on his soul, and to reveal Himself in saving power to him.

As the morning dawned a ray of light burst in upon his troubled vision. Not only did he see himself to be

a sinner but he saw that Jesus was the Saviour of sinners. He was enabled by simple faith to rest upon that glorious work of redemption *once for all performed* on Calvary's cross. He, too, could sing—

"I do believe, I may believe
That Jesus died for me."

Rising from his knees, and rushing upstairs, he roused the house, exclaiming, as many another in like circumstances has done, "I've got it! I've got it!"

Meeting with little sympathy at home, he ran down to the village, and knocked up one that he knew took an active part in the cottage meetings. Soon another was summoned, and the three together gave thanks unto God before the sun had risen.

The news soon spread that the young Squire was converted. And indeed it required no telling, for the change was manifest to all who knew him. As he himself expressed it, "The camel has got through the eye of the needle."

He yielded himself a *living* sacrifice to God. From that happy moment his whole life was consecrated to the service of his new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and during the years that followed until the Lord took him home, many a soul was turned from darkness to light through his earnest and faithful preaching.

He saw at a glance that to follow Christ in this world meant a clean break with it all, and when remonstrated with by a half-and-half disciple for so completely giving up the world—had he not acted precipitately in parting with his horses and his dogs, etc.?—"Oh," said he, "I found the case was so urgent, and the gate was so narrow, that I pressed in myself and left the gun, the horses and the dogs outside."

Reader, have you found happiness yet? If not, turn at once to that blessed Saviour, now glorified in hea-

ven, Who when here on earth proclaimed :—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37). The world can never satisfy you; it never has satisfied anybody. It may give you passing pleasures, but they won't last. Never were truer words uttered than those spoken by the Son of God :—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall gave him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 13, 14). Come and try !

Love.

LOVE is the way in which we are exhorted to walk, "walk in love" (Eph. v. 2); "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"—the way of love (1 Cor. xii. 31).

Love is our clothing, "put on love" (Col. iii. 14).

Love is the bond that unites us, "knit together in love" (Col. ii. 2); it is the "bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 14).

Love is the motive power of our faith, "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6).

Love is the soil and foundation from which the roots of the new nature derive the vigour which causes us to grow and prosper, "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. iii. 17).

Love is the fruit of the Spirit in us (Gal. v. 22).

Love reflects in us what God is, "God is love"; "Be ye imitators of God."

Love is the atmosphere and the perfume with which the believer should be impregnated in all his being, in his spirit, his thoughts, his acts, and which he should spread all around him.

M. K.

Times of Peace and Progress.

"Then had the churches rest (or peace) . . . and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multipled" (Acts ix. 31).

THIS happy state of things came in after the remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus, that bitter enemy and persecutor of the church of God. In the light which shone from the glory on that memorable day in his history, Saul saw two things: he saw himself to be an enemy of God, and he saw Christ—the very One whose name he had been trying to blot out—as the glorified Saviour.

He heard, too, those words which enfolded in themselves the truth of the church of God, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" It was not, "Why do you persecute My people?", but "Me," and in reply to Saul's question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" the answer came, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." This truth formed the great subject of Paul's ministry—the union of the members with the glorified Head in heaven and with one another.

And now that the persecution ceased for the moment the churches could go on in peace; enjoying the blessings God had given them, and growing in the knowledge of Christ, they were "edified." This is the object of all true ministry—the *building up* of the saints on their most holy faith. Anything which does not make for this, be it ever so brilliant or eloquent, is not for the good of the church of God.

Following on edification was the "walking in the fear of the Lord." That reverential fear is the sure mark of christian progress, and it is one of the things most needed in our day of shallow profession. The nearer we are to God, the deeper will be our reverence for Him and what pertains to His glory.

But these are not the only green spots we find in this oasis in the desert. The next thing was "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." He is Himself the Comforter, ministering blessing, taking of the things of Christ and making them known to us, and thus filling the soul with joy and happiness. No wonder the consequence of all this was that "they were multiplied."

When the people of God are going on in communion with Him, seeking the glory of Christ, this is sure to be the result. There may be difficulties to overcome in passing through an enemy's country, but God will surely own whatever is done for His glory and honour. Whereas if we get occupied with ourselves, with the faults and failings of others, the result is barrenness, coldness, pride and many other evils.

"Follow not that which is evil, but that which is good," says the aged apostle John to that large-hearted man Gaius. It is by occupation with the good, with the truth, with Christ, that we grow in the true knowledge of God, and that others are drawn to Him also. It is like the central heating system in a great mansion; it diffuses its warmth all around and forms a centre of attraction for others.

"If this Book be True . . ."

WE are told of a Romanist who sat down to read the Bible an hour each evening with his wife. In a few evenings, he stopped in the midst of his reading, and said, "Wife, if this book is true, we are wrong." Continuing his readings a few days longer, he said, "Wife, if this book is true, we are lost." This discovery caused anxiety. He continued to read, and, in

a week, exclaimed with joy, "Wife, if this book is true, we may be saved!"

Shortly afterwards, God graciously so ordered it, that, by a christian coming across their path, they were instructed in the truth more fully.

. . . . . .

"If this book be true. . ." Why should it not be true? What is "this book"? and, wherein does it differ from other books?

God is its *Author;* therefore it must be true. He has been pleased that what He has "spoken" (Heb. i. 1-2) from time to time, should be so recorded, as to reach men from generation to generation.

It has thus become a record of divine revelation, which has been given by God, because man needs it, such as Genesis iii. 15. It is, therefore, divinely *inspired;* and, of necessity, *verbally exact.*

Now, as to *"revelation"* and *"inspiration,"* it has been pointed out that *"revelation"* refers to the unfolding of truth. God revealed to Abram His coming judgment against the wickedness of Sodom; and the sacred writers have recorded the circumstances for a warning to men, in the very words God desired they should be stated. This necessitated inspiration (a word meaning God-breathed).

"Inspiration" extends, not only to the *thoughts* in Scripture, as some assert, but to the very *words* of it, as we may learn from 2 Peter i. 21 and 1 Cor. ii. 13. A "word" signifies the expression of the mind of the one who utters it. Dean Burgon has remarked, that "as for thoughts being inspired apart from the words which give them expression, you might as well talk of a *tune without notes,* or *a sum without figures.*"

"This book," then, is given to us "in language fixed and unalterable," upon which absolute *reliance* may be

placed. It has been observed that contracts, statistics, etc., would be useless, if no confidence could be placed on their phrases, words, and figures. The same applies as to "this book." This may recall to us the manner in which King Darius was addressed, as stated in Daniel vi. 8-13, viz., "Now, O king, establish a decree, and sign the *writing*, that it be *not changed* . . ."; and, in this connection, it is well to note that the Lord said, "*the scripture cannot be broken*" ("scripture" means *writing*).

The value placed by the Lord Jesus upon the *written word* may be gathered by a reference to Luke iv, where we read that, "He found the place where *it was written*," and said of it, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Also, in Matthew iv. we find that three times He repelled the foe with a scripture, by prefacing each with "*It is written.*" In Luke xxiv. He said, "All things must be fulfilled which were *written* in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning Me," and, "Then opened He their understanding, . . . and said unto them, Thus *it is written* . . . " (vv. 44-46).

The Lord again and again bore witness to very many other scriptures, authenticating those relating to the deluge (Luke xvii. and Genesis vii.); the repentance of Nineveh (Matthew xii. 41); Daniel's prophecy (Matthew xxiv.); etc., etc. Satan, however, has always sought to bring discredit upon what is divinely "*written,*" and so to destroy the "*writings,*" that ignorance and doubt may prevail. But, we are not ignorant of his devices; and the fact remains, that "this book" is *true*.

. . . . . .

But wherein does "this book" differ from other books?

It differs from them in many ways. It differs from them in that it deals with all God's ways from the Creation to the end of time; and as to the relation between God and man. Its subject, indeed, from Genesis to Revelation, may be summed up in one word, "CHRIST." Gregory the Great was not wrong when he said that "the contents of the book are the heart of God in words." And, surely, Christ was the expression of that heart.

Then, again, it differs from other books, by reason of its strongly *prophetic* character, which indicates the work of an omniscient Mind. There is, for instance, the wonderful prophecy of the successive World-Empires, in Daniel ii. and vii., and others have shewn that a complete life of the Redeemer here, might be written from the Old Testament alone. How true is seen to be the remark of Augustine, that "The New Testament lies concealed in the Old; the Old Testament is laid open in the New"!

The *structural arrangement,* also, of "this book" is unlike that of any other book; for it consists of a collection framed into a wonderful whole. One mind is seen pervading it throughout. It has been very well illustrated by a piece of mosaic, of which each separate part has been made by a different person, each one unknown to the other; and yet, all the pieces so arranged as to manifest a UNITY of design, combined with infinite variety.

Yes, "this book," of which God is the Author, does indeed differ from every other. *It is God's Word.* No wonder, therefore, we read in Psalm cxxxviii. 2, "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy Name," and we do well to give heed with due reverence, to the exhortation of the apostle Peter, to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" unto salvation.

N.L.N.

"Jehovah's Fellow."

"And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look on me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only (son), and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for (his) firstborn . . . Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man (that is) my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones" (Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 7). (new trans.)

OUR purpose in quoting these two remarkable passages is, to draw the reader's attention to the fact that only one person is speaking, and yet spoken of. Take for instance the "me" and "him" of chapter xii. 10. Could there be any difficulty in any right-minded student of the word as to the matter of identity? the "me" and the "him" belong to the One who speaks, to Jehovah Himself.*

It is concerning Christ, Jehovah's Fellow, the words are uttered. They could refer to none other. The same is true in chapter xiii. 7, only there He is presented as "man." Indeed, it has been truly said that, "The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament." Thus faith recognises in Jesus of Nazareth of the New Testament, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. It is the burden of prophetic utterance. The compound Hebrew name Jehoshua would express the same.

* W. Kelly, in his Lectures on the Minor Prophets remarks, that the reading of the Keri (Jewish writings) "on him" instead of "on me," seems evidently to bear the stamp of a correction designed to remove an apparent anomaly from the construction as well as to get rid of the plain truth, as the text stands, that the pierced One is Jehovah. But these tamperings with the text and the efforts of others to enfeeble the translation, only show the deep moment of what is here written by the Holy Spirit. The striking force of the whole context shows that He could unite in His person, one nature entitling Him to be called Jehovah, and another which might leave Him open to be pierced.

Wherever we turn in the study of the scriptures, it is manifest in the light of God's testimony concerning Him, that *God and man are one Christ.* In our days we are faced with the pretensions of theological leaders to greater light, and their denial of the verbal inspiration of the scriptures is in the van of this so-called modernist movement. Now Christ is the central subject and object of all scripture, hence the seriousness of the matter.

If these attacks on the word of God be listened to, the result is to weaken the authority of that word over the minds and consciences of men. It loses its place as a divine treasury of spiritual instruction and knowledge, from Gen. i. 1 to Rev. xxii. 21. But when faith lays hold of the scripture as a truly God-given revelation of and from Himself, we can say, "We believe, therefore we speak."

We feel it important to warn the christian reader against what we may call the allurements of knowledge, or what the apostle Paul called "oppositions of false-named knowledge." They may have a religious guise and profess much learning, but they do not carry with them the authority of scripture and are therefore simply the reasonings of the mind of man.

The beloved apostle Paul wrote under a deep conviction of the strategy of the serpent who, by his lies and seductions, was endeavouring to draw away even leaders amongst the people of God from the truth. We must, therefore, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." And again, "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. xv. 32, 33).

In our day, alas! false teachers are becoming more daring in denying the Deity and the atoning work of

Christ, the Son of the living God. We therefore repeat what we have said, that Jesus of Nazareth of the New Testament is Jehovah of the Old. A few references to both will help to make this clear—it is indeed a fact of the most vital importance, for upon the truth of the Person of Christ, hangs the value God sets upon His work of atonement on the cross, yea the whole structure of Christianity.

Let us turn to Hebrews i. 4-7. In this quotation the Son is addressed as the "first-begotten" (or first-born) —compare with this Psalm ii. 7; 1 Chron. xxii. 10 and xxviii. 6. These two latter passages refer, in the first instance, to Solomon; but, as the illustrious type of a greater than he, Christ, the Son (see also 2 Sam. vii. 14). So in ver. 6, "And let all the angels of God worship Him," this could only be said of the Son of God.

In verse 8 we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He is addressed by God as God, in contrast with angels. And further, in verse 9, as Messiah, the sceptre of His throne is a sceptre of righteousness. When here below He loved righteousness and hated iniquity; "Therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." This remarkable passage combines both the truth of the Lord's divinity, and His character as the faithful Man on earth.

But the declaration of His eternal Deity is even still more precise, as we see from verses 10-12. There He is owned by Jehovah above, as Jehovah—a title which was never applied to any but the Supreme Being. With what depth of feeling Psalm cii. depicts His humiliation on earth in the days of His dependence on Jehovah here! Yet, humbled as He was, He was the Creator Himself, the Same, the One who would endure even

when creation itself had passed away into its primitive nothingness.

Many other passages might be brought forward to prove the truth we have had before us, but we have drawn attention to these in order that our faith concerning our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, who, although He took manhood, yet thought it not robbery to be equal with God, might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. H.L.

Correspondence.

The following extract from a letter has been passed on to us for reply, as the question is one of general interest :—

> "*I often wonder why, in the meetings, the Lord Jesus Christ is so often addressed in praise and thanksgiving. Many of our hymns, too, do this. God says in His word, 'God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him' &c. (John iv. 24). 'Giving thanks unto the Father' (Col. i. 12). 'Whatsoever ye do . . . giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him' (Col. iii. 17). 'By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,' etc. (Heb. xiii. 15). Paul often, taught by the Spirit, said, 'I thank God.'* "

It certainly would indicate a lack of spiritual intelligence to confine our addresses in prayer, praise, etc., to the *Lord Jesus alone;* though He is truly the worthy Object of our praises, which should be guided by the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Him. One has said, "That Christ could say, 'Before Abraham was I AM,' that even when humbled . . . all should honour the Son as they honour the Father—that this must be fully maintained, is beyond controversy for the christian." This remark is important for us to remember.

Let us, then, take the hymn commencing, "Worthy of homage and of praise; Worthy by all to be adored" —this, and other hymns of praise, addressed to Christ the Lord, may be, and should be, a foretaste for our souls, of that adoration which shall flow forth from the whole church to the slain Lamb in glory" (Rev. v.).

Then, it is well to remember that worship is always according to God's revelation at the particular time; hence the worship of the Israelites was suited to *their* condition; but in John iv., the Lord Jesus, who came to reveal *the Father,* refers to the hour that was then about to dawn, when the "true worshippers" would worship *"the Father"* in spirit and in truth (ver. 23); and He added, "*God* is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

He thus intimated that in the coming hour, it would not be the worship of *Jehovah,* as with Israel, but of God, revealed as *Father;* to know whom characterises the very "babes" of the family; though it is also needful for us to know that it is the triumph of redemption that sets us in peace with *God,* as such.

It has been remarked by another that hymns of worship addressed to the Father, are not so frequently found in our hymn-books as they might be; and yet there are some very fine verses, as, "Blest Father, infinite in grace"; "Father, Thy name our souls would bless"; "Father, we Thy children bless Thee," and many others.

As to *prayer*—the Lord instructed His disciples in John xvi. 23-28, to pray to the Father in His name. He would be no longer with them on earth, but He gave them all the value of His name to plead before the Father, who Himself loved them.

Thus the whole Trinity are engaged on our behalf:— God the Father, to whom our prayers are addressed; God the Son, in whose name we plead; and God the

Holy Ghost, to guide and lead us, as we read, "Praying in the Holy Ghost," "Praying always . . . in the Spirit."

But though prayer, as a rule, is addressed to God the Father; this in no way excludes prayer to the Lord Jesus. Thus, Paul besought *the Lord* three times that the thorn in the flesh might be removed. The answer came, truly, though not in the way Paul expected. It has been remarked by some that, in matters concerning the church, we address the Lord Jesus. This seems very suitable.

It is well, however, to be kept from getting into confusion in addressing the Divine Persons in prayer or worship, which may lead to irreverence. On the other hand, we may fall into a cold, formal accuracy, lacking in spiritual power and reality. In this, as in other matters, simplicity and true dependence on God, is the great point. [Ed.].

Fathers—Young Men—Little Children.

(1 John ii. 13-27.)

THE writings of John have a very special importance for us in the present day. He was the last of the inspired writers and had for his theme, chiefly, the great truth of the Person of Christ, which is the foundation of everything in Christianity. Life—eternal life—as bound up with Him, is also largely dwelt upon by John.

His epistle opens in quite a remarkable way; not as an address to any particular church, but as a direct presentation of Christ, as manifested on earth, and as the eternal life which was with the Father, in all the intimacy and blessedness of that relationship. This prepared the way for the bringing out of what that life

was, as perfectly manifested in Christ and as communicated to us.

What a depth there is in such revelations! In Him we reach infinitude itself; yet adapting itself (because the Word has become flesh) to the relationships in which men are found. Able to sympathise with us in our sorrows and trials. He had a heart filled with tender love and compassion for His own. Such was Jesus in this world. We may rest in contemplation on the shores of this great ocean of infinite grace; we may gather up many precious pearls on those shores; but we shall never fully sound its depths or exhaust the treasures which it contains.

In looking at our chapter, we find addresses to three classes of believers—fathers, young men, little children (or babes). It is said to the fathers, that they had known Him that was from the beginning; and this is repeated twice over. Thus what marked a father was the knowledge of Christ. But there was in Him, as we have said, such a depth and infinitude, that it never could be exhausted.

The "father" was one who had been some time on the road and had much christian experience, but he could come back and back again to contemplate those inexhaustible depths which were found in Him who was "God manifested in flesh," "the Word become flesh," and yet be, as it were, only at the beginning. Blessed Object for our reverential meditation and our everlasting worship and praise!

To the young men John says, "Ye have overcome the wicked one," and again, "Ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The "young man" was one who had been on the road for some time: he was not a mere novice. The source of his strength was, "the word of God abideth in you."

It was not human greatness or learning; these may fill us with pride and lead us astray; but it was God's word abiding in them. Nor is it a mere mental acquaintance with the letter of scripture that can preserve the soul, but a Spirit-taught learning of the truth, in communion with God Himself. So our blessed Lord Himself met all the subtlety and craft of Satan from the written word, as the obedient and dependent man. This is our example.

"Love not the world," says the apostle to the young men. This is most significant, because it is just at that stage, when one has been on the christian path for some time, that the world holds out its special attractions. When a man is brightly converted and starts on his way full of love and zeal, he would not give you "thank you" for the world's vanities. After a while he has to experience the wear and tear of life, the disappointments and difficulties of the way; *then* it is that the world begins to assert its claims and glides so easily into the heart.

And what is the world? It may be classed under three heads:—the lust of the flesh, that which is inward and appeals to the carnal desires of the man; the lust of the eyes, what is more outward and attractive to the senses; and the vainglory of life. This latter seems to be that which especially appeals to the man who wants to make his mark in society and in the world of science, politics, etc.

The world is a system perfectly adapted to the natural man. The poor man has his world as well as the rich. It is a thing which is always there, at our elbow so to speak, clamouring for our worship and service to its lord and master, Satan. How many a christian has been ruined as to his christian testimony because he listened to its seductions!

But "the world passeth away and the lust thereof." There is nothing permanent or lasting about it, and yet it serves Satan's purpose for the time being, in seducing the heart away from Christ.

Then we come to the "little children." "I have written unto you little children (babes) because ye have known the Father." How precious is this! The little one in the family of God, who had not long tasted His love, knows the *Father*. He could look up into the Father's face and say, "Abba, Father." And yet the apostle occupies ten verses, in his address to these babes! He tells them that it is the last hour; he warns them against antichrists, "now are there many antichrists," he says. *The* antichrist will appear in his own time, after the church has been taken to glory, and will be the embodiment of full-blown unbelief and infidelity; these "many antichrists" are his forerunners.

These, in John's day, were something like those who, in our times, hold unitarian views, and no doubt would include the leaders of false cults, such as Millennial Dawnites, Christian Science teachers, Christadelphians, etc. In John's day they had been within the christian assembly, but they had gone out; that is, they had given up Christianity and had gone out into the world. To-day, alas! they still remain within the professing church, teaching Modernism, Higher Criticism and many other antichristian ideas.

But the little children had an unction from the Holy One and knew all things, they needed not that anyone should teach them. This does not mean that they would undervalue sound teaching; but rather that they were not dependent on man: they had divine life, the new nature, and above all, the Holy Spirit to instruct and teach them the truth—from the written word of course.

Such is God's gracious provision for even the young-

est in the christian course. We cannot depend on the church for guidance, or on ecclesiastical authorities; but we have God, His word, and His Spirit to instruct and to lead us into all truth. He has foreseen the evil from the beginning and has graciously given us a full warning and safeguard in His word, to which we are responsible to take heed. F.G.B.

Prophetic Notes.

MUCH of what we read in reports of the Advent Testimony meetings shows that there are many things which need to be better understood by those who lecture on the coming of the Lord. Some of these seem to be greatly taken up with signs which they believe portend His coming, and which show that that event is near at hand.

It is well to guard against the prevailing idea that our day is more fraught with remarkable events than other times have been. Had we lived in the fourth or fifth centuries, when the Roman Empire, which had swayed the world for so long, was tottering to its fall under the blows of the barbarian invaders from the north, it would have seemed to us as if the world was indeed coming to an end. Much the same might be said of the Napoleonic Wars. Again, what could be more remarkable than the destruction of the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii by lava in the year 79?

The truth is, that the coming of the Lord, as *we*, christians, look for it— that is, His coming in the air to call His saints to meet Him there (1 Thess. iv. 15-17) has nothing at all to do with the fulfilment of remarkable signs and events. The confusion in which many are found on this subject is, because they have not understood the true calling and hopes of the church of God as a body which, though formed on earth, is united

by the Holy Spirit to the glorified Head in heaven; and which awaits the Son *from heaven* to raise or change these bodies of our humiliation and give them a fashion like His own.

So long as we mix up Jewish hopes and expectations with the *christian's* hope, we shall be plunged into confusion and uncertainty. It is, however, quite true that, as we look back over the last ten or twelve years, we can see remarkable happenings, taking place gradually, which prepare the way for the state of things which prophecy shows will exist after the Lord comes for His church.

Amongst these we might point to the rise and strengthening of Italy as a great Power, and the grouping of the Powers in a way more suitable to the establishment of the Roman Empire. Also to the deliverance of Palestine from the Turkish yoke, the spread of communism and lawlessness, etc.

But to observe these, is a different thing from seeking to be guided by the changing events which we may read about in the newspapers daily. Signs and events belong, not to the church of God, but to the Jews of a future day, who will know, when they see these things take place, that their deliverance is near at hand. We find these signs referred to in Matt. xxiv. 29-41; Mark xiii. 24-37, and many other passages.

The christian waits for a *Person,* not for signs and events. He waits for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 10); he looks for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour (Phil. iii. 20); he looks for the rising of the bright and morning star *before* the day of deliverance and blessing comes for this earth (Rev. xxii. 16).

Let us not lower the hopes and calling of the church, but ever remember that *our* place is in association with a *heavenly* Christ, who is coming to take His saints to meet Him in the air.

77

Running the Race.

(Philippians iii.)

THE whole of Paul's life was founded on the fact that he was running the race, pressing on towards glory, and it was completely formed by that. The Son of God was forming his soul day by day, and he was always running towards Him, never doing anything else. It was not so much *as an apostle that* he entered into Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death; *every* christian ought to be doing the same.

A person may say he has forgiveness of sins, but I say, What is governing your heart now? Is your eye resting on Christ in glory? Is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus so before your soul as to govern everything else, and make you count everything loss that is in the way? Is that where you are? Has this excellent knowledge put out other things?—not only outwardly blameless in your walk and able to say you love Christ; but has the thought of Christ in glory put out other things? If it were so, you would not be governed by everyday nothings . . . .

The apostle, in this chapter, puts himself forward in a remarkable way as their example. There are those whose "conversation is in heaven" and there are those who "mind earthly things"; the end of the latter is destruction; they are contrary to Christianity . . . . Those who mind earthly things are the enemies of the cross of Christ. What was the cross?—it had judged all this . . . .

Evil and good came to an issue at the cross. It was the turning-point; it was where the two met. And now the whole question is, Am I with the world that turned Christ out, or with Christ whom the world turned out? There is nothing like the cross. It is both the demonstration of the righteousness of God against sin, and

of the righteousness of God in pardoning sin. It is both the end of the world in judgment, and the beginning of the world of life. It is the work that put away sin, and yet (on man's part) it is the greatest sin that ever was committed.

The more we think of it, the more we shall see that the cross is the turning-point of everything. So, if a person follows the world, he is an "enemy of the cross of Christ." As christians we have to look into it, how far this vain show puts a spider film over our hearts so as to hinder us from seeing. If I take up the glory of the world that crucified Christ, I am glorying in my shame. Where is a man at home?—in his Father's house, not in the dreary desert he has to cross in going there?

The meekness of the path we saw in chapter ii.; but here in chapter iii. we have the power and energy that delivers from the world that would hinder our being like Him.

"Who shall change our vile body"—the body of our humiliation, not vile morally. I have Adam's body now, I shall have Christ's then. All our living associations are where He is. As Saviour He will come and accomplish all in changing our body, and conforming it to His glorious body. The price has been paid, but the final deliverance of what has been paid for is not yet come. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God," but we have not yet got it. We are waiting till He comes to get it.

Ah! beloved brethren, if our hearts really felt that God is going to make us like Christ, if we practically believed that He is going to bring us as brethren to be with and like Christ—well, we should have altogether another thought about the world, we should be "perfect" then, pressing towards the mark.

If I die meanwhile, I am "always confident." I do

not want to die; I want mortality to be swallowed up of life; but if death come, it does not touch my confidence; "absent from the body, present with the Lord."

J.N.D

To-day or To-morrow?

IT is well known that nothing is so characteristic of a Turk as his expedients in finding excuses for delays: even when he admits action is required, he wants to put it off until "to-morrow."

"To-morrow," with him, is an indefinite expression meaning by-and-bye, measured by weeks or months. It was thus at Sinope. When the fact that the Russian fleet was coming was reported, the Turkish Admiral, instead of sailing at once, decided, in council, to sail "to-morrow."

And, "to-morrow" came; with it came also the Russian Fleet; and, the Turks fought, and *sank* at their anchors.

The folly of delay in such a case must be apparent to all; and there are occasions, too, when its danger is so pressed home, that there is no escaping its warning. For instance, a house is on fire; the cry of alarm awakens its inmates; at once the fire escape is rung up, and advantage is eagerly taken of the opportunity for safety now brought within their reach.

Or, again,—one of the crew of a majestic liner, falls overboard in a shark-infested ocean. Quickly, rescue measures are taken; the need for urgency is at once realised; the thought of delay in the matter is not in it; and, the man is saved!

Before another morning dawns, the summons to eternity may have come; and the word may have gone forth, "*This night* shall thy soul be required of thee." What then?

"I am going to spend Christmas with you, dead or alive," wrote a young American worldling from England to her mother in New York; naming, at the same time, the day of her intended departure, and the vessel.

Shortly after this, she went with her husband to the theatre. *That night* she awoke, saying, "Oh, I cannot breathe," and almost immediately expired.

By the vessel she had named, and on the day she had fixed, her body was taken to New York. But, what about her spirit,—that separate entity in each individual, which, by the inspired writer, is referred to as "formed within us" ("the Lord which . . . formeth the spirit of man within him," Zech xii. 1)?

Oh, is it not passing strange, that the most important of questions affecting us, should be so little heeded; or, if thought of, postponed to "a more convenient season"? Warnings crowd around us, concerning the uncertainties of life; accidents, diseases, wars, and a score of other things. These all cry aloud to do with all our might *to-day* whatsoever the hand findeth to do. And yet, when the "Eternal Salvation" is presented as God's free gift, for "whosoever will," the attitude towards its acceptance so often appears to be, "not now," but "to-morrow"; and then, alas! as not infrequently happens, "to-morrow" may mean "too late."

But, thank God, "mercy" is still calling; and its door stands—not "ajar"—but widely open. It is still the golden day of grace; "the blood of Jesus" still avails, still speaks in God's omniscient ear, telling that "the atoning work is done"; and the all-embracing title of "whosoever" still awaits the claiming.

Why, then, hesitate, my reader? "Why tarriest thou?"

Four Exhortations.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. xvi. 13).

HERE we have four exhortations in one verse, all of them needed as much now as ever.

(1) *"Watch ye."* The christian who really wants to be faithful to Christ needs to be continually on the watch, as the Lord Himself said, "Watch and pray." A soldier, when on guard, must be awake and alert; to sleep or even fall into a drowsy state at the post of duty, would be to be guilty of an offence calling for most severe punishment.

How many of God's people forget this and slip into an indifferent or lethargic state of soul. Alas for them, and for any of us who do so! We are in no condition to maintain the truth or witness for Christ in face of an active and watchful enemy.

(2) *"Stand fast in the faith."* "Stand fast," this is urgent, seeing that the tendency always is to accept an easy path and to surrender some part of the truth of God in order to escape trouble. But it is only pandering to self and disloyalty to Him.

(3) *"Quit you like men."* This also reminds us of what is required of a soldier, who must be virile, manly, ready to endure and hold his position in spite of the enemy's activity. This a christian soldier is bound to do, though not in his own strength, but in complete dependence on God. It is worthy of note that the LXX. or Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses this word in Psalm xxxi. 24, "Be of good courage," and then the Psalm adds, "Let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord."

(4) *"Be strong."* This is a word akin to "hold fast." There are many reasons why strength is called for; we need it so as not to be easily moved by the

assaults of Satan. The prevailing weakness and the divided state of the Church of God, the discouragements and difficulties of the way—all these things are just the very reason why the servant of God should go forward in *His* strength, "in no way terrified by your adversaries."

Times of special perplexity call for special grace and strength, but we can say, "God is able to make all grace abound." Our part is to seek His face in prayer, and to be true to Him who has done so much for us. So the Lord says to His Church, "Hold fast till I come" and "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. ii. 25; iii. 11).

The Person Makes the Place.

WELL do we remember, in the early days of our Christian career, the joy that flowed into our heart when the lines entitled "The starless crown" were first read in our hearing. After dwelling upon the glories of the *Place* (Heaven), they referred to the glory of the *Person* (Christ), in some such words as these:—

But sweeter far than all besides,
I *saw the Saviour's face,*
And, as He looked, He smiled on me
With wondrous love and grace.

How truly we realised, at the moment, what a happy thing it was to know Him, and that it is *the Person* that lends interest to *the Place.* Also, that, after all, like Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, it would be an easy matter to turn away, even from "angels in white," if we could not be sure of the presence with us of our beloved Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The dear christian that read those lines to us has long since passed into that glorious presence, there to await with Him the moment when He shall "descend from Heaven" with a shout, to "raise" and "change" the bodies of His redeemed, and claim them to be "for ever" with Himself (1 Thess. iv.; 1 Cor. xv.).

This recalls the case of a gentleman reputed to have been possessed of vigorous intellectual powers, and surrounded by every earthly comfort, but who laboured under a life-long disability; for he was blind from his birth. After many years, it seems that he was examined by an eminent French surgeon, who informed him that his blindness was wholly artificial, inasmuch as his eyes were good, and, had he operated on them twenty years before, the sight might have been obtained. But, added the surgeon, even now success might be possible; but it could only be at the cost of considerable pain.

An immediate operation was consented to, with the result that the surgeon was successful.

What a change henceforth in that happy household! On being offered a flower—a rose—the once blind man recognised its odour, though he had never seen a rose before. Then he gazed upon the face of his beloved wife; and his children, too, were brought to him, whom, when sightless, he had so often fondled. Presently, he all at once exclaimed—"Oh, why have I seen all these before asking to see the doctor whose skill has afforded me the facility to do so? *Show me the doctor!*"; and, on his being pointed out to him, the patient, it is said, became so overcome with gratitude and joy, that he embraced his benefactor with tears.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty," is the promise connected with future *earthly glory;* and, every true believer rejoices in the fact that "we shall

see Him as He is"; and this, too, in *Heavenly glory*.

Yes, "as He is," the risen, ascended, and glorified Saviour, whose "countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength," so full of warmth and light. And, as we think of that radiant face, that "countenance transcendent," we may well sing, as we do sometimes :—

"We go to meet the Saviour,
His glorious face to see;
What manner of behaviour
Doth with this hope agree!"

May we, dear fellow-christian, see to it that the words of the Master have their place in each of our hearts, where He says :—

"Let your loins be girded about, and lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord . . . Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

N. L. N.

The Whole Armour of God.

(Ephesians vi. 10-18).

WHEN the Israelite reached the end of the wilderness journey and looked across the Jordan towards the Promised Land, he could say, "All this land is ours, it is the gift of God." True he had still to enter upon it, to take actual possession, to plant his foot down upon it, but it was already his as the gift of God.

Just so it is with us christians. God has blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ; but that they may be ours practically, we have to enter in by faith and take possession of them—to "possess our possessions."

Here it is that true christian conflict begins. Once we are saved from God's judgment in Egypt through the value of the blood as God sees it, and delivered through the Red Sea, Satan's power is broken, he can no longer keep us in his slavery. But his great object is to prevent us from entering into our heavenly portion *now;* and therefore he tries to induce us to live on a lower level, to take an easy path where we might escape trouble or conflict.

Alas! how many of God's people have listened to his seductions and seem to know little or nothing about their *heavenly* portion in Christ above, or about the conflict in heavenly places, of which we speak.

Of course we shall not have warfare when we get to heaven itself, nor shall we need armour there; but we do need it *now,* in order to meet the forces arrayed against us—these wicked spirits in the heavenlies, who work by their wiles and craft; but always with the object of keeping us out of our true portion in Christ. In order to combat these wicked spirits we need to have on the *whole* armour of God; it will not do to have any part of it lacking, and we must have it on *before* the conflict begins.

There are six parts in the armour:—

(1) The "girding of the loins." Twice over God said to Job, "Gird up thyself like a man"; this was in order to call Job to brace himself up to answer the questions God was about to ask.

So it is in our chapter; in order that we may be braced up for conflict with the enemy we need to have our *loins girt about with truth.* Let us remember that every bit of this armour is *practical;* and it is all necessary, if we are to stand against the wiles of the devil in this, the "evil day." "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" says David in Ps. li.

When the soul is going on in communion with God, we desire to hide nothing from Him, even if it were possible to do so. We can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The Lord said, "Thy *word* is truth," and when the light of God's word shines into the heart, it detects everything that is not in keeping with it, and Satan cannot gain an advantage over us. But if there is in us a "grievous" or "idolatrous" way—something between the heart and God—the enemy finds a point of attack.

(2) "The breastplate of righteousness." This is not a question of our standing before God in divine righteousness, or of being made the righteousness of God in Christ—a truth of the greatest importance in its place. In fact we cannot stand before the enemy if the question of our sins is not settled and if we have not a "purged conscience," that is, a conscience set at rest in virtue of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. So long as we fear God will bring our sins up against us, we are not at peace with Him and have not yet entered upon the properly *christian* conflict here spoken of.

The breastplate is that which protects some of the most vital parts of the body; and the breastplate of righteousness is practical righteousness and rightness in all our ways. If the christian acts in a way that is unrighteous, he gets a bad conscience, and without a good conscience he is weak and powerless before the enemy.

(3) "The feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." That the feet should be properly protected and provided for is most necessary, because it has to do with our daily walk and conduct.

But this preparation of the gospel of peace does not refer to preaching the gospel to others—a very good and blessed thing in its place. It is our ways and our walk marked by peace. So it was with the Lord Jesus; and He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Nothing evidences a soul really in the presence of God more than to go on in peace, whatever may be the state of things around.

(4) "The shield of faith." Over all these things previously mentioned we are to take the shield of faith. When the enemy fires his fiery darts, if the shield of faith is up, they fall powerless to the ground. It may be that he tries to insinuate into the mind a doubt—Is God really as good as we think He is?—or an infidel question.

It is just at such a moment that it is our privilege to rely, with unwavering faith, upon God, and to say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When we *know* God we can trust Him with absolute confidence, no matter what the appearances may say to the contrary. And we do know that "GOD IS FOR US." These four words are our stay and our safeguard against every unbelieving suggestion of the enemy.

(5) "The helmet of salvation." This is not merely the salvation of the soul from hell, though of course it includes that; it takes in very much more. It is a great encouragement to know that *complete* salvation—to begin with, to go on with, and to end with, is assured to the believer. He knows that ultimate victory is his, because, even if Satan appears to triumph in this world now, the day of his complete overthrow is coming.

"God will bruise Satan under your feet shortly," says the apostle Paul. So that the christian can lift up his head and go forward boldly, knowing that God

will make everything to work out for the complete defeat of the enemy and the ultimate victory of His people.

(6) "The sword." This is the *offensive* part of the armour; the other parts are *defensive*. It is *the Spirit's* sword, and it must be wielded in the power and wisdom of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus did this perfectly when He met Satan and overcame him simply by the written word of God; but it was the word used with divine wisdom and skill. So it will be, if we are walking in humility and self-judgment; God will give us the needed wisdom in using this sword against the enemy.

How many have fallen in the conflict because they have tried to meet Satan by mere reason or human wisdom; but we have to remember that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, mighty through God.

Hence the christian warrior, even though he has on the whole armour of God, is found on his knees in prayer. It is well to notice that there are four "alls" in ver. 18. Prayer is to be "always," with "all" supplication in the Spirit (how different from formal *saying* of prayers!). It is to be in the watching, expectant attitude: not merely once or twice, but with "all" perseverance, and its scope is to take in nothing less than "all saints."

So that the Christian warrior, clad in God's armour, instead of going forth in his own strength and prowess, is in the place of complete dependence on God; from whom he gets all his strength and resources for the conflict, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

F. G. B.

89

Jehovah's Shepherd.

"Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey . . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, even My servant David (type of Christ), he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezek xxxiv. 2, 22-23).

THE words of our Lord as given us in John x. 8, "I am the good Shepherd . . . all that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them," are a solemn illustration and confirmation of the above. There is also a blessed reminder of the food He provides for His own, "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

But this Shepherd must also give His life for the sheep; He must be slain in order to rescue the "flock of the slaughter," and to feed the poor of the flock (the remnant) (Zech. xi. 7). Unlike His prototype, David, who delivered the lamb from the lion and the bear, risking his life though not losing it, this Shepherd must become the Lamb of God to die, in order to rescue the lambs and sheep of His flock from a greater power and a greater enemy.

Thus we read, "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter," again, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd"; this was fulfilled, and fulfilled only in His sufferings and death; both at the hands of men, and in judgment from God on the sins which He bore on the cross.

It is well that we should be thoroughly grounded in these truths concerning Christ, the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. He knew the cost of it before He undertook the work, and He says, "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself"; it was the consummation of His voluntary obedience to the Father's will, for He adds, "I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

. . . . . .

We have many beautiful types of this Shepherd in the Old Testament, but none, it appears to us, more fitting and complete than that set forth in the history of Joseph, who was the special object of his father's love (Gen. xxxvii. 3). We read, "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren." So begins this remarkable typical history, to which even children have listened with delight. There are episodes in it which point most plainly to its glorious Antitype; we will briefly consider three of these.

The first is connected with his brethren. The very fact of his being the object of his father's love only produced envy in them (comp. Matt. xxvii. 18). His telling them the truth, conveyed to them through his dreams in which God spoke of his glory, gives us another phase of the history (Gen. xxxvii. 11). This was the starting point of their dislike and their conspiracy against him; and it is written of his Antitype, "They hated Me without a cause."

Then came the putting him into a pit, from whence he was taken and sold to the Ishmeelites, and therefore separated from his brethren (comp. Zech. xi. 12; Matt xxvi. 14, 15). This brings us to the deception practised by his brethren and the lie they told to their aged father; Joseph being separated from them for the time being (compare vv. 31 and 32 with Matt. xxviii. 11, 15). In this part of the account we find Joseph's father, Israel, stricken with inconsolable grief, but we do not find any remorse on the part of his sons, who vainly seek to comfort their father.

How instructive it is to compare this part of the history with the blessed Antitype—Christ! Even now the name of Jesus is a name of contempt to His brethren after the flesh, and it may still be said, "For neither did His brethren believe on Him" (John vii. 5).

But Joseph's very rejection was the path which led to his glory; and we may add here, to the opening up of a way of salvation for the world. To use a figure of speech, we may say, "There is corn in Egypt, whilst there is a famine in the land." (Rom. xi. 11).

The interlude of Joseph's history whilst in Egypt, before his exaltation, cannot properly be applied historically to Christ; but his sufferings during that time, as well as the moral features that accompany them, were used of God to bring him to the destiny that was in view in his being made a blessing to the world, and in his being able to provide for his brethren, even whilst still unknown to them. It is remarkable, too, that at this time he married a Gentile wife; type of the church as the bride of Christ.

Thus, it is at this period of Joseph's history that he comes before us as the type of the One who was indeed the "Son of God's love"; and who, by His Spirit, is gathering out His church, the bride of the Lamb, which He will one day present to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He is now exalted to the right hand of God awaiting the completion of that church, when He will return to take His people to Himself. This period runs from the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, till the Lord comes for His own, when they will be called to meet Him in the air according to 1 Thess. iv. 15-18.

After this era we come to the third part of Joseph's history, in which he was made known to his brethren. It is a touching passage, in which we find Benjamin, the son of his father's right hand (chap. xxxv. 16, 18,

in contrast with Ben-oni, son of my sorrow) is re-united to Joseph, the rejected, but now exalted, sufferer—the two brothers forming thus a double type of Christ, who will have the complete place of government in that coming day both over restored Israel and the Gentiles.

In tracing out these facts in this interesting typical history, we can evidently see that God had in view a deeper and greater purpose than giving us simply a history of Joseph, namely, a typical instruction concerning His beloved Son—and that, both in His relation to Israel and to the church.

In conclusion, let us observe, that in the blessing on the head of Joseph, referred to in Gen. xlix. 22-26; his father, guided by the Spirit, connects the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel, with *that* history; as also the royal line, with that of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. If the reader will read that portion of Scripture carefully, he will see in the wonderful outburst of the old dying patriarch, how everything points, in a typical way, to One greater than Joseph.

Let us here quote the verse from the New trans., "The blessings of thy father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, unto the bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

H. L.

A Few Remarks on King Asa.

(2 Chronicles xiv.-xvi).

HOW few of God's people really realise their responsibilities as being made "Kings and priests to God"! (Rev. i. 6). And yet the higher the calling the greater the responsibility.

In Asa we have a man who rose to the position of king of Judah—a responsible position truly. He began his public life well, because he began it with the Lord; and he put his faith into practice by removing the altars to the strange gods and the high places, breaking down also the images and cutting down the groves.

In doing so he put aside the works of man which were great and showy; things which required gift and skill to make, but which were really satanic. They were like much that is seen in the world to-day—works of art, admired by multitudes. And the consequence of his faithfulness was that his kingdom had peace and quietness, even as Isaiah prophesied of the man who trusts in Jehovah, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee."

And so we read in the case of king Asa, that the land had rest, "the Lord had given him rest." To this is added the fact that the people were prosperous because they had sought the Lord and He had given them rest on every side. It reminds us of the word of the Lord to Eli in 1 Sam. ii., "Them that honour Me I will honour." Asa ascribes all the praise to God for their prosperity.

But how often, alas! it is the case that when God gives the blessing—adds to and prospers His people—we rest in the blessings and forget the Blesser. This is a very real danger.

In verse 8 of our chapter we read that Asa had an army of 580,000 mighty men of valour. Who could stand against such a force? And yet it is the case that, let God's people be ever so great and mighty, if they are without His strength, they have no power against the enemy.

So it was here. Zera, the Ethiopian, with an host of 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots came up against them. But Asa's resource was ours also—prayer to God. And truly he availed himself of it; we find him saying, "Lord, it is nothing to Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude." The result was a complete victory.

But do we not often forget the resource we have *in Him?* It is not human strength but prayer, as Peter says, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Surely if we remembered this, we should be much brighter, happier and more victorious christians than we are. Notice how Asa makes his cause the Lord's; he says, "Let not man prevail against Thee." It was, in fact, reminding the Lord that they were *His* people, and that *He* was at their head.

In chapter xv., God comes in with a word of caution. "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed; and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear me now, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."

We might have thought that at a time like this no caution would be needed, after having seen God acting so manifestly on his behalf, and the blessings he obtained by waiting on Him; but it is just at such a time we are in danger of being lifted up by success, prosperity, or blessing, and of forgetting God. Whenever God cautions, it shows that there is danger to be anticipated, and so it was here, as we shall see later on.

Azariah reminds Asa of the time when there was no peace, they had been without the true God, and there

was nothing but warfare between the nations. The result was that Asa was encouraged and was active for good, putting away the idols out of the land and renewing the altar of the Lord.

So it always is; God's word, when we take it to heart, must have a sanctifying effect on our lives and ways, as Ps. cxix. 11, says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Then in verse 9 we get the effect and fruit of good influence on others—the gathering together of all Judah and Benjamin as well as some out of Ephraim at Jerusalem for worship.

It is a solemn fact to remember, that we are all an influence for good or for evil upon others; here the Lord got *His* portion, in the offerings which were made to Him (ver. 11). Do *we* give Him His portion, as the apostle reminds us in Heb. xiii. 15, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name"? The result in this case was rest and rejoicing.

Asa was a faithful king in many respects, even the idol set up by his mother in a grove he destroyed utterly, and it is said that his heart was perfect all his days. And yet it has to be recorded that "the high places were not taken away out of Israel"—for "perfection" was not reached in his *associations*.

In chapter xvi. we get what, alas! we so often find—his failure. Asa had been blessed and enriched; he had enjoyed peace and prosperity. No doubt many would have envied him, and some would have made friends with him on account of his riches and success. But it is often the case that riches and honours are used by Satan to get between the soul and God.

When Asa was small in his own eyes he leaned upon God, but when prosperity came, he got away from

dependence on Him and sought the help of worldly and ungodly friends, instead of being cast wholly upon God. How truly, as James says, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Apparent success followed his alliance with the king of Syria, but God was dishonoured by it and sent Hanani the seer to rebuke him, and to tell him that henceforth he should have wars.

Verse 9 merits our serious consideration, "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." It is for our good and blessing that God looks down upon us; but how often we, by our unfaithfulness and our failures, hinder the blessing coming. Asa was angry with the prophet for telling him the truth and put him in prison, instead of turning in repentence to God. Let us be warned by his history, and depend *wholly* and *entirely* upon God and His word.

C. H.

Ezra and the Returned Captives.

"FOR Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra vii. 10). This is a most important thing, beloved brethren, for those who are in the place of the remnant now. It is not the vain asking for power—a great snare in a broken state of things.

When the church began, it began with power, but now it is in a state of ruin. It is not power that we want, but self-judgment—self-judgment and the heart to obey—to do the will of God, which always goes along with self-judgment. Whereas the difference is this. If people think that the great want is power,

they virtually throw the blame upon God. They say that there is such weakness now. "It is no use to meet together to worship the Lord or to do anything else: we have not power."

Vain foolish thought! Most peculiarly so to those who know that the very essence of what God has wrought in the church is to send down the Holy Ghost to be therein for ever; and if the Holy Ghost be not power I know not what is. But, beloved friends, what we really want is faith in the power that we have got, instead of these murmurs and complaints; as if God had taken away the power, and as if our business was to go on in our own poor wretched way crying out for power.

Not so. What we have to do is to put our hand upon our mouth, and ourselves in the dust, and to take the place of real humiliation where there is that which hinders the action of the Spirit of God. But the great point is to seek in humiliation to do *His* will. . . .

What should characterise us—what should mark that true work of God in which, through the grace of God, we have our part, is this—not crying out for power, but ceasing from evil, and seeking of God to learn to do well—the acknowledging of the sin of the church and of our own sin, in particular—our own failure, and separating, at once, according to the light that God gives us, from what we know to be offensive in His sight.

W. K.

"Beware . . ."

"BEWARE lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 8, 9). The apostle Paul, were he with us to-day, might well repeat his words to the Colossians as above. The two streams are flowing wide and deep in Christendom—Rationalism and Ritualism.

On the one hand, we have the speculations of the mind of fallen man, called now by such titles as Modernism, Higher Criticism, Evolution, etc.; and on the other, we have the falling back on ordinances, rituals and such like things. Who can doubt that the present crisis in the Church of England is largely due to the rapid advance of the latter tendency during the last sixty or seventy years?

Modernism is a device of Satan to shake the whole foundation contained in the word of God. It denies the Bible and the Christ of the Bible and gives you nothing instead, except empty speculations emanating from the mind of fallen man. It can make you doubt about a great many things, but it cannot give you one solid fact to rest your soul upon for eternity.

Ritualism, on the other hand, gives you many resting places, but all of them short of the one great foundation—the finished work of Christ. It denies. too, in practice, the complete efficacy of the "one sacrifice for sins" done once for all and never to be repeated; in virtue of which the believer has a "purged conscience" and a "perfect" standing before God.

But we have ALL in Christ; in whom dwells all the completeness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom we are complete. Who would give up the substance for the shadow, or exchange a standing such as this for the vain and empty forms of Ritualism? No one, unless deluded by the enemy.

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In the Hour of Death.

"I HAVE noticed," wrote Captain Hedley Vicars, "a calm and peaceful look pass more than once over the ghastly face of the dying, as that blessed Name ('Jesus') passed my lips. May we not hope (as it was with the dying thief), even in the hour of death, faith in the blood of Jesus, breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost, has set more jewels in the Redeemer's crown from among the soldiers of the 97th Regiment?"

A young christian man of the writer's acquaintance, some time ago, was weary and sad, dissatisfied with his own lukewarmness, and feeling that he was here of no use—when a letter came, telling him that his friend F——was in Homerton Hospital (London), dying of consumption.

Taking it as a message from God, to go with the "wonderful words of life" to the dying man, he visited him, but, alas! only to meet with indifference, and even with rebuff. It was a shame, said one and another, to upset the poor fellow's mind by such matters; and his wife, too, was angry; for her policy was to deceive her dying husband by the false idea that he would soon be well!

Assured, however, by the head nurse, that the case was a hopeless one, our friend continued his almost daily visits; faithfully and lovingly urging, in his simplest language, the need of at once receiving, as a lost and ruined sinner, God's great and eternal gift of Christ as his Saviour.

"They think, at home, that I am dying," said F—— to him, on one occasion of his visit; and a smile passed over his haggard features at the bare idea of such a thought.

"But, if *you knew,* dear F——, that you were going

to die to-day, tell me, would you not hasten to receive Christ as your Saviour?"

"No," was his emphatic reply.

This was on Friday. Circumstances prevented further visits until the following Tuesday, and during this interval, prayer went up to God for wisdom and help in the matter.

On the Tuesday, our friend called, and found him much worse. "Well, F——, how long halt ye between two opinions?" he asked.

"I'm not halting now," was the reply; and owning to his sense of his lost condition in God's sight, and of his danger, he proceeded to explain that he had definitely closed in with God's offer of salvation, and had received the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour.

In the early hours of the following day (Wednesday), F—— took his *"departure"* from *"the earthly house of this tabernacle"* (2 Pet. i. 15; 2 Cor. v. 1-4), and was *present with the Lord"* (2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 23). Thus, in the last moments, was this poor sinner, the devil's castaway, saved as "a brand plucked from the burning."

My unsaved reader, for an instant consider the hour and moment must soon arrive—and, oh, how soon it may be!—that will end your life on earth; when it will be *your turn* to enter into eternity. Others have been cut off. Their day of salvation is now gone. But yours lingers still. To-day your hands, and eyes, and mind are busy; and well, you know, that to-morrow the hand may be lifeless, the eyes sightless, and you—departed! And, if still unsaved, only to pass into "the blackness of darkness" of an eternal night; with "the wrath of God" still abiding upon you (John iii. 36).

Take thought, and "Flee from the wrath to come!"

N. L. N.

In the World but not of it.

WHO that has heard the voice of the good Shepherd and learnt something of His deep and changeless love, has not found joy and happiness in meditating upon that wonderful prayer given us in John xvii.? In it we find the outpouring of the heart of the Son into the Father's ear, just on the eve of His return to that glory from which He came.

It was uttered, we might say, under the shadow of the cross. It breathes a devotedness to the Father's glory and a love to "His own which were in the world" beyond all expression. Love always desires the very best for its object, and so it is with the love of Christ.

But as we reflect upon it, let us ask the question, "How far has it penetrated our hearts and souls? How far have we been touched and moved by those pleadings of the Son with the Father on our behalf?"

Take only one truth which is expressed twice over in the prayer—What practical effect has it had upon us, and what response have we made to it? He says, "I have given them Thy word," that is, the Father's word in testimony before the world; consequently they were hated by the world; and why? because they were *not of it as He was not of it.*

Again in verse 16, in a still more emphatic form, He says, "Of the world they are not, even as I am not of the world." *In* the world, but not *of* it—that is the true position of the christian. May we not pray, "O Saviour, help us so to drink in of Thy spirit, so to have communion with Thy thoughts, so to be satisfied with Thyself, that we can do without the resources of this world which has rejected Thee"?

To the young believer especially we would say—The world holds out to you all its attractions, it bids for the allegiance of your mind and soul and heart; but will

you be disloyal to that Christ who wants you to be wholly for Him, as He has been wholly for you? It must be Christ *or* the world. He loved you in death, He loves you in life; He gives you a better portion by far than all the vain show of this world, He is coming one day to make you a co-heir with Himself in the kingdom and glory.

We are not giving expression to mere sentiment, but appeal to ourselves and others, so that we may take afresh to heart the words of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, and what these words demand from us in return for such infinite grace.

"My Word."

IT was often pressed upon us by an aged and well-taught servant of God (J.N.D.), who has long since passed up to be "with Christ," that divine truths can only be effectually learned through the conscience.

Now, the Master's word,—"the word of Jesus"—(Matt. xxvi. 75, and John v. 24) is always effective. Like Himself, whose word it is, it never fails; *"My word,"* that goeth forth out of My mouth . . . *shall accomplish* that which I please." And, in this connection, it may be instructive to pass on a thought often noticed, as to the last chapter of Mark's gospel—the gospel that specially sets forth the Lord Jesus as the Anointed Servant.

It will be observed that the three-fold testimony therein recorded, failed in effect in each instance. For example, the angel in vain besought the women not to be "affrighted" (v. 6 and 8). Then again, of Mary Magdalene's communications to the disciples, we read, "They believed not" (v. 11). And, finally, the witness

borne by "the two" to whom the Lord had appeared, was not accepted. But, with the Master's word, how different! We read that, "After the Lord had spoken" (v. 19), after *He* had said "Go . . . preach," we find *His* word effectual at once, for, "they went forth and preached everywhere"! This is consistent with Mark's gospel.

"The word of Jesus"—ah, how well Peter remembered it (Mark xiv. 72) after his denial of his Lord! It had, indeed, *reached his conscience,* confirming to him the truth of his earlier confession of sinfulness (Luke v. 8). And, that look!—"the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." No wonder he went out, and wept bitterly. Truly, in Peter's case, we have a beautiful instance of how effective the Lord's word was. It had accomplished that which He pleased. It had reached his conscience. ...

"And they remembered His words." Yes, the women who came with their spices to anoint the *dead* body of Jesus remembered; but, it was not until reminded of those words by the heavenly messengers; or, surely, they could never have made such a mistake! But, remembering now His words, they hastened, with hearts full of gladness, to report "all they had seen and heard, unto the eleven, and to all the rest" (Luke xxiv. 8-9).

"The word of Jesus,"—every happy possessor of eternal life has, through the power of the Holy Spirit, been reached by that "word" (John v. 24); so full, as it ever is, of *power* (Luke iv. 36, and v. 13), of *grace* (Luke vii. 48), and of *glory* (Luke xxiii. 43).

What a testimony was rendered by the woman of Samaria, and "the men of the city," as narrated in John iv.—a gospel so rich in the "words" of Jesus! Read in chapters xiv. and xv. what His "words" tell us. Amongst other things they speak of His *peace*

(xiv. 27), His *love* (xv. 9-10), His joy (xv. 11); and, they inform us that these *may all be ours*—consciously ours! May we be like the one of whom it is written in 1 Samuel iii. 19, that, "He let none of His words fall to the ground!"

N. L. N.

God for us.

THE whole teaching of the gospel leads us back to *God* and to His thoughts, which cannot fail, and cannot be hindered. And there we find (His name be praised for it!) that *God is for us*. The apostle develops this doctrine in Romans viii. 31-39. We see the proof of God's being for us, first, in what He gives, then in justifying us, and, finally, in that nothing can separate us from His love.

Such is the blessed consequence of the whole teaching of the epistle, "God is *for* us"; that is the source of blessing; that is the conclusion the heart draws from all that is here revealed of Him. Not only has the *righteousness* of God been glorified and satisfied in the work of Christ, but we see also that the *love* of God is the source of all; and that changes all our thoughts as to God . . .

Thus we know that God is for us according to His infinite love, and according to His eternal and immutable righteousness. The first proof of it is that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us: "How shall He not, with Him also, freely give us all things?"

Yes, we can count on Him to give us every good thing. But how can He, the Holy One, be *for* us in view of our *sins*? It is just in that, that we have seen how fully He is for us, for He has given His Son even for our sins. "Who shall lay anything to the charge

of God's elect?" God Himself justifies us, who shall condemn us? Let us observe that all is here attributed to God. It does not say we are justified *before* God, but "It is God that justifieth"; so that the apostle may well exclaim, "Who is he that condemneth?" whoever he may be.

Then he changes somewhat the form of the sentence. He must think of Christ, and then through Him he sees also all the *difficulties in the way* disappear. Not as though they did not exist; they are there; but they disappear because Christ Himself has passed through every difficulty. Become man, in His love, He has experienced all the trials of the way, all human sorrow, all that in which the enemy has sought to oppose the faithful servant of God in the path of holiness, even unto death.

Accordingly, not only do we overcome, by His assured power, but we *experience His love* in a special manner. The sufferings are the pledge of a better glory; and while *as man* He has passed through everything, as *God* He has thereby proved His infinite love, and we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

In every respect God is *for* us. Precious truth! He has given His own Son, He will give us *all* things. He Himself justifies us, who shall condemn us? And nothing can separate us from the love that has been thus proved. All that is against us on the way to glory cannot, as being the creature, be greater than He who is above all.

God is *for* us in Christ, in Him who overcame all. Not only is the path which He trod—trod as Man so as to suffer, and as God to manifest all love in the suffering—the *proof* of His love, but, following Him in this path, we also *experience* His love. Nothing can separate us from this love. J.N.D.

"Try the Spirits."

(1 John iv. 1-6).

ONE thing that marks the writings of John is the way in which he brings out the most weighty truths in a few brief and simple words. Another thing is the great value, in the present day, of the truths he teaches.

In the closing words of chapter iii. of his first epistle he had said, "We know that He abideth in us, **by the Spirit which He hath given us.**" Then in chapter iv. he proceeds to warn those to whom he writes against false spirits—demons.

These false spirits worked through men, false prophets. We find the Lord Himself frequently warning against false prophets; they would come in the most plausible guise, feigning themselves true men and sound teachers, but really wolves in sheeps' clothing. Deception is one of the devil's chief arts; he poses as an angel of light when its suits his purpose, and for this very reason we need to be specially on our guard against his wiles.

In our days he practises through teachers of cults such as Christian Science, Theosophy, Millennial Dawnism, and many other; who say, in the most plausible way, to those whose ears they can gain, "Come with *us* and we will do thee good." But these more open attacks on the truth of God are by no means the only ones; sad to say, the systems of Christendom are largely permeated by Modernism, Higher Criticism and unbelief in the value and authority of the Bible.

How are we to try these spirits? "Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God" (ver. 2 new trans.). It is not exactly the confession *that He is* come, which would be simply to confess a historical fact; but to confess *Him* when so come. This neces-

sarily involves the truth of the Lord's Deity, because, to say "come in flesh," would have no sense in the case of a mere man—who could not come in any other way. But the wonderful fact is, that He who existed ever in the "form of God" took upon Him "the form of a bondman," and was found in fashion as a man (Phil. ii.).

We must ever cherish in our hearts and souls the truth of the absolute Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as even this foundation truth is called in question to-day. The unbelieving Jews well understood the import of His words when He said to them, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," for they accused Him of making Himself equal with God (John v.). And again He said to these same Jews, "Before Abraham was, I AM," for which saying they sought to stone Him. And again, "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30).

This was the great truth of truths, the foundation on which the gospel rests, and without which the whole fabric of Christianity falls to the ground.

But besides this, to "confess Jesus Christ come in flesh" involves also the truth of Christ's true and spotless humanity. If we put side by side John i. 1, and verse 14, we have these truths stated in scriptural language—"The Word was God," "The Word became flesh."

The value and efficacy of the *work* of Christ; the fact that by His death He has fully met all the righteous claims of God and brought eternal glory to Him, depends upon these truths concerning His blessed Person. All the counsels of God long before the world was, find their centre in Him of whom it is said that He was the beloved Son of the Father, the Life, the Light, the Lamb of God, Jehovah's fellow, and the possessor of many other titles and glories.

But there are still other truths involved in "confessing Jesus Christ come in flesh." A man may be sound as to the Deity of Christ and His spotless humanity, but he may deny the *union* of the divine and human natures in His Person—a fact which is only true of Him and of no other; as it has been expressed "God and man is one Christ."

It is remarkable how scripture, without stating these things in a formal or theological way, brings them before us in connection with some special need in the souls of those written to, or some danger by which Christians were threatened at the time.

We may find an illustration of this in Colossians ii. 9, 10, "For in Him (Christ) dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him." The word "Godhead" is found in Acts xvii. 29, and Romans i. 20; but in Col. ii. 9, it is a stronger word than in either of the two former passages.* And the adverb translated "bodily," as Parkhurst remarks, proves the fact already noted, that "God and man is one Christ."

We trust the reader will not think that we are trying to propound theology, which is not the object at all; but it is absolutely necessary for the believer who loves Christ and desires to be preserved in this evil day, to have a true and Spirit-taught knowledge, in his heart and soul, of these great truths concerning our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The spirit of antichrist is now in the world and his object is to dishonour

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*Archbishop Trench, in his "New Testament Synonyms," says, "In Col. ii. 9, St. Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fulness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up His person for a season with a glory not His own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the apostle uses *theotees* to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son."

Christ, and to plunge the people of God into the dark stream of unbelief which rapidly increases in volume as we approach the end of the age.

"Ye are of God," says the apostle to his beloved children in the faith. They had been born again and made partakers of the divine nature, thus they were "of God" and had the capacity to understand and receive the truth of God by the Holy Spirit.

Then he proceeds to give the second test by which to "try the spirits." He says "*We* are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us." The "we" and the "us" refer to the apostles. How do we hear the apostles? It may be said "Where are they now?" Of course there are no apostles now living (unless false ones). But we have the apostolic writings, indited by the Holy Spirit, and written down in the scriptures.

How graciously God has made provision for His people right on to the end! He has not left them to be misled by satanic spirits or false prophets, or fleeced by "grievous wolves" who, as Paul warns us, would enter in not sparing the flock. So, that apostle commends us to God and the word of His grace as our guide and safeguard amidst all the evil influence at work after his departure.

The simple believer has thus an unfailing guide to go by, if only he turns to the scriptures in an humble and prayerful spirit, seeking to be built up in the truth. "Heareth us"—it is hearing what God says in His word, given by inspiration, through apostles and others specially raised up and fitted for that purpose. It is by these we discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As we look abroad on these so-called christian countries, the strife between truth and error, between what is of God and what is of Satan, seems to increase

continually. The enemy becomes more bold: truths which no one but open infidels would think of denying are called in question by numbers of preachers in the pulpits of our land. Is it not so?

And we ourselves—we who seek to hold tenaciously to the foundations of the faith, and whom some people call fundamentalists—how *we* need to be kept. To stand in the forefront of the battle, upholding in our measure the truth of God, is a position which needs a special degree of divine grace and humble dependence on Him.

But let us remember—there must be no compromises. Once we are assured that there is false doctrine as to Christ, to compromise is fatal. We must act on the apostle's instruction to the elect lady in 2 John 10—one not bringing the doctrine of Christ, was not to be received into her house or bidden Godspeed. Whatever men may say, loyalty to Christ is imperative.

F.G.B.

The Presence on earth of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

AT a recent Bible reading, the above formed the theme meditated upon. Seeing the importance of it, intimately connected as it is with our place and blessings in Christ as well as with our conduct in this world, it has been thought well to draw the attention of the readers of this magazine to the subject.

I assume from the start that it is accepted without controversy that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not a mere emanation or influence from God—a divine Person, sharing equally with the Father and the Son all the attributes pertaining to Godhead, such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc.

As such He is included in what is said in Gen. i. 1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and in the "Prayer of Moses" given us in Psalm xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." His existence, His Being, is eternal; His presence is universal.

But the coming of the Holy Spirit and His presence on earth, as spoken of by the Lord in chapters xiv., xv. and xvi. of John's gospel, is an event which has now taken place, at a definite time, viz., at Pentecost. The blessings* brought to us in consequence of this fact are very great indeed.

Thus the Holy Spirit is now personally in the world in a sense in which this could not be said of Him before His coming, even as the Lord came into the world when born at Bethlehem; whilst at the same time, being God, it could be said of Him (Christ) that He had neither beginning of days nor end of life. There is, however, this difference—the days of the Lord's presence down here are called "the days of His flesh"; He was found in fashion as a man: those days *came to an end.*

The Holy Spirit, too, is here; not, it is true, in bodily shape so as to be seen, looked upon, and handled, yet as truly present here as Christ has been. And He is to abide with us *for ever.* Also, He abides not only *with* us but *in* us; the Spirit of truth. As the One who abides "with us" He is to lead us into all truth; as "in us" he gives us the conscious *knowledge* of the truth, as our truth, and enables us to walk in it; as the apostle says to Gaius, "the truth that is in thee (lit. thy truth), even as thou walkest in the truth" (3 John 3).

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*The Lord speaks also of His coming as a "reprover" to the world (chap. xvi. 8-11). The point before us at the reading, however, was His coming as the Comforter.

The Lord calls Him in each of the chapters, John xiv., xv., xvi., "the Comforter," and once, "another Comforter." The latter expression implies that there is a Comforter besides the Holy Spirit: it is the Lord Himself. And He is indeed called by that title in 1 John ii. 1, "We have an Advocate (or Comforter, it is the same word) with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

The word Comforter describes the office of one who maintains, so as to keep intact, the status of those committed to His care, in all the rights, privileges and enjoyments of their position and relationship. The Comforter (or Advocate) does not *acquire* for us our place, with all its blessedness, but He maintains us in it, and gives us the knowledge of it.

Christ, having loved us and given Himself for us, has brought us nigh to God by His atoning death and shed blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Our acceptance is assured and settled for ever by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. He maintains our acceptance unchangeably, with the Father, and that, too, in righteousness, by His presence there. Sent into the world to be the propitiation for our sins, He is now, on high, our Advocate (Comforter) with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in Christ's name, (chap. xiv. 26), having come (chap xvi. 13), takes up, here in this world, the office of Comforter (the other Comforter). It is not His office to bring into being, so to speak, the relationship in which we are, or to preserve us in it; that relationship is consequent on what Christ has accomplished for us and it is perfect and unchangeable; but he brings us into the *knowledge* and *enjoyment* of the relationship in all its blessedness.

The relationship into which we are thus brought is that of *sonship;* we are brought into it "by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). And as to the *knowledge* of it, this is made good to us by the Spirit of the Son sent forth into our hearts, crying Abba, Father (Gal. iv. 6). In order to a walk consistent with sonship, we are *led* by the Spirit of God—the Spirit of adoption (sonship—Rom. viii. 14, 15).

The consideration of this will help us to understand the Lord's word in John xvi. 7, respecting the expediency of His departure, so that the Comforter might come, as sent by Him.

First, He (the Comforter) would bring to remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had said unto them—the revelation of the Father, His name, His love, His house, etc. (chap. xiv. 6). Secondly, He would testify of Christ; and they, as witnesses who had been with Him from the beginning, would also bear witness (chap. xv. 26, 27). Thirdly, he would guide them into all truth, taking of His (Christ's) things and showing them to the disciples—those called ones into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In that day (that is, the day of the Holy Spirit's presence) they would *know* that, "I am in My Father, and ye in Me and I in you." Taking the three parts of this statement—with the first we may connect verses 9, 10; having seen Him, they had seen the Father; with the second, the words of the apostle, "accepted in the Beloved"; and, with the third, Christ living in them, their life, with its assured sequence of appearing with Him in glory (chap. xiv. 20).

There are five distinct blessings mentioned in the word of God as resulting from the Spirit's presence here.

(1) God's love (the fountain from whence all our blessings flow) is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. v. 5).
(2) The testimony that our sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more (Heb. x. 15, 17.).
(3) The witness that we are children of God (Rom. viii. 16).
(4) The knowledge of our place in Christ (1 John iv. 13).
(5) The revelation of the things which God has prepared for us—the deep things which God has freely given to us (1 Cor. ii. 9-12).

There is one thing more to be noted. In order to the *full* possession of the knowledge and enjoyment of these blessings, it is well to give heed to the warning, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," and the exhortation, "Be filled with the Spirit." This is His proper function—One who fills with joy and peace in believing so as to make us abound in hope (Rom. xv. 13).

But if we "grieve" Him by our ways, He becomes in us a rebuker and a reprover; and thus He is not free to lead us on to a deeper knowledge of Christ and all that is ours in Him, until there is self-judgment and restoration to communion with the Father and the Son.

O. H.

Psalm xxiii. 4-6.

THE *valley of the shadow of death.* Which amongst us, dear reader, has not walked through this valley? Everywhere we see inscribed this terrible word "Death." Men cannot hear it without a shudder, it has followed the whole human race from the day that Adam fell.

The natural man easily accustoms himself to *sin*; he is never troubled about it. It is not so with *death*. Some men—but the case is rare—seem to have made for themselves a breast-plate of forgetfulness so as to brave it out; more or less to show their indifference to it; but when it is allowed us to sound what is hidden in the hearts of others—this apparent insensibility—we are frightened ourselves at what we discover there.

Death casts its dark shadow over the whole world, over the whole creation, over all human life. Just recall the word spoken in Gen. v., over and over again, "And he died." Think of what follows death—judgment, eternal separation from God!

But here, in our Psalm, the dark shadow is not death, it is the valley over which death casts its shadow; the valley which closely approaches Baca (Ps. lxxxiv.), the valley of weepers. Even Jesus Himself wept when He went into this valley (John. xi. 34), when He beheld the sad lot of man, which only He had the power to set aside, but which filled His friends with mourning and sadness.

Yes, it is the valley of the shadow of death; a deep valley stretching away till it is lost to view, covered with a thick and black mist intercepting the rays of the sun. What unforeseen danger assails us there; what an abyss may open suddenly under our feet! The apprehension is perhaps more terrible than the reality. We may fly from the dangers which we see, but not from those which we do not see.

Let us hear what the sheep says, "I WILL FEAR NO EVIL." The great point here is *fear* of evil, whatsoever it may be. The sheep has even more to suffer from the fear of what is unknown than from the evil itself. It goes forward not knowing anything; not wishing, not being able, to know anything.

One thing suffices for it; "THOU ART WITH ME." The experiences which it has made up till now have given it confidence. Henceforth it knows *Him*. It no longer speaks of Him in the third person but in the second. "Thee," it says to Him. There is with it a growing intimacy. It finds even greater joy in this intimacy than in speaking of Him to others.

It is *to* Him that it speaks *of* Himself. "Thou art with me," why art Thou there? Why dost Thou walk there? Not indeed for Thyself, but for me; in order to accompany me, to direct me, to protect me, to defend me. Up to the end of that dark valley Thou wilt not leave me for one single moment. Thou hast in Thy hands Thy rod and Thy staff—all that is required to lead back a sheep which has strayed and to attach it closely to Thyself with an unalterable confidence.

Since Thou art there with me, what have I to fear? Mary and Martha, Thy sheep of old—did not they pass through this valley? Did not they prove the constancy of Thy presence all through? Did they meet death? Did they make a mistake? They arrived at the end of the valley of the shadow of death in the brilliant day-light of the resurrection of Lazarus!

A table in the presence of mine enemies. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Thou givest me abundant food, choice food, even in the presence of those that hate me. And what is most humiliating to those enemies is, not to be able to sit down themselves, nor to overturn or destroy this table; even to be compelled to be present at the spectacle of persons, perfectly peaceable, perfectly happy, realising fully what is said in the first verse, "I shall not want."

All the animosity of the world will not cause the sheep to lack the least crumb of the repast which the Shepherd

has provided for it. Similar joys are ours at the present time. The Lord's table is appointed now for His sheep, and they understand more fully each day that nothing is comparable to it.

But *before* sitting down at this festive table, the sheep can say, "Thou anointest my head with oil." In order to sit down there, the guests were anointed with precious oil. Such a practice is the public declaration that the sheep is set apart for the Shepherd, that it is consecrated to Him, that it belongs to Him as His own. This act is, besides, the sign of a special dignity conferred on the sheep.

We see in the word that an unction such as this signifies, habitually, the gift of the Holy Spirit—a gift which is only granted in virtue of public satisfaction and of a special dignity conferred on the sheep.

By the Holy Spirit, given to the believer, he is capable of enjoying heavenly things. It is the same for us, christians. In order to taste and to have part in these good things, we must be anointed with the Holy Spirit, without which all personal enjoyment, or communion with others, will not be possible.

This is not all; I must also have an *overflowing cup*, an unlimited measure, an intimate joy, so as to render this communication more efficacious both for myself and for others. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38). What blessing there may be thus in it: and for the full satisfaction of the soul, there is, besides this, that which can be communicated to others!

May we not say that this "overflowing cup" closes, gloriously, the mention of all the privileges of which the Psalm is full? What draught of joy can we still add to that with which the overflowing cup is full? Is it not the complete satisfaction that it gives to the heart of the sheep to remember the long way

traversed under the protecting care of the Good Shepherd during the moments when, as we have just seen, it can cry with a triumphant song, *"My object is attained?"*

After the delightful picture given us in this Psalm, cannot the sheep exclaim: "The love (expressed in the Old Testament by the word 'goodness') and the grace, of which I am the example here below, shall follow me all the days of my life, without there being one single day in which these divine qualities cannot be seen in me, to the glory of the Shepherd who has led me"?

And when the last day of my life here shall arrive, my dwelling-place shall be in the house of the Lord for ever—as long as there are days to enlighten the world. But let us not forget that the blessings mentioned in our Psalm are the portion of believers under the Old Covenant, those who have their part on the earth, and not, as with us, in the light of an eternal day!

H.R.

Now.

"I DO wish," said a lady, speaking of her daughter to a friend, a man of God, who was visiting her, "you would speak seriously to Caroline. She does not care anything about the salvation of her soul"; and, so saying, she went out of the room, and left them together; upon which he, seeking, as Paul did with the Corinthians, to catch her by guile, and pretending for the moment to take her part, said, "Now tell me, Miss Caroline, are they not wearying you with this subject?"

"Yes, sir, they are," she replied, taken quite by surprise at words so unexpected from him; "they keep continually talking to me about it, till I am tired of hearing them."

"So I thought," he replied. "Let's see: how old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Have you good health?"

"Yes, sir."

"The fact is," he said, "Christianity is a good thing in itself; but the idea of continually troubling a young creature like you with it! And then, pausing a moment, he added, as though a new thought had suddenly struck him, "I wonder how long it would do for you to wait before you turn to God?"

That's just what I have been thinking myself," said Caroline. "Well," said he, "suppose you say till you are fifty?"

"No; that will not do. I attended the funeral, the other day, of a lady fifteen years younger than that."

"Thirty: how would that do?"

"I am not quite sure that it would do to wait so long," said Caroline.

"No," he answered, "I do not think so either. Something might happen. Let us see, twenty-five, or even twenty years, if we could be sure that you would live so long. A year from the present time, how would that do?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Neither do I. The fact is, my dear young lady, the more I think of it, the more am I afraid of your putting it off a moment longer, especially as the Bible says: '*Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*' (2 Cor. vi. 2). It says so, you know, and if it does, is it not wise to act upon it, to seize upon the present moment, to seek the Lord while He may be found, to call upon Him while He is near? Had we not better kneel down and ask God for mercy?"

The young lady, perfectly overcome by her feelings, knelt down on the spot. In a day or two she was

believing in Christ, whose blood had washed out her sins. Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, she was accepted in the Beloved—eternally safe.

Reader, how is it with you? Is this mighty question settled in your case? "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

"Before the Foundation of the world"

WE find this expression (which we must carefully distinguish from "*from* the foundation of the world") three times in the New Testament. In John xvii. 24, it refers to the love of the Father to the Son, in those bygone ages before the world was. We need hardly say that it was infinite, perfect, and unending. He was now about to re-enter heaven, from which He came, and "His own" could have communion with the joy which this was to Him (John xiv. 28). Wondrous privilege!

In Ephesians i. 4, we have "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Here it is connected with the counsels of God before the world was; of which, marvellous to say, we are the subjects.

In 1 Peter i. 20, "Foreknown before the foundation of the world." Before anything of this creation existed, Christ, as the Lamb, was foreknown before creation. The gift of His Son to suffer and redeem was ever in the mind of God. Marvellous fact!

An effectual bar to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is unjudged sin. But all power resides in Him for us when sin is judged and put away.

Grace.

GOD is the God of grace, of love, of compassion; all of which qualities were fully expressed in Christ here. There was not a case of need or bodily sickness which came across His path, but He was ready to meet it, and that without any cost to the afflicted one. If Moses dispensed the law containing God's righteous demands; grace heaped upon grace came by Jesus Christ (John i. 16).

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"; all the love and grace of God was manifested in Him in this world. He came not to judge but to save; by His every act and word, to win back the lost confidence of man's heart to God. That confidence was lost at the Fall; but Jesus lived a life of unwearied, unselfish service, showing forth all the divine graces in His whole path here.

Surely such devoted service is a lesson for us. There are cases of need around us on every hand, if we only have the diligence to search them out. There is the wide gospel field needing to be evangelized, sinners needing to be awakened and led to Christ for salvation. Do our hearts go out after them in earnest desire and prayer that they may be saved? The lambs and sheep of the flock need to be fed and helped. Do we seek in every way we can to help them?

Of course there are difficulties and discouragements in such work; but that should not prevent the outflow of living waters for others. If we are not interested in the blessing of souls around us in some way, if there is not an outgoing of grace towards others; we soon ourselves become hard, dried up, and perhaps unfairly critical towards those who are more active in the Lord's work than we are.

On this subject, we would draw the reader's attention to the following solemn words from the pen of one highly esteemed in the work of the Lord, long since gone to his rest :—

"If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him. God, who is full of grace, being our only strength, it cannot be otherwise."

The Constraining Love of Christ.

2 Cor. v., 14, 15.

TWO great subjects are prominent in the New Testament : one is the love of God, and the other the love of Christ. The love of God has been manifested by His sending into the world His only-begotten Son that we might live through Him, and that He might be the propitiation for our sins (1 John iv. 9, 10). The love of Christ is shown by the gift of Himself; as we read in Eph. v. 2, He loved us and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. The love of Christ is declared again in the 8th of Romans, where, after speaking of His death, His resurrection and His intercession for us at the right hand of God, the question is raised : Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? and the answer is that nothing can ; because in all the things—tribulation, distress, etc.—that may come upon us for His sake, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

But here, in the 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians, the love of Christ is brought forward as a constraining power over our lives. "We thus judge," says the apostle, "that if one died for all; then were all dead; and He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again." Men of the world are constrained by shame or fear, but believers are constrained by love; the love of One who died for them and rose again. His death shows us the terrible state we were in, as well as the wonderful change it has effected for us. We were dead, all of us, but now we live, and because of that we are constrained by the love of Christ to live henceforth not to ourselves but to Him.

May it be so with each one of us while we wait for Him to come and take us to be for ever with Himself.

G.K.

Cured, Carried and Cared For.

GOD'S salvation is a full salvation. It extends over the past, the present, and the future; and every christian should know and be convinced of this; for it is connected with the Lord's work at the cross, on the throne, and in the glory.

The "certain man" in the parable in Luke x., "who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves," could have had no doubt of his rescue, when it had been effected. He was found by the Samaritan stranger (one on whom a Jew could have had no claim, (John iv. 9); so that the whole affair resolved itself into a question of "grace") in a woefully helpless and hopeless condition; a striking picture of all of us by nature, as we read in Rom. v. 6, "without strength." And

this is the very hardest, the very last thing, the awakened sinner will learn.

Dr. H. Bonar tells us that he knew an awakened soul who, in the bitterness of his spirit, thus set himself to work and pray in order to get peace. "He doubled the amount of his devotions, saying to himself, 'Surely God will give me peace.' But, the peace did not come. He set up family worship, saying, 'Surely, God will give me peace.' But the peace came not. At last, he bethought himself of having a prayer-meeting in his house as a certain remedy; he fixed the night, called his neighbours, and prepared himself for conducting the meeting by writing a prayer, and learning it by heart. As he finished the operation of learning it, preparatory to the meeting, he threw it down on the table, saying, 'Surely, *that* will do; God will give me peace now.' In a moment, a still, small voice seemed to speak in his ear, saying, 'No, that will *not* do; but *Christ will do.*'

"Straightway the scales fell from his eyes, and the burden from his shoulders. Peace poured in like a river. *'Christ will do!'* was his watchword ever after."

Now, in Luke xv., the Good Samaritan is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (compare John viii. 48), who, coming to the helpless man "where he was," administered the relief he needed—the oil and the wine—peace and joy—twofold effect of possessing the Holy Spirit. But notice, having administered the oil and the wine, as well as having bound up his wounds (wounds of conscience, as in the end of Luke vii.), *He did not leave him there.* And this is important. When the Israelites were delivered from God's judgments by shelter beneath the blood, they were not left in Egypt. "I bore you on eagle's wings,"

said Jehovah, "and brought you unto myself" (Ex. xix. 4).

When the father fell on the neck of the prodigal, and covered him with kisses, he did not leave him outside "the house." And we read that the Samaritan placed the man "on his own beast"; so that the man was dependent on a power *entirely outside himself;* and was borne along by this new power (Rom. xv. 13), the same power in which Christ walked when here below (Rom. i. 4). In Isaiah lxiii. 9, we find the same principle—"In His (Jehovah's) love and in His pity, He redeemed them (Israel); and He bare them, and *carried them* all the days of old."

And the christian can, with truthfulness, sing:—

"Object of that love am I,
And carried like a child."

The sinner, therefore, is not only "forgiven," as we read in Colossians ii. 13, and Ephesians iv. 32, but he is *brought to God;* "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God;* (1 Peter iii. 18). And, further, he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19) and "sealed until the day of redemption."

Once sealed, God never withdraws His Holy Spirit; though often, alas! that Spirit may be grieved; and every christian is responsible, not only not to grieve that Spirit, but to seek to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18-21), the only source of power. And, note the three effects of being "filled with the Spirit," as recorded in verses 19, 20, 21 (the last being so often forgotten, viz.: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God").

Not only cured, but carried! And, not only carried, but cared for! "He brought him to an inn (a place of spiritual refreshment), and took care of him"; that

is, he made a "stranger" and a "pilgrim" of him (for *an "inn"* was a place for *strangers*). The world is turned into "a wilderness wide" (1 Pet. ii. 11); and what effects this?

"'Tis the treasure I've found in *His love*
That has made me a *pilgrim* below."

That is the lesson of the "inn." It is where I get the knowledge of His love. I am brought into "the house," the circle of divine love; separated from, and a pilgrim in, the world that knows not the Father (John xvii. 25; 1 John ii. 15); and I learn (what I need in the wilderness) the love of the One who found me, and who, in the exercise of His priestly care, watches over me every step of the way; so that I can triumphantly join in the challenge of the dear apostle in Romans viii. 35.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Surely, "Christ will do"!

N. L. N.

"Like unto men that wait."

THE cheering hope of the coming of the Lord may well encourage and sustain the believer amidst the trials of the way. But it speaks to the conscience as well as to the heart, and sometimes it is well to ask ourselves the question, "Am I really waiting for God's Son from heaven—am I living daily as one who waits for his Lord?"

It is a most practical truth, and must very much affect our walk and christian testimony in this world. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord" (Luke xii. 35, 36). In those days the

loins were girded up for work or service; and here in Luke xii. the Lord is giving many exhortations as to what becomes the "little flock" of His disciples to whom He is speaking.

Service, to be true, must flow from love to Christ and communion with Him. But besides the girding of the loins, there was to be the lights burning. A lamp, to be of use, must be well trimmed and giving forth a good light. This is what God has left His people in this world for—to be lights for Him amidst the moral darkness by which they are surrounded.

And then He adds, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord." It is not merely "men who hold the doctrine of the second advent," we may hold that doctrine and be quite orthodox about the second coming as a matter of creed; yet the heart be cold and there be very little response to the word of the Lord when He says, "Surely, I come quickly."

If we are "like unto men that wait" it will be seen in our life and walk and conduct. Why look for position and honour in the world?—why seek to amass wealth?—if I am really expecting the Lord to come at any moment. But it is only as the *heart* is in it that the *hope* will have freshness and vital power in the soul. See how a mother, who has not seen her son for many years, but who has just received a cable from a distant land saying he may be expected to arrive home at any moment, watches the days and hours pass, in expectation of his arrival! And why is she so much on the alert? Because her *heart* is in it.

It is this *watching* attitude that the Lord values so much. To the one who is found watching He promises, "Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." He served us in the past by dying for us on the cross, He serves us

in the present as our High Priest and Advocate in heaven, and to the watching one He says that He will spread the table in heaven, so to speak, and come forth and minister of heaven's joys, in that day of glory.

It is helpful, in considering the truth of the coming of the Lord, always to bear in mind the context in which it is found. Thus when we read the Lord's word in John xiv., "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," etc., we should place ourselves in the position of those to whom it was spoken. What a wrench it must have been to the disciples at that moment to find that He was about to leave them!

As Jews, nurtured in Jewish hopes, they would naturally be looking for the kingdom. They believed Jesus to be the Messiah and their minds were set upon the glory of His reign—indeed some of them wanted high places in the kingdom. But now all their hopes were disappointed, He was about to leave them and go on high. *We* know how absolutely necessary it was that He should die, so that atonement might be made; otherwise we could have no part with Him in His glory.

How the love of Christ shines out all through this part of John's gospel! He seeks to pour the oil of comfort into their sorrowing hearts, saying, "I will come again"; but He does not say, "To set up the kingdom," but "To receive you unto Myself"; and this is the blessed promise for the fulfilment of which we wait. There is about it all a *personal* touch which adds to the sweetness and preciousness of it. *"I* go," *"I* will come again," "To receive you unto *Myself";* and as these words were spoken just on the eve of His departure they come with particular force to us to-day as we look on to the moment of His coming, now so near at hand.

Turning now to 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18, we shall find that the coming of the Lord is presented suitably to the context. This was the first inspired epistle that Paul wrote and it was written to a bright and earnest company of young believers. They had not been long converted and were not yet fully instructed in the truth. Seeing that some from amongst their number had died, they thought that these ones had missed the blessings of the coming kingdom. "No," says the apostle, in effect, "that is not so, for the Lord is coming first into the air to take His redeemed ones up to meet Him there and so to be for ever with Him; so you may comfort one another with these words." The "times and the seasons," the "day of the Lord," His coming in judgment on the world—all these are quite different matters, and at another, and subsequent time.

Again, in 2 Timothy iv. 8, Paul speaks of a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." The context here makes quite plain what is meant to be conveyed by the apostle's words. He is not speaking here of the rapture of the saints at His coming—a truth of which we have just spoken in looking at 1 Thess. iv.—but of the Lord's *appearing* in glory when He comes *with* His saints.

This is the more solemn aspect of the truth of the Lord's coming. When He comes *for* His saints, *all* His redeemed ones will be caught up to meet Him in the air; it is a matter of pure *grace*: when He comes *with* His saints, that will be *afterwards*, when they shall have been manifested at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. v.). *There* the rewards shall have been given in the kingdom, and *there* our life's history shall have been gone over in the presence of the Lord Him-

self. Consequently it is connected with our *responsibility,* rather than with our *privileges* as believers.

Paul, as a faithful and devoted servant of God, will get his reward—a "crown of righteousness" he calls it, because it would be a righteous thing on the Lord's part to give him that crown. The same would be true of Timothy, and of every servant of God—of you and of me, dear reader.

Do we "love His appearing"; that aspect of His coming which includes the Lord's estimate of our life and service and conduct here? It is a most important question—Am I walking daily in the light of the judgment seat of Christ? Thus the "Coming" of the Lord is spoken of in varied ways in scripture, including, not only His coming *for* us, but also His appearing, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired (wondered at) in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10). It has its bright and joyous side, but also its more solemn side, which we must not overlook.

We might go over many passages of scripture, but enough has been said to show the importance of considering the context when seeking to learn what God has given us in His word on the various aspects in which the coming of the Lord is there presented for our soul's profit and blessing. May He awaken all His people to a deeper heart-interest in the subject of His return. F.G.B.

Our El Dorado.

EL DORADO, or the "city of gold," was the fabulous town situated in the wilds of South America, in the vain search for which many an adventurer of the 16th century lost his life.

The saved man has discovered the true "El Dorado"; it is no mere earthly paradise with streets of

gold and palaces of emeralds; it is the gift of God; it is within him; and it lasts for ever—it is eternal life.

What is "eternal life"? No definition has yet been found for ordinary life; and certainly no definition can do justice to the believer's "El Dorado." Truth is always greater than our statement of it, and especially is this so when God's wonderful gift is in question. However, those who have eternal life know that they have the capacity to enjoy God; they have the source within them of endless satisfaction, like a spring of water whose flow is eternal.

But if we cannot say what eternal life is, we know where it is; it is "in Christ," for He is the Eternal Life (1 John v. 20). Having Christ, the believer has that which meets all the needs of his many-sided nature. As a sinner he needs deliverance from future punishment: Christ his Substitute bore the wrath due to him; the penalty has been exhausted. And Christ in resurrection glory removes the sense of present guilt from his conscience. He is no longer the slave of sin, for the Son has made him free. His mind is now at rest, for he is in touch with Him who is "The Truth."

And apart from the question of its sin, the human soul has needs that Christ alone can satisfy. We need an object to love: Christ is the eternal Lover, love for whom transcends and sanctifies all other loves. The soul is meant to cherish ideals: the redeemed soul has ever before it, in Christ, perfection in a Person. We cannot be happy in idleness: Christ is the perfect Master whose service is joy and liberty. We need to be ever growing in the knowledge of truth: our divine Teacher holds all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge at His disposal, and is Himself The Truth. We need a body that is free from all the trammels and infirmities that harass and weaken us in our present condition: our bodies are to be changed into the likeness of His body of glory. E.A.

The Lord's Supper—1.

1 Cor. xi. 29-31.

IN chapter x. the apostle had to show the Corinthians that there could not be any communion between the Lord's table and the table of demons; he thus established the important principle of communion with the tables with which one participates.

In chapter xi. he recalls to them what he had taught them as to the *manner* of partaking of the supper, which he calls the Lord's supper, as it had been instituted by the Lord; for they had completely changed the nature of this memorial of His death, which they had made to be an ordinary meal, where there reigned, alas! disorder and intemperance. He therefore instructs them as to the practical state in which one should be, in order to partake of the supper worthily.

The way in which the Corinthians were acting showed that they despised *the assembly of God* (ver. 22). They had lost sight of its dignity and its holiness. They were acting as if they were in their own houses. This certainly does not mean that one is at liberty to act as one wishes at home; because we should do everything, whether we eat or drink, to the glory of God (chap. x. 13). Four motives should move them not to act in an unworthy way with respect to the supper: (1) What it is in itself. (2) The One who has instituted it. (3) The moment at which He instituted it. (4) What it represents.

Nothing can be more touching to us than to follow the institution of it in the gospels, where we find the Lord saying, "This do in remembrance of Me." He foreknew the death which awaited Him, the betrayal of one of His disciples, the denial of another, and the hatred of the world. He alone, too, was capable

of bearing the weight of such a moment. But He does not occupy them with *the circumstances,* but expresses His desire that they should remember Him in His death for them. In a day still future, they would understand by the Holy Spirit, the glories of His person, the nature of the death which He endured, and the blessed consequences of it.

But the fact that, from the glory itself, the Lord recalled to the apostle Paul what He went through on the night that He was betrayed, should surely appeal to our hearts. He said to them, "This is My body which is given for you. . . . Do this in remembrance of Me. . . . This cup is the new covenant in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The Lord had revealed to the apostle the truth concerning the assembly, the body of which He is the Head; and, as the supper occupied so important a place in connection with that truth, He Himself desired to recall what He passed through on the night on which He was betrayed. Paul had not learned it from those who had been witnesses of it.

Is there anything more calculated to move the inward affections of His redeemed ones than to hear the Lord say to us in presence of this memorial, "This is My body which is given for you"? This body in which God has been manifested in order to draw near to His creatures without annihilating them by the brilliance of His glory, was that in which He revealed to them His infinite love.

It is also in this body that God has been fully glorified by a perfect obedience, by a life without spot. This body has enabled Him to take the place of the spotless Victim, capable of taking upon Himself the burden of our sins under the judgment of God, and

of being the burnt-offering, the perfection of which God alone could fully estimate.

Of this body the Lord says, "It is given for you." It is in love to us that He has taken it, and that He has given it. It was not possible to be saved in any other way. His part in it was the unspeakable suffering consequent on bearing the judgment which we deserved. Can there be anything more marvellous than what is brought before us in this bread, received from the Lord's hands so to speak, each time we partake of the supper?

How far the Corinthians were from the Lord's thoughts when they made of it a meal consisting of various foods, and where they ate and drank without measure! The apostle recalls to them that the Lord took *bread,* and not other food. In the same way it is from the Lord's hand that we receive the cup—this cup of which He said, "which is the new covenant in My blood."

In the gospels of Matthew and Mark the Lord says, "This is My blood"; it was required by a thrice holy God, and by it we have been made fit to go into the presence of Him against whom we had offended. He alone could fully appreciate its value, as it is said in Exod. xii., "When *I* see the blood," etc. This cup is the communion of the precious blood of the Lamb without blemish and without spot; it is of more value than all the treasures of the universe, which, all of them together, could not take away one single sin.

The blood is that of "the new covenant." There is no covenant made with the church, but with Israel, God's earthly people; to enable them to enjoy all the promised blessings. A first covenant was concluded with Israel (Exod. xxiv. 8); by it the people undertook to do all that Jehovah had commanded them, so that God might bless them; but the people, having

by their unfaithfulness broken the covenant, have not received the blessings of it.

God, however, had made unconditional promises to the fathers and will fulfil them when the church shall have been taken to glory. That this might be so, there was also needed a sacrifice in virtue of which God could establish this new covenant, not *with* the Jewish people, as was the first, but *for* the people, as Jeremiah, cited in Heb. viii. 12, says.

Every converted Jew saw, thus, in the cup that which was peculiarly precious, recalling to him that, if the earthly promises, so dear to his heart, could not be fulfilled; he had, in this cup, the blood of the covenant guaranteeing their fulfilment when the time for it should come. The blood of the covenant is the same as that by which *our* sins have been taken away.

In breaking the bread and drinking the cup, our hearts are carried back to the supreme moment when the Lord, lifted up on the cross between two malefactors, having endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, underwent the forsaking of God in our place. We see, therefore, there, a dead Christ, and not a glorified Christ as He is now.

The Lord knew that the selfishness of our natural hearts would cause us easily to forget at what a price we have been redeemed and what our salvation cost Him; that is why He sets before us a visible means of recalling His death to our hearts. In order to be saved, we have only to *believe*—that which is, for us, so simple—but at what a cost the Lord has accomplished such a work!

S.P.

Hebrews i. and John xvii.

Being partly Notes of an Address at a Meeting on Lord's Day Morning.

OUR attention has been drawn to these two chapters, and if our brothers who read them were led by the Spirit, it is well for us to take heed to them; not only as to the contents of each chapter itself, but also as to the connection between them. Taken thus together, they are instructive.

Let us ever remember and value increasingly the gospel which God has sent to us, Gentiles. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, describes it in this two-fold way: on the one hand, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4).

He also states that he was sent to "preach (as gospel) among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8). Again, he says that it pleased God, "to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach (as gospel) Him among the Gentiles" (Gal. i. 16). That is, the gospel which has come to us, is concerning God's Son, both as to His Person and His work. Blessed it is to be told of His work; equally blessed, yea exceedingly precious, to be told of the glories of His Person.

The effulgence of His glory shines out divinely and in a perfect manner in these two chapters; each from a different point of view, but each bringing before us the same Person; both forming together, a harmonious whole. Hebrews declares Him to be God—God the Son—who became man, not surrendering His Godhead, but God manifested in flesh; yet when man, and because of His being man, having those with Him who are His fellows (Heb. i. 9).

John xvii. shows Him in His personal relationship, Son of the Father, and in the glory of that relationship as one with the Father—a relationship which existed before the foundation of the world, and which, as to the love and glory of it, was in no wise changed when He was found in fashion as a man in this world. And, as in Hebrews the Man of whom God is mindful and the Son of man whom He visits has His "fellows," so in John, the Son has those whom the Father has given Him, in whom He has been glorified.

Let us trace, a little, His personal glories as presented in these two chapters—the Man of God's purpose and the Son of the Father's love; both shining out in Him when manifested in flesh—for it was then only that this glory could be seen (Heb. i. 3; John i. 14).

Hebrews i. begins with the important statement that God has spoken to us in the Son (i.e., in the person of the Son, new trans.). He is the Creator-God, who made the worlds, and is the purposed Heir of all things. He is the Preserver-God, upholding all things; He is the Redeemer-God, making *by Himself* (alone and efficaciously) purification of sins; He is the Victor-God, who has sat down (i.e., in His own right) on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We have in these verses 1-3, His divine glories—God the Son with titles and attributes that pertain to Him as the Son, in a way not used in scripture when speaking of the Father or the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, He is the Creator of the universe, its Sustainer and Redeemer; on the other hand, He is God manifest, God seen and heard after a personal sort.*

* It is the blessed office of the Holy Spirit, who indited the scriptures, to guard the personal glory of the Lord Jesus; who, having become man, might be, and has been, dishonoured in this world by unbelieving men.

Thus He who was God (John i. 1) became, in time, man; to be a Revealer and Redeemer; and, as such, takes His place in the scene of His creation. Clearly, His place as Man must be unique. Angels excel in power, but the Son takes a place so much better than the angels. And God has taken care to mark out His uniqueness as Man.

At His birth God said, "Thou art My Son, *this day* have I begotten Thee." Throughout His life—a life lived with God and before God—He was God's delight, whose testimony to Him was, "I will be to Him for father, and *He* shall be to Me for son" (Heb. i. 5 new trans.). And so the Firstborn, the One who is the immediate expression of the rights and glory of God, is seen to be the object of the worship of angels —those beings which held such an exalted place in the Jewish system.

And further, being set, as Man, in authority over all creation, God declares His government to be without failure and without end, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and for ever," etc. Lastly, when the time-state of all creation shall end, when the heavens shall be folded up and the earth changed, when the eternal state and "God's day" shall begin (2 Peter iii. 12; Rev. xx. 11; xxi. 1.), God's word as to Him is, "Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not."

Thus we are led through His whole history as Man: from His birth, through life and resurrection to His return and reign, yea to eternity. He never ceases to be God, but having assumed manhood He never gives it up. This is declared emphatically in the last testimony contained in this wonderful history, "Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning . . . Thou art the same, and Thy years (i.e., as Man) shall not fail." Yea, the God who thus testifies of Him again and again, is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In John xvii. it is the same Jesus, but presented to us from another point of view, with another glory: not as the Man of God's purpose, set over all the works of His hands, but as the Son of the Father's love; with authority, indeed, over all flesh, but in order to give eternal life. He is the Son of the Father and, as such, speaks of the glory and of the love of the Father—both before the foundation of the world (vv. 5, 24).

He is seen on earth as the Son of man, but, even so, as the One who *is* in heaven, and says, though on earth, "where I *am*" (not, shall be), verse 24. Sent into this world, He is seen, not as Heir of all things (as in Hebrews), but as glorifying the Father, and as having finished the work given Him by the Father to do.

The things given to Him are as "from with the Father" (verse 7), to be enjoyed as the Father's, and in communion with the Father: "all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine" (verse 10). The end of the story in Hebrews shows Him to be supreme over all the works of God's hands: the end of the story in John's gospel shows Him in the glory, with the Father, sanctifying Himself (i.e., taking His place apart from the world); "now come I to Thee" (verses 13, 19, 24).

But oh, the wonders of such grace! In whatever point of view we see Him, we are found with Him, whether as given to Him of the Father (in John), or as His fellows (in Hebrews). For, in every aspect in which He is seen, we are called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord His Father is our Father, His God is our God.

And yet it is precious to notice, that there is *a* glory in which He is infinitely above us; that which He calls "My glory" in John xvii. 24, which we shall

have the unspeakable privilege of "beholding," but in which we shall not share. However great and blessed the intimacy of the relationship into which we are brought, there is also the divine and incommunicable glory of the Son, in which He stands ever alone.

May God grant, as the effect of this gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ, preached among the Gentiles, that we may realise better what it is, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, being rooted and grounded in love."

O. H.

Can we all say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly"? It is a sort of plumb-line, a sort of touchstone to test our state of soul by: and by it inconsistent believers ofter find out what it is that hinders their desire to see Christ.

"Continue Thou."

"BUT continue thou in the things which thou hast learned" (2 Tim. iii. 14). Amongst the exhortations given by the apostle Paul to his dear son in the faith, Timothy, we may truly say that none is more important than this one. The church was at that time getting into a state of confusion and worldliness; evil men and seducers were waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. And if this was true in some measure then, what is it to-day, when the apostasy is advancing with such appalling strides?

What is the man of God to do? What is any christian, even the simplest, to do in view of this state of things? We may rest assured that God has not left His people without a resource; He never does so, never did so, even in the darkest of times.

Timothy was not to be carried away by the vain speculations of men's minds, but to *continue* in the things which he had learned and been assured of, knowing *of whom* he had learned them. It may be said that we have not the apostle Paul to guide us now. That is so, but we have the apostolic writings; and the word of God is always good, always "living" and "abiding." Timothy had known the sacred scriptures from childhood—the word of God given by inspired men raised up and fitted of God for the purpose.

These scriptures do not need to be accredited to us by popes, councils, or the church; they carry with them, to the soul who receives them as from God, their own proofs of their divine origin and authority. They reach down to the deepest depths of the human heart and expose its very thoughts and intents, and they reach up to the highest heights of the glory of God and reveal a divine and God-given salvation. They are able to make wise unto salvation.

"Every scripture is divinely inspired and profitable," etc. This is our sheet-anchor, so that we may not be driven about or tossed by every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. God says, "Them that honour Me I will honour" and the soul that honours Him by valuing and keeping His word, in humble and prayerful dependence, He will surely keep in the day of trouble, trial or difficulty.

This is the safeguard for the simple as well as for the wise. The Good Shepherd's voice, known and loved, leads in the right path, and calls us to follow *Him*: the "stranger" bids us to follow in his crooked and deceitful ways. But the true sheep of Christ have the circumcised ear, the eyesalve to see; and it is our own fault if we are turned aside by the voice of a stranger.

It was remarked to us lately by one who has had considerable experience in the christian pathway, how many he had seen entrapped by the enemy's snares, caught by worldly projects or ambition, and ruined as to their christian testimony. Such cases are solemn warnings to show how we need to watch the *beginnings* of things, the *first* step on the downward path, and to judge every motive in the heart which would lead us to seek another object than Christ, however apparently harmless it may be. And surely they emphasize the importance of the apostle's word, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned."

A Great Example.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."—1 Cor. xi. 1.
"Brethren, be followers together of me."—Phil. iii. 17.

IT is instructive to note the distinction between these two exhortations of the apostle, as given above.

The first, which belongs to the close of chapter x.,

indicates the way in which the beloved apostle followed his Lord.

The Redeemer surrendered all for God's glory; and, though rich, became poor, that we might be rich. He was the merchantman who, when seeking goodly pearls (Matt. xiii.), found one of great value (the Church); and went, and sold all that He had, to possess Himself of that pearl.

Hence, the apostle exhorts the Lord's people to imitate him, in, as he says, "*not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many,* that they may be saved." In this, he sought to imitate, or follow, Christ, who trod the path before him; and he desired that thus we may be prepared for self-surrender likewise, on behalf of others, even as the Lord Jesus Christ did for us.

The apostle John, in his first epistle, reminds us that, "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (ch. ii. 6).

The *second exhortation* suggests a different line of thought; and yet, what an important one! The apostle was in prison at the time he wrote it; and yet he could refer to his so running the christian race towards the goal, and so pressing toward the mark for the prize of the heavenly calling, that he could look for the moment when, the goal attained, he would be in the presence of his Lord, "Who shall change these bodies of humiliation (R.V.), and fashion them like unto His own glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21); at that glorious moment, when "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

The Lord could not be said to have trodden this path, for He was Himself the Goal; always Himself here and on high. Paul runs, and exhorts us to run likewise, as to attain all at the end. Hence, in this second exhortation to imitate him, he does not here add, "as I also am of Christ."

But is there to be no surrender in this?

Indeed there is. An eminent schoolmaster once abruptly said to a boy, who afterwards became an energetic Anglican missionary bishop, "If Christ asked you for your coat, would you give Him your worst coat?" The devoted apostle could say, as to his pathway here, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

Dwelling, as we sometimes do when together, upon the great and constraining love of Christ, is it unusual, or strange, to find ourselves singing, sometimes with much feeling, that :—

Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands our life, our soul, our all?

Surely, there is an increasing need, in this day of ease, selfseeking, and lukewarmness, to give heed to these two exhortations by the apostle Paul.

N. L. N.

The Lord's Supper—2.

1 Corinthians xi, 20-31.

THERE is not, therefore, for the believer, any act greater or more sublime than to break the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of the Lord's death; nothing which presents, in a more touching way, His ineffable love! No words can fully express in our language what these symbols signify. Our highest thoughts can but touch upon this endless theme.

Again, the apostle says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The fact of eating the bread and drinking the cup, announces that which we cannot fully express. In a world which has rejected Him and sees nothing in Him to desire; and, besides this, which now lowers Him to the level of the first man—we announce His death, recognising Him also as the Lord who will appear in glory; but we do so with the

sad thought that such a glorious person as the Lord of heaven and earth needed to be the victim for our sins.

In taking the supper, we announce in presence of the world and its prince that the Lord has died, but that He will come again. Thus the celebration of the supper is an act of accusation against the unheard-of crime committed at the cross. Also we believe it will be found that Satan will make greater efforts to hinder the table of the Lord being set up in a locality than even to hinder the preaching of the gospel.

The remembrance of the Lord's death is bound up with His return. *Then* we shall not need to remember Him; we shall see Him in all His glories, crowned with all His diadems; but we shall see Him also such as the supper represents Him. It is thus that John saw Him in the book of Revelation as "a Lamb as it had been slain," the eternal object of the new song, which we commence in its reality, but so feebly! here below.

If we understand a little what this memorial of the Lord's death presents to us, we shall understand also with what practical holiness we should approach to it. The apostle puts this before the Corinthians in verses 27-29. They were taking the supper unworthily and rendering themselves guilty in respect of the body and blood of the Lord, for they misunderstood what these symbols represented. We also render ourselves guilty in the same way if we approach this memorial carelessly, as a form or with unjudged sin.

Our affections for Christ may get into a dull state, we may be overcome by the things of this life and need to be awakened afresh in order to approach the Lord's table worthily. These affections are often revived in presence of the symbols of the Lord's death. Through the goodness of God it sometimes happens

to us, as to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that we recognise Him in the breaking of bread.

It is happy when this result is produced, but, should we have to wait for this moment to enjoy communion with Him, when it ought to be the supreme object of our hearts for time and eternity? We should constantly, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, feed upon the Lamb who has undergone the fire of judgment in our place. Then, when gathered in the assembly to break bread, our hearts would be overflowing with gratitude and burning with a love manifested in worship and praise to the Lord and to the Father who has given us His Son—for it is thus that lost sinners have been transformed into worshippers, and can begin here below that worship which we shall carry on in His presence for ever.

Having given these warnings as to what is suitable to those coming to the Lord's table, the apostle adds, "and so let him eat," not "let him stay away." Satan has always sought to alienate the children of God from the supper. He knows that being in presence of this memorial of the Lord's death makes us seriously minded and helps towards a walk in holiness; but he also insinuates into the minds of some the thought that they are not holy or worthy enough to take their place at the table.

If we listen to these suggestions of the enemy, we forget that the responsibility for a walk in holiness flows, in the first instance, from our relationship as children of God. Every believer, whether he partakes of the supper or not, is responsible to walk, "soberly, righteously, and godly." Someone may say, "But I am not worthy to partake of the supper." This is to be occupied with oneself rather than with the Lord. On the contrary we should say, "The Lord is always worthy that I should remember Him." This remark

has completely changed the reasoning of more than one hesitating child of God.

Souls also sometimes fear to expose themselves to the judgments which came upon the Corinthians, of whom many were feeble and sick, whilst a good number had fallen asleep, that is, they had died. No doubt this may be the case with us, but the apostle tells us how we can avoid these judgments, which form a part of the discipline which is exercised in the family of God so that we may not be condemned with the world.

"If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." To judge oneself is to constantly apply to oneself the judgment that God has passed upon us in condemning our old nature at the cross, that nature is incorrigible and always prone to do what is wrong. If we constantly applied this judgment to ourselves we would be kept from allowing the flesh to act, and we would not commit acts which draw down upon us God's judgment.

We see here, then, that there is no reason why we should refrain from answering to this desire expressed by the Lord the same night that He was betrayed, *"This do in remembrance of Me."* Most of the reasons given for not allowing the Lord's invitation to remember Him to have its due place with us, arise from thinking more of ourselves than of Him, also from wanting liberty to do what pleases the flesh.

It has been rightly said that, to partake of the supper is not an act of obedience; it is much more than that. It is the desire of the Lord's heart, which addresses itself to the heart of the redeemed one. Obedience has rather to do with the Lord's table, for we should there conform to *His* instruction to keep the table in a way in accordance with *His* thoughts and to maintain it pure from all defilement.

S.P.

The Cross and the Glory.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded (interpreted) unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself . . . . And He said unto them (the apostles), Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." (Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 46).

THE sufferings and the glory, or glories, of Christ (1 Peter i. 11) are the two fundamental pillars on which the whole of the counsels of God and His promises concerning man—redeemed man—rest. To fulfil these counsels the Son of God became man that He might accomplish the work of redemption; and on Him, and His death and resurrection, everything depended for the glory of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11).

The glory of the Godhead, so far as it concerns man, was first shown forth in creation (Gen. i. 26, 27), but its greatest and final triumph, according to the sovereign grace which reigns through righteousness, rested on the Second man the Lord from heaven. Christ therefore is, as Son of man, the centre of the purposes and counsels of God, that God might find His eternal rest in the midst of redeemed men—a rest that cannot be disturbed because it is founded on a righteousness based on the work of the cross (2 Peter iii. 13).

The cross came in at the end of the dispensations in which the first man, Adam, and his descendants, were put under trial, the result of which was that man has been proved to be a sinner and lawless; the summing up of man's history, whether without law or under law, is given us in Rom. iii. 9-20. The various quotations there given from the prophets and the psalms, prove the truth of what is stated, that "they are all under sin."

So it is also that the heavens and the earth are called to witness, in the prophet, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have

nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 2, 3).

Yet even then a door was still open for repentance as we find in verses 16-19 of that chapter. But the final test of man under probation was the coming of Christ into this world. This great final test brought matters to a crisis; the result being that man's moral history under God's longsuffering and forbearance, closed at the cross.*

But the very fact that man was proved to be utterly lost and guilty left the way clear for the most wonderful display of divine grace that the world has ever witnessed; and thus the preaching of the cross has become the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes (1 Cor. i. 18).

Salvation depends entirely on the reception by the sinner, of God's own testimony by the Spirit, concerning "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Paul determined to know nothing save this in his preaching at Corinth. All who receive Christ by faith are saved, all who reject Him are eternally lost (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16).

It is well for christians to keep this great fundamental fact before them lest they be led astray; for much of the oratory of our pulpits teaches otherwise. At the time of Israel's declension of old, the prophets gave the warning, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people *seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?* To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa viii. 19, 20).

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* We may remark here that an additional test took place by the coming of the Holy Ghost, so that the testimony of two divine persons has been set at nought by man (Acts vii. 51, 52).

The cross, then, is the necessary prelude to the glory, even for Christ as Son of man. Christ alone was competent, in every respect, to make atonement for man's sin: He was sinless, He "knew no sin." And His atonement work forms the righteous foundation whereby God can justify the ungodly sinner who believes. There is no other ground.

This constituted one phase of His glory as Son of man: at the cross, God was glorified in Him (John xiii. 31, 32). We have often been struck by the various glories set forth in these verses. "Now is the Son of man glorified"—the Lord looks at His death from this point of view, as that in which God was infinitely glorified; and God would glorify Him in Himself (comp. Heb. i. 3), and that straightway or immediately, without waiting for the manifested glory of the kingdom.

Thus many glories cluster around Him as Son of man; but there is a glory yet to be revealed. Peter, James and John saw it in its display when He was transfigured on the holy mount. This glory is a confirmation of all the prophetic utterances concerning Him; it was the "prophetic word made more sure," as a "light shining in a dark place until the day dawn"—they were eyewitness of His majesty (2 Peter i. 16).

We are exhorted in the scripture to beware of those who would deny these truths or render them null and void by their reasonings. There are false teachers in the professing church now, as there were false prophets in Isaiah's day among the people—the wizards and mutterers of whom he warns us. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh" (2 John 7, new trans.).

The cross (where ended the sufferings of Christ) and the glories that should follow, constitute, therefore, the basis of prophetic testimony in the Old Testament;

and these prophecies have their fulfilment in the New. And what is most blessed for every true believer is, that he has his own share in both, now, by faith, his redemption being accomplished in virtue of the blood of Christ shed at Calvary.

May we not remind each other in closing that, as for Christ, so for us, the cross with its reproach and shame, comes *before* the glory: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17).

H. L.

Christ and the Church.

(Ephesians v. 32.)

IT was given to the apostle Paul in a special way to unfold the "mystery"—"this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The union of Christ and the church was first prefigured in Genesis ii. 21-24, when the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and made a woman and brought her to the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (see also Eph. v. 30, 31).

So it was that while the "deep sleep" of death fell, so to speak, upon Jesus, and He rose again in the power of a victorious life, the Holy Ghost came down to form the church, which is united to the glorified Christ in heaven; for "we are members of His body."

It is well, however, to say that there could be no union with Christ apart from His death, and what is called "union in incarnation" is an utterly false idea. No: His death must first take place, atonement for sin must be made ere any such thing as being united to Christ could be.

Then we should also keep clearly before us the relationship expressed in the words at the head of this

paper—Christ *and* the church. Without Him the church would be nothing, in fact there could be no church, nor could it be said that God "gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Wondrous truth, that the body should be, in a sense, necessary to Him, the Head, to complete the mystic man!

The apostle is so full of his subject, the church, that he cannot even give instructions as to the relationships of life—husband and wife—without referring to it. He goes back, in verse 25 of our chapter, to what we might well call the origin of the church's existence, and he finds it in the heart of Christ Himself. "Christ loved the church"; we might truly say that that love is the spring and source from which all the church's blessings flow.

There are three things here said:—"Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." He could not possibly give more than *Himself*—this is the past. Then, in the same love, He sanctifies and cleanses with the washing of water by the word, so as to render the church *practically* suited to His own holy presence; this is His present service. And, still in the same love, He will present His church to Himself glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; this is the future, and the climax of His love, as it is also of the church's blessing.

So also in chap. iii., the apostle glories in his ministry, which was to preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. This truth was not revealed in Old Testament times but was something altogether new and unique. Indeed the word "mystery" means something which we never could have known if it had not been revealed.

The mystery of which he speaks had been "hid in God"—he does not say hid in the scriptures—but was

now made known. In it the principalities and powers in the heavenly places witness a full display of the all-various wisdom of God. They had seen many displays of God's wisdom; they had seen it in creation, in His ways with men of old; but here was something altogether unique, far surpassing all else—poor sinners from both Jew and Gentile, saved by grace, formed into one body, and united to the glorified Christ in heaven. What a display of infinite grace and wisdom!

No wonder that the apostle bowed his knees in prayer that these Ephesian believers (and we also) might know the surpassing love of Christ, and be filled up to the measure of all the fulness of God.

If we turn to the epistle to the Colossians we shall learn still more of the wonders of this association conveyed to us in the words "Christ and the church." There are various glories of the Lord Jesus unfolded in chapter i.; there is His glory as Head of creation as Creator of all things, and as Head of the church, in resurrection, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the first place.

Do we enter into these truths and do they find a place in our hearts and souls? Alas! many christians are quite satisfied with knowing that they are saved and that they will go to heaven at last. Sad and serious loss to them it is to know so little of the wonderful blessings that are theirs in virtue of what God, in the riches of His grace, has done for His saints. And what a poor response it is to such grace, to show so little interest in what so closely concerns the glory of our Head and Lord, as well as our own privileges and blessings!

But let us also remember that every blessing God gives us, every privilege He bestowes, carries with it a responsibility on our part to answer to His grace. The truth of the church of God is no merely unpractical idea, far from it indeed; it enters deeply into our

christian life and our relationship with God and with our fellow-believers. Everyone who is born again and sealed with the Holy Spirit is a fellow-member of the one body of which Christ is the Head.

We are apt to forget this and to fall into a sectarian or party spirit which does not realize our relationships to other members of the body. "The members should have the same care one for another," if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26). Besides this, all have their own place and function in the body, and if things were right in the church, all would work harmoniously, according to the gift or place God had given to each.

So it is also in that chapter so full of needed exhortations, Romans xii., the apostle says, "We (the many) are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."

Indeed the truth of the church of God, so far from puffing us up and making us think something of ourselves, would have the most salutary effect in regulating our daily conduct in the world and towards one another. Should it not humble us to think how little we carry out such truths in our everyday life, and in our church relationships? And not only so, but it would lead us to a walk in separation from the world, which knows not Christ, which cares nothing for His interests, and which is going on to judgment.

F.G.B.

Found in a Hedge

IT was only a leaflet taken from a roadside hedge in the beautiful county of Hertfordshire, England, on a Lord's day evening, where it had evidently been carefully placed for the benefit of any passer-by.

The finder proved to be one of two young men who were taking a stroll together after having attended a somewhat impressive religious evening service. A quiet and serene calm pervaded all around; in strong and strange contrast to the finder's perturbed state of mind; which was, at the moment, so well expressed by the poet as :—

'Tis a point I long to know;
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His? or, am I not?

To him, the leaflet proved to be a precious message from the Good Shepherd, who had "laid down His life for the sheep."

And, what were the words that were destined to be such a healing balm to the young man's soul? Just these. On the one side of the leaflet, was the hymn beginning with :—

Just as thou art, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place.
O guilty sinner, *Come* !

On the other side of the leaflet, was the response to this appeal, in the words of the hymn commencing with :—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !

He saw it at once. It was the Saviour needing the sinner, and the sinner needing the Saviour. "Just as thou art . . . Come !"—"Just as I am . . . I come."

He came; and, for over fifty years has proved the truth of the Saviour's words, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Through mercy, he is still spared to bear witness to the grace of Him,

who, in this way, went after the sheep that was lost, "until He found it."

How simple is the gospel message! To become a recipient of the blessing it announces, the only qualification necessary is, to feel the need of it.

"All the fitness He requireth
Is, to feel your need of Him."

It is the lost one that needs the Saviour; and, the Saviour Himself has said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Reader, only the breath in your nostrils is between yourself and Eternity. Delay is ever a dangerously hardening process. Whatever false teachers may assert to the contrary, the truth still remains, based upon the divine word, that

"There are no pardons in the tomb;
And brief is mercy's day.

May it be yours, believing the Saviour's promise, to take up, this moment as your very own, the response in the leaflet, and to say *from the heart* :—

"Just as I am . . .
O Lamb of God, I come!"

And your prospect will be "eternal glory."

N.L.N.

A Good Conscience and Sincere Faith.

CONSCIENCE and faith are bound up together. If a man believes a thing to be right, his conscience cannot condemn an act performed in view of that faith. Conscience is largely governed by faith, and, in its turn, powerfully influences faith.

In 1 Tim. i. 5, the apostle warns against being led away into useless argument, and reminds us of the true aim of teaching and exhortation.

A "pure heart" sees God. Where the motive is single the consciousness of the divine will may be so clear as to amount almost to a vision. Where God is our chief desire there will be, on our part, the loyalty of the set will, which will remain undeflected by any change in feelings or circumstances.

For the maintenance of a "good conscience," knowledge and obedience are vital. Our conscience needs to be enlightened by the word of God, or it may lead us astray; on the one hand it may falsely accuse us: on the other, it may be silent when it should condemn. And there must be obedience to the word. And where there is conscious failure, there should be immediate confession; to keep "long accounts" with the Lord is a sure way of suffering from a clouded conscience.

A "sincere faith" is of the same sort in private as in public; its possessor does not privately hold certain beliefs while publicly professing other and different ones. The adjective "sincere" comes from two Latin words, "sine," meaning without, and "cira," wax. If a dishonest marble merchant of ancient Rome wished to deceive a buyer, he stuffed the holes or cracks in the piece of marble he wished to sell, with wax of the same colour as the stone. The fraud was at first undetected by the purchaser, but when the piece of marble was taken home and exposed to the Italian sun, the wax would melt and the flaws be exposed to view. And so a piece of stone that was of the same quality through and through, with no holes or cracks came to be described as "sine cira," without wax, "sincere."

When Paul refers to his ministry he not infrequently appeals to the transparent sincerity of his life and motives, and these were bound up with a "faith unfeigned." It is worse than useless to try to act with another man's faith—or conscience or judg-

ment. Sincere faith must be one's own and must be held in the fear of the Lord.

And that which springs from the pure heart, the good conscience and the sincere faith is love—love to God and to man. We are to love God not only with the emotions, but with the understanding and the will. And love to man is not merely a sentiment, but rather a principle that gives and serves and, if necessary, sacrifices. And Paul, in stating that love is "the end of the commandment," is repeating 2 Peter i. 7, where Peter gives to love, the place of capstone in the pyramid of christian graces.

In 1 Tim. i. 19, we are warned that those who cast aside a good conscience may make shipwreck of faith. Unbelief has its roots in the will, not in the understanding. A lowered standard of conduct demands an inferior creed to justify it. The wish is often father to the thought. The clouded conscience does not see facts as they really are. In the extreme case, pleasure in unrighteousness leads to belief of a lie. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." This promise has a wealth of meaning for the believer. And the opposite holds true, too. If obedience to the light leads to assurance and further faith, disobedience to it leads to an eclipse of faith.

In 1 Tim. iii. 9, the exhortation to maintain the divine truths of the christian faith is especially needed in days like the present when "the faith once delivered unto the saints" is doubted or denied on every hand. We have to contend earnestly to maintain the faith. Every believer knows God as his Teacher. The doctrines of the word of God have been confirmed to the believer by his spiritual experiences. And the earnest exhortation runs, "Continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." Thus we shall hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

E.A.

Scripture Notes.

"BUT Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself" (Dan. i. 8). Much, very much, in the christian's life depends upon the purpose of heart. Just as with the regulator of a watch, the whole working of the machinery depends upon it. "My son, give Me thine heart," and if *that* be given, the rest will follow. What, then, is our purpose of heart? Is it Christ and His interests, or is it partly Christ and partly other things?

. . . . . .

"Prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 4). Let us note the order here—prayer comes first, then the ministry of the word. This is how it was in those early days of the church's history, as we find in Acts i. 14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Do we not often fail in this—true, earnest, believing supplication and prayer?

. . . . . .

"Caleb . . . wholly followed the Lord God of Israel" (Josh xiv. 14). It was with no faltering or uncertain step that this man of God followed the Lord—he "wholly followed." He was one of the two who acted in faith in the matter of the spies sent to search the land; and these two alone, of all the host, survived to witness for God during the whole of the wilderness journey, until, by faith, they got their portion in the promised land according to the oath that Moses sware (ver. 9). It was his purpose, "I will wholly follow the Lord my God" (ver. 8).

. . . . . .

The Spirit and the bride say "Come"! Is the bride for the earth? What has she to do with the wilder-

ness, save as Rebecca, passing through it? What gives her her whole character? A certain position recognised, not by her but by Christ. Herself recognised by Him as that which without spot or wrinkle is to be presented to Himself. It will be a marvellous scene when Christ presents the church to Himself, when the last Adam takes that bride of His to share His glory. Ah! not only that; but it is oneness with Himself that characterises us. What the heart feels to be so precious is the fact of our being looked at as belonging to Himself, and that the Father sees us not only in a relationship that links us up with the Son of His love in the glory, but *such* a relationship that He could not do without us.—G.V.W.

JESUS, Saviour, still the same,
I would glory in Thy Name,
Thou for me Thyself hast given,
None like Thee on earth, in heaven.

Perfect is Thy matchless love,
Interceding now above,
For Thy weary, way-worn saint;
Why should I despond or faint?

Thine the sorrow, Thine the shame,
"Man of Sorrows" was Thy name;
Now my great High Priest on high,
Keep, O keep me, to Thee nigh.

"Come Unto Me."

(Matthew xi. 25-29.)

THERE is, perhaps, no portion of scripture in which the moral glory of the Lord Jesus shines out more manifestly than in this one. He had been rejected by His people Israel, and the cities where His mighty works had been done had shown unbelief and hardness of heart in refusing Him. The Lord felt it all; but what effect had it upon Him?

It only brought out more fully the glory of His Person, who, though rejected as the Messiah of Israel, was the Son, to whom all things were delivered by the Father, and whom none could know but the Father only.

Thus, as has been said by another, "The rejected Messiah is refused by man: He submits to it. They strip Him of His robes of Messianic glory, and what comes out? He is the Son of the Father, the Son of God from all eternity, the blessed divine Person who could look up and say, 'Father.' Refuse Him in His earthly dignity, and He only shines in His heavenly one; despise Him as a man, and He is manifestly God."

Who could understand the mystery of the Person of Him who was the incarnate Son, the eternal Word made flesh and dwelling among us? None but the Father only. The wise, the great ones of this world were, and still are, utterly confounded here; these things are hidden from them, and revealed by the Father to the simple, the humble, the babes.

And so it is that the pride of man is rebuked, and the prying intellect of man, which in all ages has sought to penetrate the mystery of the Person of Jesus (1 Tim. iii. 16), only proves its utter inability. Though taking the lowly form of a bondman here in grace, the Person of Him who was the I AM is, and must ever be, inscrutable.

How precious, then, the Lord's word to the weary, the heavy laden! Jew or Gentile, whosoever it might be—He says to all such, "Come to Me and I will *give* you rest." He does not sell that rest, nor can we earn it by our works, it is His free gift.

Then, in taking up His yoke, we *find* rest to our souls. It was the yoke of perfect obedience and submission to the Father's will, whatever the trial of His rejection might be.

Fellow christian!—this is our example, this is the Christ we have to follow; "Learn of Me," He says. Do we sometimes become chafed, wearied, or discouraged because of the way, or in His service? Let us seek grace to take everything from a Father's hand. It is always best, and in doing so we can find rest and joy, whatever our circumstances may be.

It is not a heavy burden like that which the Pharisees bound upon men's shoulders, but which they themselves did not touch with one of their fingers: it is the yoke which Jesus Himself carried, and His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Nor is it acting like a stoic or a fatalist; but an intelligent and willing submission to the Father's will in all things; as we sometimes sing,

"Our times are in Thy hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee."

This brings peace and joy to the soul.

Christ—"a Servant for ever."

NOTHING can be more cheering to the child of God than to notice the care with which the Holy Spirit unfolds "in *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and the *Psalms*," the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke xxiv. 44).

As to the Psalms, we find in Psalm xl. 6, words used which suggest to us the thought that He, the Son of God's love, took the place of a bondsman, by becoming Man (Phil. ii.)—"*Mine ears hast thou digged.*" The "ear," amongst other things, is for the reception of commandments. How true this was in the Lord's case may be seen from such scriptures as Luke ii. 49; iv. 18; John x. 18.

In this connection we have a beautiful picture presented in John iv. 30-42, of His doing the Father's will by receiving sinners, thus forcibly illustrating His words as recorded in John vi. 37-40: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I *will in no wise cast out,* for I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

As to the Prophets—Isaiah l. draws attention to this blessed Servant, with ears "opened" in life service, receiving commands morning by morning—"all the frankincense" of the meat offering for God (Lev. ii. 2). "The Lord God hath given me the disciple's tongue, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; He wakeneth mine ear to attend in a disciple's manner. The Lord God hath *opened mine ear.* I was not rebellious, nor turned back."

Such scriptures as Luke iv. 1-13 and Matthew iv. 1-11, amongst many others, will suggest themselves in this connection. Having taken the place of a Servant, *obedience* and *dependence* are ever seen in Him (the second Man, the last Adam) all along the way; though

> "His path, uncheered by earthly smiles
> Led only to *the Cross.*"

This brings us to the witness of *Moses,* in Exodus xxi., whence we gather that He, whose ears were "*digged*" in incarnation, and "*opened*" in life service,

were *"bored"* at the Cross, and He becomes "a Servant for ever"; for He loved His Master (in the words of the type), His wife and His children, and would not "go out free." He gave Himself *"to God,"* but it was *"for us"* (Eph. v. 2)—He loved *the Church,* and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). And yet again, in a wider sense, He can speak of His own, and say, "Behold I, and *the children* whom Thou hast given me" (Heb. ii. 11-13; John x. 15).

How it is that He who went to the cross is "a servant for ever" has been told again and again, and is unfolded in such scriptures as John xiii. 1-17; Heb. iv. 14-16; 1 John ii. 1; Luke xii. 37; 1 Cor. xv. 28.

Surely, as we contemplate *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,* who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, the only utterance of our poor hearts can be,

"Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all." N.L.N.

The Servant's Equipment.

" But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry " (2 Tim. iv. 5.)

WE know a little study where the above text is pinned to the edge of the shelf in front of the writer, and it suggests a few comments. What is here said to Timothy by the aged apostle who so fervently addresses him as "my son" is an admonition of the greatest value to anyone who desires, or shall we say aspires, to the honour of serving the Lord. What may be called the 'personal touch' must ever make Paul's letters to Timothy especially attractive to us as well as valuable. The deep affection of the aged apostle nearing the end of his course, for his dearly beloved son in the faith, his tender solicitude for the frail body, and the touching sympathy for one naturally diffident, give to these two letters especial interest and charm.

The apostle Paul felt the spiritual state of the church as perhaps no other servant ever did; and burdened with the fear of decadence when he was gone, these words of counsel to one of whom he says, "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state," have great weight, and must certainly find a place in the heart of any servant of the Lord.

There are many words of counsel, warning, and encouragement scattered through the two epistles, and it may savour of temerity to select any particular one from the rest, but the four points touched upon in the passage we draw attention to, mark it out as peculiarly applicable to the Lord's servants in this and any other day.

The first clause is directed to the very necessary point of watchfulness over oneself, and this is more apparent in the new translation of the verse which reads thus, "But thou, be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry." (New trans.) Read thus it shows clearly that the first exhortation is to watch ourselves, not others; but, as in the 12th verse, chapter iv. of the first epistle, it enjoins upon Timothy exemplary personal conduct—"in word, conversation, charity, spirit, faith, purity." "Sober in all things" covers then, we may say, the reflective side of our life and service; while the next point, "endure afflictions" (or "bear evils") encourages the servant in that which comes from without in the shape of trial and persecution, reproach, scorn, and even ill-usage.

When we remember how often our service is marred by hasty words, impatience under restraint or misunderstanding, and how often the "flies in the ointment" are not discerned by us, we see the value of this injunction, coming first; and endurance under evils coming from without, follows in the second place. Perhaps no other servant of Christ was the subject of

such pressure of affliction from without as the apostle Paul, so it comes well from one who writes of himself, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake which is the church."

The third exhortation has its own special value for one whose service to the saints was so strenuous as Timothy's. The care of assemblies, the needs of the saints, would naturally absorb all his time and attention, leaving but little opportunity for evangelising. Hence the need of the injunction. It need not be inferred from this that Timothy was not gifted as an evangelist, but rather that the care of the churches, however pressing, must not shut out the desire for the spread of the glad tidings and the state of the perishing millions in the world. Although Paul speaks of himself as having the care of all the assemblies, he was ever ready up to the last to carry the gospel to the regions beyond. Ready even to be separated from Christ for the sake of his "kinsmen according to the flesh."

Then the exhortation concludes with that strikingly beautiful clause, "fill up the full measure of thy ministry"; and so the whole sphere of service is covered. Watchful over self in all things—endurance under trials and afflictions—drinking deeply into the love of God for the world as an ambassador for the glad tidings—and patiently, untiringly labouring in the manifold calls of the ministry of Christ, both in the church and the world.

May the Lord stir up all His servants to a like purpose of heart; the darkness deepens, iniquity abounds, and indifference to God and His claims hangs like a pall upon the scene around. Notwithstanding this, "The Lord *shall* deliver us from every evil work, and *will* preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom. "To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." T.R.

Thou art my Hiding Place.

(Psalm xxxii. 7.)

ADAM after his disobedience, endeavoured to hide himself from the presence of the Lord God. In the above confiding affirmation to Jehovah, how great, how blessed is the contrast! Yet the Psalmist had realised what Adam had so soon to learn, that nothing can hide from the all-searching light of the divine Presence—not the heavens, Sheol, the sea, nor even darkness itself (Ps. cxxxix.). A deeply solemn consideration for men "appointed once to die, but after this the judgment."

What had intervened to bring David's confidence in this Psalm, in place of Adam's fear? Had not David sinned? Alas! he had sinned so grievously, as Psalm li. tells us, that in the economy of the law there was no sacrifice to meet the offence, for it was blood-guiltiness. But in view of the full propitiation purposed in the divine counsels (1 John iv. 10—oh, wonder of grace!) Jehovah, having wrought conviction in his soul and brought him to confession, had assured him of His complete forgiveness.

Thus all cause for guile being removed, David's whole heart was open before God. He rejoiced in what he was inspired to testify—the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered . . . unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." A forgiveness so absolute, a reconciliation so perfect, had begotten a confidence which found expression in this beautifully appropriate acknowledgment of the divine favour in which his soul could tranquilly repose.

The Hebrew word here translated hiding-place is also rendered "covert" and "secret place" in other Psalms, the thoughts being combined in Psalms lxi. 4, and xci. 1.

The prophet Isaiah, looking, by inspiration, beyond

the impending judgment on Israel, to the fulfilment of the second Psalm, broke out into the joyous strain, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness . . . And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This "Man" is the Jehovah of the Psalms: and all-sufficient are His resources to meet the need of His earthly people in that day; to shelter them from every ill that then may be occurrent.

David, too, could not only sing of immunity from merited punishment for sins; He found in Jehovah a sanctuary, affording such refuge from trouble, such confidence as to enemies, that He could contemplate public praise to Him (xxvii. 5, 6). He was constrained to worship, by the reflection that Jehovah would keep those who trusted in Him, in the secret of His presence, from "the pride of man and the strife of tongues" (xxxi. 19-21). Moreover also from what is yet more harassing, the reasonings of men—vain, hateful, earth-born thoughts—Jehovah was a hiding-place and shield to the author of Psalm cxix.; His word that in which he could hope and delight (vv. 114, 162, 174).

But the crown of God's purposes for the glory and satisfaction of Christ is the church, which is His body. It is believers of the present dispensation He has chosen to form it, and to be Christ's heavenly companions. He has created them anew in Him, bestowed upon them a Father's love, making them joint-heirs with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Saviour, met all their responsibilities at the cross and has associated them with Himself in resurrection-life. With their hearts burning within them, they can sing,

"One spirit with the Lord":
Jesus, the glorified,
Esteems the church for which He bled,
His body and His bride."

In a far higher, richer way, therefore, with fuller, happier intimacy are they privileged to know *Him* as their sweet retreat. And He is the same blessed One, the Jehovah of the Psalms, known by them as the Lamb of God, the Son in whom the Father has been revealed. They, indeed, share His rejection in the world but are soon to share His home in the Father's house.

Meanwhile, they have the comfort of this inspiring hope. Nestled under the covert of His wings, resting serenely in the eternal security they afford, they are happy in the enjoyment of an abiding place in His heart. To Him they can bring every care, assured of fullest sympathy. And in the power of the indwelling Spirit, they can have blessed communion with Him as to needs or service or even as to His own interests in the church and in the world.

But how far do they—or, to bring it closer home—do we, enter into our privileges? Do we draw on His "unsearchable riches" in the measure He would have us draw on them? The object of true love could hardly grieve it more than by refraining from participation in the benefits it has procured at so great a cost. May the transcending excellency and surpassing love of our glorious Lord so captivate us that we may be impelled to respond with ardour to His gracious desires. Overwhelming is the grace which has brought us into intimate relationships with the Father and the Son. Oh, that a sweet savour of praise may ever ascend from our grateful hearts as even infinitesimal portions of what we may call this Niagara's flood rise continually from the depths into which it falls, up to the very heights from which the mighty waters make their plunge.

A. J. H.

The Crisis in the Church of England.

Reflections on the Revised Prayer Book Decision.

WE should like to make a few observations on this subject, taking it simply as a fresh indication of the tendency of the times in which we live. Unquestionably the new book is a long step in the Romeward direction; no apologies for it can hide this fact. What really matters is, not so much what appears on the surface, but what is at the root of this Romeward movement which is so strongly marked in Christendom.

We believe that Romanism is simply the outcome of the natural tendency of the heart of man, when man adopts Christianity (or nominal Christianity) as his religion. Something great, something that appeals to the eye and to the senses, is always attractive to the masses.

An ancient form of religion such as this, which goes back for centuries and presents an apparently united front to the world, which glories in outward display and in multiplied and gorgeous ceremonies and rituals; one which, at the same time, gives a salve to the conscience of man who knows he is a sinner against God—such a religion will always have a large and increasing following. Its full and complete type and development, however, will be found in Revelation xvii. 5, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

The Ritualistic section of the Established Church, flitting like a moth round the Romanist candle for many years, seems to be more and more caught in the influences that are at work, and unable or unwilling to stop on the downward road.

But these happenings have a voice for every one of us. All our hearts are just the same by nature, and the tendency towards what seems great and prosperous is the same in all. For these reasons we need to be lifted

above the clouds and dust of human opinions and to judge of everything in the clear light of God's holy word.

At the Reformation the truth of the authority of scripture, instead of the authority of the church, and the giving of the word of God its true place, instead of tradition; as well as the truth of justification by faith—all these were brought to light again after the darkness of the Middle Ages.

But *faith* is not a *visible* thing; and the more men get away from the simplicity and godly sincerity that marked the work of God in those days, the more they will lean on what is visible and tangible; hence what appeals to sight and sense has great attraction for them.

Besides this, a sacramental religion, which teaches that the grace of God is conveyed through the sacraments and rituals of the church, must necessarily give a very large place to the clergy or priests, who are supposed to be the channels through which that grace is conveyed to the worshippers in these rituals. It is human nature to like what makes us appear great in the eyes of others.

Then also we can see in the present drift, an effort of Satan to detract from the glory of Christ, and to lead men to look to other mediators and other saviours—to turn them to other resources in order to get peace with God, rather than to Christ only.

All this is a practical denial of the fundamental truths of the gospel. It ignores the utterly lost condition of man as we have it in Romans iii. 9-20, and many other scriptures. It sets aside the absolute necessity for the new birth, on which our Lord insisted to Nicodemus, saying, "Ye *must* be born again"; it deprives us of the complete and full efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, in virtue of which the believer has

a purged conscience and access into the holiest of all through the rent vail (Heb. x.).

In a war of contrary principles such as this is, between the evangelical position, which is (or ought to be) set for the upholding of the truths of the gospel at any cost, against that which saps the very foundations of these truths, there should be no compromise whatever. To compromise may seem to be amiable and broadminded, but it is certainly to surrender the citadel of truth to the enemy. And it was for these very truths that many of the martyrs died at the stake! We are not here speaking from the point of view of any particular denomination or body of people, but endeavouring to look at the points at issue as they affect the whole question of a true, pure, unadulterated gospel; as to which the apostle Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8, 9).

It is a day of compromises and of lukewarm indifference also; but to compromise at the cost of fundamental truth is disloyalty to Christ, to whom we owe our life, our peace, our all. F.G.B.

"To Save to the Uttermost."

(Hebrews vii. 25.)

"UTTERMOST" is an old-fashioned expression, in fact to-day it is almost obsolete. Some years back, however, on every farm lease in Essex, and on every farm plan, the measurements of a field were always given in its "outermost," as well as its "innermost" area.

For instance, you might hire a field of 21 acres "outermost" measure, and yet only be able to plough 19 acres of it, which would be its "innermost" size. The hedges all round the field have to be allowed for, also the ditches. There might be a small pond-hole in one corner, and possibly a path running across the land. None of these items would produce corn, but all must be included in the total acreage of the farm. Swampy marshes, sandy heaths and woods, all have to be totalled. Hence the difference between the "outermost" acres of a farm and those capable of tillage, were vastly different. The farmer had to reckon on so much "innermost" or valuable land, with a considerable proportion of "outermost," or unproductive land.

The pathway of every Christian as he journeys home is along an uphill road. Though at times we may find "still waters" and lie down on "green pastures"; yet there are steep, rugged places to climb, and we travel through barren uncongenial soil that seems impossible for fruit-bearing. We are journeying through "a waste howling wilderness," through a "dry and thirsty land" wherein is no water; where the desert sands are hot, scorching our feet, and where enemies mighty and numerous abound.

What a joy then to know that our Shepherd not only provides the pleasant "innermost" circumstances of our lives, but the contrary ones also are under His control, so that our Guide is "able to save the outermost" ones too. Thanks be to His name!

C.E.M.

The Assembly of God.

(1 Corinthians.)

GOD so allowed it that the apostle Paul should be imprisoned at Rome in order that we might have, in writing, the instructions contained in the epistles that he wrote from that city. He allowed also that the state of certain assemblies necessitated the warnings and instructions which he gave them by letter during his journeys from place to place. Thus it is that we have, as God's provision, the inspired word which is so necessary for us.

There were in the assembly at Corinth disorders of all kinds—divisions, immorality, despising the Lord's table, false doctrines, etc., etc. Before blaming the Corinthians for all these things the apostle begins by stating what they were as an assembly, and individually, in the sight of God, in order to make them understand the gravity of the evil by measuring it according to what they were before God.

He addresses his epistle to "The Assembly of God which is at Corinth, to those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints." This is what they were collectively and individually before God. The assembly is "of God"; it bears the character of God; it is seen by God according to the perfections which flow from the work of Christ. It is not the walk of those who compose it that forms the character of this assembly; but their walk should flow from that which the assembly itself is.

If the character of God is not maintained by the christians united in a locality, their coming together ceases to be practically an assembly of God. It is not sufficient that all the christians in a locality should be gathered together to constitute *an assembly of God;* for that to be so they must be united according to the

divine instructions given, especially in this epistle—for these instructions might be called, "The constitution of the church."

The assembly of God has existed since the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; but, for centuries, the gatherings together of christians have scarcely borne the characters of it—far from it indeed. *Men* have taken the place of the Lord's authority, they have appropriated to themselves place and position in the church and have replaced the gifts God had given for instruction, by teachers of theological dogmas.

Thus the church has become corrupted; although in the midst of this state of things there have always been faithful christians, zealous and devoted to the Lord, many of whom have been martyred, and who will wear eternally the crown of life (Rev. ii. 10).

In spite of the present ruin of the responsible church, all believers in the world form a part of it; and, locally, all the believers in a locality. All the believers who were at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Colosse, or elsewhere, constituted the assembly of God in these localities, and each of these assemblies was a representative of the universal assembly.

What was true then is true now, even though all the christians in a locality are not united together; but these diverse groups do not bear the true *character* of the assembly of God, which is one, and subject to the teachings of its Head and Lord (Eph. v. 24). If there should be found some united apart from moral and doctrinal evil, according to the teachings of the word (2 Tim. ii., etc.), they represent the assembly of God in that locality, although, as regards themselves alone, they are not the assembly but only a part of it.

We shall see in chapter x. that it is around the Lord's table that the expression of the unity of the assembly is to be realised.

There was, then, at Corinth an assembly of God.

The Lord had said to Paul, "I have much people in this city." But they had lost sight of what the true features of this assembly were, this is why they were walking, in many respects, in impurity and disorder.

In order to lead them back to a walk in keeping with the holiness of God Himself, the apostle addresses them, considering them according to the perfect condition and character of the assembly such as God sees it. This was the most effective way of leading them to measure the distance which they had allowed to come in between what the assembly is in God's thoughts, and what they had made it by conduct so unworthy and so like "despising the assembly of God."

Thus their hearts would be touched so as to judge what was out of keeping with the character of such an assembly. We find that the same principle is true individually. They were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, i.e., saints by the call of God and not those who had become such by their conduct; nor even called *to be* saints. But the holiness of their conduct should be in keeping with the holiness of *their position* —the only measure of the christian's walk. This is what we have to bear in mind.

We see in the second epistle that the first epistle had borne its fruit. The Corinthians had put away the evil which was in their midst so that in addressing his second letter to them the apostle could continue to call them, "the assembly of God which is at Corinth." But if they had not judged the evil which had been pointed out to them, they would have lost the character of *the assembly of God* which was in that city.

The first epistle was addressed also "To all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their's and our's"; that is to say, to all christians wherever they may be found. Even to-day all those who profess to be christians are

responsible to conform to the teachings of the apostle. The most terrible judgments will fall upon Christendom because they are not conformed to these teachings, whilst still professing to be His church. Indeed they have largely got into a worldly and even apostate state.

After having wished them grace and peace, the apostle reminds them that they did not come behind in any gift whilst awaiting the revelation of Jesus Christ. This also laid upon their conscience what they had done with the gifts God had given and how they had used them. They could thus measure how much more guilty they were, since God had given them all that was necessary for a walk which needed not to fear the light, when it will be brought to bear on the christian at the appearing of Jesus Christ. This appearing is always presented as referring to our *responsibility,* because then it is that all will be made manifest.

The Corinthians had received everything which could render them irreproachable in that day; but, in spite of all their failure, the apostle counted on the faithfulness of God on their behalf. He said, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." One finds, moreover, in these words, an appeal to their consciences and to ours, for, as with them, *we* have been called to the same fellowship. What a motive to watch that nothing in our walk should be out of keeping with this fellowship, for the Lord cannot be in communion with evil!

So it is now also, God has given to the church all the gifts necessary for its building up, until the Lord's coming; but the fact that these gifts are dispersed amongst different christians not acting in their proper place, or perhaps not at all, is a great cause of weakness amongst the children of God.

The Lord, however, takes care of His own amidst the ruin, if they wait humbly upon Him; and He gives them what is needed in order that they may be edified, that they may be faithful to Him, and that the work of the gospel may go on. Our resources are in Him, the Head of the church which is His body and will be so till He comes.

S.P.

The Good Shepherd.

WE find in John x. verses 4, 5, that it is not the sheep's knowledge of the stranger that keeps it from the snares which he tries to set for it; but there is *one voice* which is known by the sheep, the voice of the Good Shepherd, and they know that what they hear is not *that* voice. It is thus the simple are kept; the wise wish to know everything, and are deceived. The voice of the Person being known, encourages and authorises the sheep to follow Him . . .

Now the happy results are given to us—the position of the sheep that follow His voice. If anyone enter by that door, he shall be saved. Salvation was found in the Shepherd, that which the fold could not give. The sheep should be free—the fold afforded a kind of security, but it was the security of a prison—it would find pasture, it would be fed in the rich pastures of God. It is Christianity in contrast with Judaism. Christianity was salvation, liberty, and divine food. Security is no longer imprisonment, but the care of the Good Shepherd. Free under His care, the sheep feed in safety in the vast and rich pastures of God.

This is the general position, but there is more (ver. 10). Jesus, in contrast with all the false pretenders

who only came to steal and to kill, came that we might have life, and that we might have it in abundance.

The first expression used here, is the object of His coming in general, which characterises the gospel and also the epistle of John: it is the Son of God come down, that we might live through Him. He is the eternal life which was with the Father, and gives life, and becomes Himself our life (compare 1 John iv. 9; i. 2; v. 11, 12; John iii. 15, 16; one might multiply quotations).

The second part of the sentence shows the character and fulness of this life: this life is in the Son. Having the Son, we have life, and we have it according to the power of His resurrection. The faithful in old times were quickened; but here it is the Son Himself who becomes our life, and that as Man risen from among the dead. We have it "more abundantly."

The 10th verse gives us the great purpose of the coming of the Son of God; but His love must unfold itself fully; He is not only the Shepherd, but the "Good Shepherd," and the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. His death has done everything for them; it has redeemed them, washed them from their sins, justified them, purchased them for heaven; however, I think the object of the passage is the love and devotedness of the Good Shepherd: rather than lose His sheep, He lays down His life.

The hireling thinks of himself, and runs away; and the wolf comes and catches* the sheep and scatters them. In Gethsemane Jesus said, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." Those who took the place of

* The word "catch," in the sentence "the wolf catches them," is the same as the word used by the Lord when He says, "No one shall catch them out of My hand." The wolf scatters the sheep, but cannot pluck them out of Christ's hand, nor deprive them of everlasting life.

shepherds abandon the sheep when the enemy comes; He lays down His life rather than leave them a prey to the wolf.

But there is yet more: the Good Shepherd knows His own, and His own know Him, as the Father had known Him, and He had known the Father. Wonderful position! Wonderful relationship! Jesus had been the object of His Father's heart; in the same way His sheep were the objects of His heart. Taught of God, His sheep knew Him, and trusted in Him, as He trusted in the Father; and He lays down His life for them.

But, in laying down His life, He opens the door to the sheep from amongst the Gentiles, which He must also bring, and they shall hear His voice. With both one and the other, all should be the fruit of His heart and of His mouth, and there should be but one flock, and one Shepherd. As to man, this completes the fruit of the Lord's work, at least down here. . . .

In this act of devotedness, the gift of His life, the point is, not only the feelings of the sheep, but of the Father. Jesus could give a motive to the Father that He should love Him—"*therefore* doth my Father love Me." It is only a divine Person who could do this. The Father takes pleasure in the faithfulness of His children; but to lay down His life, to give Himself even unto death, and to take His life again in resurrection, whilst re-establishing the Father's glory, tarnished by the entrance of sin and of death; this was a motive for the Father's affection. Glorious and devoted Saviour! Although He felt everything, He never thought of Himself, but of His Father, and, blessed be His name! of His sheep.

J.N.D.

Who Is Wise?

"WHO is wise, and he shall understand these things? intelligent, and he shall know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the trangressors shall fall therein" (Hosea xiv. 9). Faith always says "The ways of the Lord are right," whatever they may be. Even if it be to deal with us in discipline or chastening, yet we know that the *end* is always in love and for our good.

In Psalm lxxvii we read, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." This is the place where God dwells, where He is known, and where what is of the flesh in us is excluded. And there it is that God's mind is discerned—in His own presence, where true wisdom is to be had; and where we can say, His ways are right.

But in the same Psalm we find, "Thy way is in the sea." In the unstable and confused state of things in this world, God has *His* way; and He is above *all* the circumstances of our path, His path is marked out for each of us. So we can truly say here also, the ways of the Lord are right.

As we have said, the man of faith always vindicates God's ways and actings, he knows that all must be well. This is very comfortng and helpful for us to bear in mind. It has been truly said that, "His path of action is straight onwards, however great His mercy may be. The just, sustained and helped by the strength of God, can walk there; but the transgressors, through the very power that is present, shall fall therein."

Does it not remind us of that remarkable verse in the prophet Nahum, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him"? The previous verses had told us of God's greatness and majesty, of His jealousy and vengeance

against His enemies, His fierce anger and fury against the wicked; but what is He for His people? He is good; He is a stronghold in the day of trouble.

Yes, it is this very God, whose anger is so slow, but whose power is so great, who will not acquit the wicked—It is He who is the sure and unfailing refuge of all who trust Him; and He Himself knows all who do so. Truly, we can say, "The ways of the Lord are right!"

A Word In Season.

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts ix. 31).

FOR some years the christian assemblies in the Holy Land had been subject to much trial and persecution, but at length a time of rest and peace was reached through the mercy of God. Saul of Tarsus, the great opponent who had been "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," had, at the very height of his opposition, been met "in the way" by that same Lord and conquered by grace. He confesses himself as the one in whom the greatest manifestation of God's long-suffering had been shewn forth, and is found preaching Christ as the Son of God in the very places where his open and bitter hostility had been seen.

And now a season of rest is granted to the tried and suffering churches, which they use for edification. They readily and thankfully turn to those things which tend to the building up of the saints in their most holy faith. They act upon the instruction of Jude 20th and 21st verses, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking

for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

It seems to us that we may learn a valuable lesson here for our present-day needs. We live in a day of much pressure and activity. One question after another demands the attention of the Lord's people to-day, and calls for much exercise of faith and patience on the part of those who seek their welfare. The very foundations of the faith are assailed from different points, and the blessed Person of our Lord Christ does not escape the malignant attacks of the enemy, and often from least expected quarters. Matters, too, of a happier nature, such as the restoration of fellowship between divided assemblies of believers, make great demands upon us for vigilance and self-judgment; all making more than ever welcome a period of peace such as is described in the Scripture at the head of this paper to which we call attention. The word translated " rest " may be read "peace," and is so given in the translation by J. N. Darby.

"The assemblies then throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

Let us mark the beautiful connection here of those things we long for, and so constantly pray for. Peace, rest, edification (or building up), walking in the fear of the Lord; and comfort of the Holy Spirit—then, increase.

We deplore the decreasing numbers found around the Lord's Table in many places, the lack of spiritual power in service, and of unction in worship. The dearth of conversions and interest in the gospel also calls for much exercise. What and where is the *remedy for this state to be found? The Lord's hand*

is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is His affection for His church abated even by the poverty of her response. Let us, then, do as the asembly (or the assemblies) did in the days of Acts ix., use the time of peace and rest the Lord grants us to seek unto Him, "follow peace with all men and holiness" (Heb. xii. 14)—seeking after that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers. What does Ephesians iv. 7th to 16th verses, say to us on this matter ? We would gladly quote the whole of the passage, but must suffice ourselves with calling special attention to the object of the various gifts of an ascended Christ to His body the church, with a view to "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building-up of the body of Christ."

"Walking in the fear of the Lord" does not imply dread in any sense. We are delivered from the fear that hath torment, by the perfect love which casteth out fear (see 1 John iv. 17-18); but we worship God with reverence and godly fear because "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Ps. lxxxix). "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" says Proverbs xiv. 27, and the same tells us twice over that it is the principal part of wisdom (Pr. i. 7 and ix. 10, see margin). This wholesome sense of what befits the presence of God is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, for the Assembly of God is "the pillar and ground of the truth"; it "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 21, 22).

And then the last sentence in our text and the one which is equally important, and leads to the much-desired increase is, that the comfort of the Holy Ghost was also enjoyed. It is no new thought to many of

our readers that this beautiful name given to the Holy Spirit in our English Bibles,—the Comforter,—does not imply merely the solace and sympathy in trouble or infirmity, which is associated in our minds with the thought of a comforter, but the Greek word *parakletos* is used of one who undertakes the cause of another, an advocate or helper.

Very precious thought this if we look at the words of the Lord Jesus in John xiv., where He first mentions the various offices which the Holy Spirit would fill when sent down by Him as the ascended Lord and Christ. To glance, ever so briefly, at this would take us beyond our present purpose, and may form an article to follow this in another number, if the Lord will. But the point here is its relation to increase. He is the main and we might say the only true power for increase in the assemblies. It is the Spirit's work from first to last. Converting the sinner from the error of his way and turning him to God. Sealing the one in whom faith is found, and being the power of his life in worship, testimony, and service. The increase is thus not a matter of number only, thankful as we are to see that, but "increasing with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 19), is also a sure mark of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in the assembly of God.

T.R.

The Name of Jesus

As found in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Notes of an Address.

THERE is surely a peculiar sweetness in the name JESUS. It is not His official title, but His own personal name; and that personal name of our Lord has a peculiar sweetness and attraction for our hearts. What a name it was, and still is, to us!

The epistle to the Hebrews dwells much upon that

name, speaking of, and calling our Lord "Jesus" more frequently perhaps than any other. One sees the fitness of it when we think of the Hebrews, who were accustomed to a high priestly office and a Levitical service of a more or less official character.

We see the appropiateness of bringing before them, in a special way, the Lord Jesus in all the simple majesty (Heb. ii. 6-9) of His personal name. I would direct our hearts to dwell for a little while on what He is as spoken of here, as the glorified Man, the One in whom all that God purposed and testified concerning man should be made good.

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet," but we do not yet *see* this. Meantime, we see the blessed pledge of it, and are privileged to look up into the opened heavens, and that which meets our gaze is, *Jesus!* We see Him crowned with glory and honour; and our hearts respond and say, He is worthy of that place which He occupies; He is worthy of that glory which is His; He is worthy of that crown—the One who, by the grace of God, tasted death for every thing—for the whole of what was away from God—He the One who tasted death for it all.

In chapter iii. we are called to "consider Him." What an employment for our hearts! What an employment for our whole being, not only our hearts but our minds also! We sometimes forget that. We agree that the heart needs to be occupied with the Lord Jesus, but we think our *minds* need various other things as a sort of relaxation. But the Lord Jesus is sufficient for the mind as well as the heart.

"Consider Him," the One who was here from God to man, the sent One, the Apostle from God to man! Oh, what an embassage of peace and love was this Apostle! And He was the High Priest, from man to God. Thus the One who was here as the

Apostle from God to man, is now the High Priest from man to God. Downward and upward, consider Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession—*Jesus*. We are partakers of a heavenly calling; and we are heavenly because Christ is heavenly.

Chapter iv. 14. The apostle had spoken of us as "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling," and now he exhorts us and says, "Let us hold fast the confession," based on the blessed truth that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, *Jesus,* the Son of God. As the high priest of old entered and went through the various parts of the tabernacle; and, on the day of atonement, into the holiest of all; we have One who has passed through the heavens into the Holies; and He is there to succour us; concerned with our difficulties and infirmities, with our sorrows and our trials; the sympathising High Priest, who sympathises and succours as only He can.

Well may we sing of "the Saviour's present grace"! We may dwell upon His past grace—the grace that brought Him down, the grace that shone in His lovely life, the grace that shone out at the cross—and still that grace shines out, it is "the Saviour's present grace."

How fully, how perfectly, God has provided for us; not only in the past, but in the present and in the future of joy and blessedness awaiting us when we shall be "for ever with the Lord"! "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God"; and that we need mercy and grace, we are invited to come boldly and obtain mercy; and find grace to help in time of need. Mercy for the journey, for we are weak: Grace for the warfare for we need help.

Chapter vi. 17-20. How gracious of God, not only to give His word, but to confirm it by an oath. And

in the Forerunner who has entered for us, we have a personal assurance, a personal guarantee of the glory promised us—the glory that is before. He has entered *heaven,* and it gives a heavenly character to our hope, for He Himself is there.

What a strong consolation we have! It is indeed an anchor of the soul entering into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner has for us entered, "*Jesus,* made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Our attention, our thoughts, our minds, our hearts are set on Him in heaven, where He is.

Chapter vii. 20-22. "By so much was Jesus made a surety"—one that became responsible. How different to the first man, who assumed responsibility, and as soon as he did so, broke it. Where was its value? But here the One who has secured it is *Jesus;* and "a better covenant" rests on His blood.

Chapter x. 19. Made free of the sanctuary; no more conscience of sins; access to God Himself always and at all times. That which would keep us out, our sins, are gone. The veil being rent we can enter in. We are invited to draw near in full assurance of faith. We have a great Priest, who represents us in the Holy Place, as well as a Minister of the sanctuary; and by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, we have access into the presence of God himself.

Chapter xii. 2. The only way I can run is by looking unto *Jesus.* There is the one to encourage, to cheer, to comfort. However difficult the path may be, He has trodden it. If I look at the road, I shall see the stones in it; if I look at myself, I shall see my weakness to tread it; but looking unto Jesus—*there* is the Leader and Completer of faith.

We read in chapter xi. of men and women of wondrous faith and we marvel as we read it; but they

are eclipsed by Jesus, as is everything in the epistle. Angels, Moses, Aaron, the tabernacle and all the worthies of faith are eclipsed by the One who is the Leader and Completer of faith, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross." Whilst we are looking unto Jesus, we can run the race, and run it with endurance too.

Chapter xii. 24. What and whom the saints have come to in verses 22-24, and the great signification of all, is blessed and of course important; but we cannot go into this now, except that I would call attention to the words, "We have come to *Jesus,*" here presented as the Mediator of a new covenant (entirely new). We have seen Him in chapter vii. as the "surety" of a "better" covenant, and now as the "Mediator" of a "new" covenant. And what a contrast there is between that grace and blessing which the blood of sprinkling speaks, and the voice of Abel's blood crying to God from the ground!

Chapter xiii. 10-13. Thank God for those two little words "unto Him." If it were only written, "Go forth without the camp," who dare do it? But it is "unto Him (Jesus) without the camp"; and if He is without the camp, what blessed company!

The man in John ix. who was cast out—and it meant everything to a Jew—found that Jesus was cast out too; and the Lord Jesus found him, and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" And Jesus said, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." From blindness and being a poor beggar, he became a worshipper of the Son of God.

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him (Jesus) without the camp, bearing His reproach." "By Him (Jesus) let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." This is a glorious climax, isn't it? Con-

tinually, and by Him; the fruit of our lips; giving thanks to (or confessing) His name.

So we have had Him in this epistle as the One crowned with glory and honour, Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest, the great High Priest passed through the heavens, the Forerunner who has gone before us, the surety upon whom everything rests, the One by whose blood we can enter into the holiest, the Leader and Completer of faith, to whom we can look, the Mediator of a new covenant, the One outside the camp to whom we can go, whose Name we have to utter and to confess! "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing His Name."

A. J. L.

Christ's Mission to the World.

"Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required, Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 6-8).

IF we may judge by much of the modern so-called Christian propaganda and effort, we may conclude that in many pious minds there is to be found the impression that Christ's mission to the world was to reform it.

While not for a moment thinking lightly of the intentions of those who carry on these laudable efforts, we believe that Scripture teaches us something quite different. Christianity, like its divine Founder is, to use a symbol, an exotic plant in the world. As to Him, let us quote Isaiah liii. 2, "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

The language of the prophet teaches us plainly what is set forth in the symbol we have just referred to, an exotic; and, as Christ Himself has said, "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. x. 25). From His first coming into the world, even as a child, men sought His life; and, led on by Satan its prince, the world—and when we say the world we mean the religious world—pursued its object steadily on to the cross.

The presence of Christ in the world did not bring about reformation, and His rejection led to its judgment (John xii. 31). And yet He had a mission; the psalm we have quoted gives its character and its object. What was that mission? It was not reformation, but salvation. It is a notable fact that when Christ began His ministry, in the fulfilment of His mission to His own people the Jews—for it was to them He was sent—it was solemnly demonstrated in the synagogue at Nazareth that, because of the truth which accompanied His testimony of grace (John i. 17), there was no heart to receive it, but a positive determination to destroy Him (Luke iv. 28, 29).

Men do not like the truth, which always brings to light man's true state before God, and which always addresses itself to the conscience. But they had no power against Him till His hour was come, and so "passing through the midst of them He went His way."

Thus Christ's rejection at the start determined His own path henceforth; it was not one of reforming the world, but of overcoming it (comp. John xvi. 33; 1 John v. 4). In other words Christ and Christianity in their true mission are not *of* this world; and yet they have a mission *in* it. It is written of Him, "He went about doing good," etc. How could it be otherwise

in the midst of the ravages which sin had brought upon suffering humanity? But the Lord was rigidly separated from the politics and associations of the world.

Even at the feast of tabernacles—a notable religious feast among the Jews—Jesus "went up, not openly, but as it were in secret." And here He makes known His own position by a sharp contrast. He said to His brethren after the flesh, "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John vii. 7).

The very presence of the Son of God in the world He created, only brought out in clearer outline its enmity. Does this look like reformation? Yet, as we have said, He had a mission, and that mission was to do the will of God.

In passing, we may say that in this He associates others with Himself; "And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 49, 50).

Thus the Lord's mission was to do the will of God. The words, "Lo, I come," set forth the trend of His blessed purpose. The sacrifices of old found their typical fulfilment in His Person and work. The infidelity which has attacked both these, through the working of Satan, is not merely a modern thing; the germ of it was apparent in the Apostle's day; but, as the apostasy develops, its emissaries become more bold than ever.

Christ's coming was not to raise the dignity of the first man; but to bridge over his ruin through the work done on the cross. And thus it is written of Him, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in

fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-8).

How His divine glory and perfect humanity shine through all this! It is as the One who of old displayed His glory at the giving of the manna (see Exod. xvi. 7, 10). This then was His mission to the world, to accomplish the will of God by dying on the cross, it was the great finishing touch to the mission He had undertaken in coming into the world.

He drew, indeed, disciples after Him, who were taught by faith to know His worth; but the language of the prophet came true respecting the world's recognition of His goodness and compassion towards suffering humanity in His daily service of love in their midst, "Then said I, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" (Isa xlix. 4).

It is instructive to note at this point in the prophet's testimony concerning Him, that "though Israel be not gathered," this, Jehovah's chosen servant, gets His answer; "I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth (ver. 6). In this present era of grace towards the world, thus depicted, the gathering together in one of the children of God that were scattered abroad, is being fulfilled.

And the Lord has put His own stamp upon those whom He thus saves and gathers, as He says. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Christians belong to God's heavenly calling (Heb. iii. 1), and the world with all its boasted progress is under the shadow of an apostasy, a departure from God that has never had its equal in history, however dark the foreshadowings of it may have been in the past.

H. L.

Digged Ears.

" Mine ears hast thou digged " (Psalm xl. 6 (marg.).

THAT this beautiful Psalm has special reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, Heb. x, 5, makes clear.

It sets forth some of the "all things" referred to by Him in Luke xxiv. 44, when He said " . . . . all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of *Moses,* and in the *Prophets,* and in the *Psalms,* concerning Me."

In Heb. x, 5, the Apostle quotes from the Septuagint (LXX.), which was a Greek version of the Old Testament, made about two hundred years prior to the advent of Christ. The "ears" were not yet formed or "digged," for the Creator (the Speaker in this instance) had not yet assumed servant-form, the place of obedience. Hence, this Psalm has reference to His birth, when He (who in Genesis i., commanded and it was done) would take the place of a servant.

It has been said that "the root-thought in this word 'digged' is that He came to do the will of Jehovah. *All* His will could be done only by Him as manifested in the flesh; and, as we say in figure, we 'have such an one's ear'; meaning we have the services of his person; so we are to treat the 'digged' ears, as practically representing the Person of the Servant of Jehovah's will. So that it is not an unnatural rendering of 'ears hast thou digged for me' to render it by 'a body hast thou prepared me,' as we have it in Hebrews x.5. The Holy Spirit, by adopting the translation of the Septuagint, has, indeed, sanctioned this as the true meaning."

The body "prepared" for Him, was that in and by which the glory of God was to be maintained and vindicated; and whereby, also, upon this earth (a tiny speck in the universe) the divine principles of holiness and

righteousness, and grace reigning through righteousness, were to be worked out.

His ears were "digged" in incarnation when "The Word became flesh," and, "that holy thing" born of a woman (though eternally in the Father's bosom, and never left it) was called (in *time*) "the Son of God" (Luke i. 35).

He "knew no sin," and "did no sin;" and, His life no man could take from Him, for He had "power to lay it down, and power to take it again." "Destroy this temple," said He, speaking of His body, "and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). The "ear" obtained in incarnation, was ever "opened" (Isaiah l.) to the voice of Jehovah.

Whether we think of Him as the babe in the manger, or asleep on the stormy sea; as weeping by the graveside, or in the agony of Gethsemane; as dying on a cross of wood, or risen and speaking peace to His disciples; as ascending heavenwards with hands uplifted in blessing, or appearing as the glorified One to Stephen, Saul of Tarsus, or John in Patmos; it is always in that body "prepared" for Him.

And, beloved, we are told, that it will be "the Lord HIMSELF" who will descend from heaven to fetch His people home (1 Thess. iv.); and "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him AS HE IS" (1 John iii.).

Oh, what joy it will be then

"To find each hope of glory gained,
  Fulfilled each precious word;
And fully all to have attained
  The image of our Lord."

N. L. N.

Abraham, the Man of Faith.

(Hebrews xi. 8-19).

ABRAHAM stands out before us in scripture as a particularly instructive example of the man of faith. Every day of the christian's life there is a call for the exercise of faith. We begin the christian path as believers, and it is by faith alone we can walk along that path to the glory of God.

First of all, when the call came to Abraham to "Go out" from his country, kindred and father's house, he obeyed, and went out not knowing whither he went. After the flood a new and terrible evil appeared in the world, that was idolatry, which we first read of in the family of Abraham himself, "Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods" (Joshua xxiv. 2). God then called out one man and his family as a witness for Himself from amidst the surrounding evil of the world.

Abraham had two things to go upon when he started on this new and untried path—God and His word. If we are called to take a new and hitherto untrodden path, we are quite safe if we have these two things, because faith lays hold upon God and acts in dependence on Him: but if we go out merely to please ourselves or for some selfish reason, we cannot count upon God being with us, and sooner or later, we shall come to grief.

Very likely people may have said then, as they in principle say to-day, "What a foolish man you are, Abraham, to leave your home and country and go out, you do not know where!" And they would have been right if he had not had the distinct call of God to go; but that call made all the difference between wisdom and folly. So it was with Peter on the lake of Galilee. He would have been very foolish to leave the ship and attempt to walk on the water if he had not the word of the Lord, "Come"; but when he had that, all was right, even if he set his foot on such an unstable element as water; and that, too, amidst a storm.

But the path of faith is not always the smooth and pleasant path which nature would like to pursue; it has its trials and testings, and we find it to be so in our everyday life, do we not?

"By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles," etc. This is very important—he "sojourned"; it needed faith to *go on* as well as to *start*. And this is just where many have failed: they "came out" but they did not "stay out" on that path. But, indeed, on the christian course we cannot stand still; we must go forward or else we shall surely slip backward.

By faith he dwelt in tabernacles or tents; he was the man of the tent and the altar, he was a pilgrim and a stranger and a worshipper. What a true picture of the christian position! In the world, but not of it; passing onward to the "better country," having God as our portion—or, to put it in New Testament language, having Christ as our Saviour, our life, and our object. Oh, to pass through the world with the heavenly city in prospect, the place prepared of God, of which He is the builder and maker!

It is remarkable how, in this chapter, the Spirit of God passes over Sarah's failure and want of faith, to notice that which just suits the subject in hand, namely, her confidence in the promises of God. It is out of what *seems* to us to be improbabilities that God works out His plans and purposes, all of which are known to Him from the beginning. How exactly the position is summed up in Romans iv. 20, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able to perform," etc.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises." We should have thought these worthies would certainly have realised, as a present possession during their lifetime, that which God had promised.

But it was not so. And this gave occasion for faith to achieve still greater victories, for they saw the things promised afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It was no mere sentiment, but a practical reality to them.

And surely one feels how important this is for us, because we need to persevere and go on in spite of difficulties and discouragements. The christian's path is an uphill path, but it is a blessed one in view of the rest that remains for the people of God, and God's sustaining grace on the way there. These "might have had opportunity to have returned," but they made their own, by faith, of the better and heavenly country which God had in store for them; and, having put their hand to the plough, they did not look back.

As we consider the much greater and heavenly portion that God has given to believers *now,* in association with Christ, may we not well feel how short we come compared with those who had not these privileges? *We* have a living Christ in heaven and the Holy Spirit indwelling, in the church and in the believer; should we not therefore live in the power and enjoyment of these truths far more than we do?

Then "after these things" and all the experiences Abraham had gone through, there was still one great trial of faith, in the offering up of Isaac. Just consider the way it is put in Genesis xxii. ! "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of." Could anything be more touching? It seemed to be a complete frustration and setting aside of what God had promised and purposed for him and for his seed for ever. Isaac, the only son, the beloved, was to be offered up!

But Abraham's faith rose to the occasion. He knew God sufficiently well to be assured that He would not ask anything which would deny His own glory; and

even if Isaac was offered up, God was able to raise him up again from the dead. So it was that he went off at once, without any demur; and, after that mysterious three days' journey towards the mount, he said to his young men, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, *and come again.*"

But just at the last moment the execution of the sentence was stayed, though, so far as the figure went, Isaac was offered up and received again in resurrection.

There are two things which must ever go together—faith and obedience. If what we do is in obedience to God's will and word, we can always count on Him to carry us through; because there is then a true ground for faith to go upon.

It is well to take heed to the word of the apostle Peter, "Add to your faith courage"; it is that moral power which we all need to resist the enemy and stand for Christ in the evil day. If we judge of things by mere *appearances* we may often be misled: but faith sees Him who is invisible and is guided, not by circumstances, but by God and His word, and He is above all circumstances. **F.G.B.**

"And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential Deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and with His almighty voice hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God, and very man; and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus day by day. **C.H.M.**

Boasted Progress.

IN this day of boasted progress the pride of the human intellect rises up more and more against the revelation God has given of Himself in His word, and indeed against the God who gave it. We meet with this frequently and in every walk of life. It is therefore well to be firmly grounded in the revealed truth contained in that word of God; our only safeguard in these perilous times.

We have no contention with true science in its own sphere or domain, it is very useful and important; but the "false-named science" against which scripture warns us, always subjects God and His revelation to the mind of man, thus making man the judge in all these matters. Man is not now as he was created, he is fallen and away from God. He cannot have right thoughts about God, about the universe, about the state of the soul after death, etc., until he returns in repentance to God and learns from the revelation He has given in the scripture.

How puny, after all, is all human effort in view of this vast and wonderful universe! Truly, it might be said, "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"; "To be laid in the balances they are altogether lighter than vanity"; man's life is short and uncertain, like a vapour that appears for a little time then vanishes away.

But man's pride is yet to rise to still greater heights in a coming day. According to Rev. xiii. the Antichrist will do still more and greater wonders and signs. Then it will be that (as someone has said) "All the pride now rolling around, and the intellect setting itself up, wasting itself for want of an object, will here find its focus. All the pride of man will be a mere puppet show, for Satan to stand behind and pull the strings."

Quite Ready.

A NEAR relative of the writer had occasion, very recently, to visit a poor woman who was dying of consumption in what is called the "doomed ward" of a London infirmary. On rising to go she was asked by several of the patients to do them the favour of posting some of their correspondence. Among these was a young woman of some twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, who was also nearing her end through the same sad disease—consumption.

Glad to render this little service, the visitor asked this young woman if she were ready for the great change; to which she cheerfully replied, "Oh, yes, quite ready. I am not at all afraid to die. If I knew I had only another moment to live, I would open my arms, and say, "I am *quite ready* to go, Lord Jesus,—*quite ready.*"

Ready, quite ready! So young, and yet quite prepared to leave this world with all its joys and sorrows, to pass away into the presence of Him, who, when on earth, said, in accents so kind and tender, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will *in no wise* cast out."

And, He is the same to-day—"The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Everything grows weary and old—the earth, the moon, the heavens, all "wax old" (Heb. i. 11); everything is breaking up—"they shall perish," and "shall be changed" (Heb. i. 11-12). Yes—everything is passing away. But, He remains—*"Thou remainest"* (Heb. i. 11); and, *His Word* remains (Matt. xxiv. 35); and, they shall remain who are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* (1 Pet. i. 23).

Such can truly say, "I am quite ready to go, Lord

Jesus—*quite ready.*" The apostle Paul meant the same thing when he wrote that he was "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"; for he well knew that, "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6-8).

But, *where* is the Lord? Hebrews iv. and x. answer this question, and tell us that He is "passed into the heavens," for He, "after having offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God"; and further—"from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."

My reader, if "your sins are forgiven you" (1 John ii. 12); if for you "there is therefore now no condemnation" (Romans viii. 1); if you are justified (Rom. iii. 24; iv. 5); if you are "reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20)—then you are no longer an "enemy" (Rom. v. 10); but, like the apostle Paul, you are "ready" (2 Timothy iv. 6), *"quite ready"* to enter "whither the Forerunner (this implies other runners) is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. vi. 20).

Only a few days ago we were told by a young lady of the illness and "departure" of her brother-in-law. He, too, was quite a young man of twenty-five, and had only been laid up for a month with the same disease —consumption. For several nights he was unable to lie down, and had to spend his time in his chair. He was thus when, one day, he called his young wife to him, and with a smile said to her, "My dear, *I can see Jesus!*" With these words, his spirit (like Stephen's, as recorded in Acts vii.), passed away to receive his "far better portion," by being *"present with the Lord."*

N.L.N.

"Some Better Thing."

"God, having provided some better thing for us," Christians.

THE church is a body, called out during the time the Lord Jesus is rejected upon earth; we belong to a rejected Christ, our lot is cast in with God's Son, whom the world has cast out. This characterises the "better things" referred to by the apostle when, speaking of the Old Testament saints, he says: "God having provided some better thing for us" (Heb. xi. 40).

The special company to which Christians belong is the better thing. There will be the display of the church in eternity: "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7). Whatever place Christ has in heaven or on earth the church has and will have with Him; if He is rejected, as now, she has the place of rejection too; when He shall reign, she shall reign also. A wonderful thing is the better thing as to our standing and state in the glory, but all we can say to it is, that it is of God's sovereign grace!

Now, before the church could exist as the body of Christ, according to God's ways, Christ as Messiah must first have been rejected by His people the Jews, be received up into heaven, and the Holy Ghost be sent down to form the body. It would not have been possible, save only in the counsels of God (Eph. i. 4), for the body to have existed before Christ, as the Messiah was rejected.

In the epistles you have clear statements of what the body is and how it is organized. The body of Christ is declared to be one. "For we are members of His body." "The body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." "But that the members should have the same care one for another." "We are members one of another." "And the eye cannot say unto the hand,

I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. xii).

It is not sufficient for you to be interested in Christ alone, to the exclusion of the church. He is the Head of His body, and you cannot separate the Head from the body; it would be death. God is interested in the body of Christ, and the scriptures tell you what the body of Christ is and how it is governed.

In the present age there is the body upon this earth, forming for the Lord's glory, to be His companion in the glory; and this one body is the church of God; that even as the first Adam had his Eve, so the last Adam has His. "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. v. 32). "The bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. xxi. 9).

In the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle is instructing the Ephesians that they belong to a new family, a family they had never heard of before, a family whose design had been "hid in God." God had created all things; but there, he tells them, is something which for manifest reasons, had been "hid." The Spirit of God in this epistle, as also in other epistles, brings out the wonderful calling of the church, the wonders of God's resources; "the manifold wisdom of God." It is, therefore, now no longer a mystery, and christians should not be ignorant of the special place and blessing with which God had blessed them.

These, then, are the christian's guides; not the glory in the cloud, or in the tabernacle, or in the temple, as was presented to God's people in the past age; but the Saviour in the glory, and the written word, and the Holy Ghost down here. The real point of the christian's position is that he professes to see the truth of the church of God, that God is visiting the Jews and Gentiles, and gathering out a people to His name—that God is preparing a bride for His Son. The bride, the one body, characterizes the present age, nor is there any excuse for the christian not to own this truth.

J.N.D.

The Apostasy.

WE believe it is a duty to raise a warning note, even in our small way, against the evils which are flooding into the professing church, and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." The dangers on every hand are very real, especially to young believers growing up amongst us to-day.

If we were looking for a further evidence of the rapid advance of the apostasy, and we might even say of the judicial darkness which is fast falling upon Christendom, we should find it in Dr. Barnes' sermon to the boys of Westminster Abbey school on the 25th September last. He took for his text Eph. v. 8, "Walk as children of light"; and a more complete travesty of such a passage it would be hard to find. From beginning to end it is the most utter darkness.

Had the sermon been in the form of a lecture, delivered by an infidel lecturer, we should not be in the least surprised; but it comes from a prelate of the Established Church and is addressed to youths of the rising generation. It is more calculated to poison their minds than anything else; and, if they follow such a lead, they will certainly become nothing but avowed infidels.

For a long time Dr. B. has been a leading advocate of evolution, that invention of Satan, intended to brutalize the race and to subvert the truth of the scriptures. The great point Dr. Barnes professes to have before him is, *seeking after truth;* but he discards the Bible, and denies its statements when they do not agree with his own ideas.

What truth can he have as to God, as to creation, as to Christianity, or aught else, except from the revelation God has given of Himself in His word? As Zophar said long ago, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job xi. 7). The answer is, No man can do

so. Man cannot rise above himself, he cannot know anything about God save as God has been pleased to reveal Himself—to a certain extent in creation, and still more fully in His word.

But Dr. B. presumes to judge what God should be, and to dictate what He should do. No wonder he should object to "certain statements of St. Paul," for St. Paul shows the utter ruin of man, and we may well here apply to these speculations what he says by inspiration from God, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that thou repliest against God?" (Rom. ix. 20). St. Paul here puts man in his true place and God in His.

Evolution is built upon the idea that man is going up, rising gradually from an inferior state to a superior. There is progress in mere knowledge, of course, and science has given us many useful inventions—steam, wireless telegraphy, etc.—but these have made no change in what man really *is*.

And, after all, these inventions are only the discovery of *how to utilize* powers and qualities which exist in nature and have existed there for hundreds of years. Who put them there? The same God that created the universe. Man has, by the most laborious investigation, found out how to *make use of* them, that is all.

Morally, man has not advanced at all; this was plainly shown during the war when it was seen that men who belonged to a professedly christian religion, committed acts which would disgrace savages in central Africa. And they would do it again.

Again, evolution is an absolute denial of the truth of the early chapters of Genesis; and with this must fall the whole truth of the Bible, of the Person of Christ, and of Christianity itself. These are interwoven together and cannot be separated.

How appropriate to all such speculations of the human mind are the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, who boasted of their wisdom, "Where is

the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . . The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God . . . . The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

It would be hard to find a more daring and blatant attack upon the Christianity which Dr. B. professes, and of which he takes the place of being a leading exponent (and a paid one, too), than this address to the schoolboys at Westminster Abbey. Will the Church of England still utilize his services and allow him to promulgate his antichristian theories within her borders? What will be the end of it all?

The Manna and the Passover.

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed. . . . For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (John vi. 27-33.)

THE words "meat" (or food) and "bread" as used by the Lord in the chapter quoted above are correlative terms, and in their spiritual significance apply to Him, the blessed antitype of the manna and the Passover. But there are distinguishing features which find their symbolical foreshadowing in the sacrifices of old. Let us draw attention to one or two of these differences.

In Leviticus ii., we have the instructions concerning the meat (or meal) offering—it was a bloodless offering. Chapter iii. gives us the peace offering, in which the blood of the victim was shed and the fat was burnt upon the altar. And it is significant that this latter is spoken of as "the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour; all the fat is the Lord's" (ver. 16).

If the reader will turn to what is termed "the law of the peace offering" in chapter vii., he will see that

the Lord had His portion in the offering of the fat burnt upon the altar; the priest had his in the wave breast and the heave shoulder, and the offerer had his in partaking of his share of the victim. In other words, it was a food offering for all—in this respect, a communion offering.

We simply refer to this in order to get help in our short study of the subject before us. Christ's perfect humanity was typified in the fine flour mingled with oil, and oil poured upon it, and in the type, this confirms what He said of Himself as the Son of man come down from heaven, "Him hath God the Father sealed." It is thus He speaks again of Himself in verse 33, "for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

The gospel of John starts with the Lord's rejection and all through that gospel man is looked at as in darkness and under the power of death. In chapter v. the Lord presents Himself as Son of the Father, quickening dead souls into life, this being His own prerogative (ver. 21). It is the same blessed Person who, in chapter vi., comes down from heaven as the bread of God, and gives life unto the world: we notice that that word "the world" takes us out of Judaism and shows us its *universal application,* the world-wide aspect of His mission. All this is in keeping with a word so often used by John—"whosoever."

But while the aspect in which these blessings are presented is *universal,* they are *individual* in their appropriation. When the Jews said to Him, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." *Faith* is always individual.

Thus, individual appropriation is what the Lord speaks of in connection with the life He gives in answer

to faith, but this is not opposed to, but rather confirms its universal application as a sovereign act of the Giver.

There is no hint in scripture, either in the Old or New Testament, of what men call the "larger hope," or universal salvation; otherwise what would be the use of the Spirit's warning, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3). It is sad that false teachers everywhere are beguiling unsuspecting souls to their doom.

In the chapter we are considering, the Lord makes clear the distinction between faith and unbelief, and lays emphasis especially on the latter (ver. 36 also chapter x. 26).

It is instructive to refer, at this point, to the giving of the manna in Exodus xvi. The people "looked towards the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (ver. 10). It was the occasion for the manifestation of glory, and this in relation to wilderness life (compare John i. 14).

God was teaching the hungry, murmuring multitude the way of life—to them it was but natural life. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead" (ver. 49). Again, "And when the children of Israel saw it they said one to another, it is manna; for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

We would here take note of the meaning of the word "manna." It implies a question, "What is it?" Christ is both the food for faith, and the enigma for unbelief. In studying His works and teaching in the gospels these two things are very apparent.

We cannot dwell at all exhaustively on this subject, but the more we look into it the more our hearts are enraptured in listening to its unfolding from the lips of our blessed Lord.

The reader will notice that there is a definite link

between the manna and the passover in the Lord's teaching in this chapter; the former, in its typical teaching concerning Him, is antecedent to the latter. It must be so for He says, "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world," and of this the manna was the type.

The Lord's incarnation was, as we know, necessary for His work upon the cross. His coming down from heaven and His being lifted upon the cross are both brought out in John iii. 13-14. And how well we know that the sacrifice of Himself, offered at Calvary, is the only way of life for the sinner! To get the blessing we must *believe* on Him who died, and in this connection we get the word "whosoever" (John iii. 15-16).

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you": it is through an incarnate Christ, whose life has been given up in death, that we can alone get life. We must feed upon Him or appropriate Him by faith, or else we have no life in us. All this was said in answer to the unbelief of the Jews who asked, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

The Lord gave His life that we might live, but this blessing is conditional on faith—we must *believe* to have it. This is what He means by "eating" and "drinking." In the Old Testament the eating of blood was forbidden; God laid claim to it, for life belonged to Him; but in its *spiritual* significance, it is to be appropriated by faith.

Thus, then, as now, what is a stumbling to unbelief, is clear to faith, as verses 62 and 63 of our chapter show. Also it is well to remember that what we have before us in this chapter is not the memorial of His death at the Lord's table, but the appropriation of it by faith so that we may have life eternal. It is important to distinguish the two.

H.L.

The Breaking of Bread.

HOW precious the privilege of remembering our Lord Jesus in His dying love for us, shown at Calvary! There is nothing on earth to be compared with it; as He meets us on the first day of the week. The Lord gathered His own around Him, and took bread and brake it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you."

It was a figure of His own precious body which was soon to be lifted up on the cross: He in no wise altered the bread, as some falsely teach, but gave it to them as He brake it. Thus the bread for which we give thanks is a sweet emblem of His body given, and we partake of it in remembrance of Him, discerning the Lord's body in which He bore our sins.

As we have said, neither the bread which we break nor the cup of which we drink is in any wise changed by prayer or thanksgiving. Also, that one loaf shows forth the one body, to which all true believers belong. The partaking of it is a witness of our love to Him and a remembrance of His love to us. "If ye love Me keep My commandments."

At the beginning of the church's history the christians were gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread in remembrance of their Lord in His death and to think of Him who had accomplished redemption by the sacrifice of Himself. So important was it that the apostle Paul speaks of it as that which he had received of the Lord, and which he delivered to the church (1 Cor. xi. 23).

Then again, we are reminded of the holiness that becomes partaking of this feast, lest any should partake of it "unworthily" not discerning the Lord's body. To do so may be to bring upon ourselves the chastening of the Lord—it may be sickness or even falling asleep.

The wine is the express figure of His blood, as the Lord Himself says, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." He in no wise turned the wine into His own blood (which was not yet shed), but it was *spiritually* to be discerned in the drinking of it; it is also a testimony to the fact that *death* has come in; even the "Lord's death"—and so we show forth His death till He come.

But some, having left the simplicity of the ordinance as it was given, have used it as a sacrifice which helps them on the way to heaven—the last rites of the church, given to sick persons, etc., also the repeated sacrifice of the Mass, a perversion of the truth and absolutely contrary to scripture.

But it is a most blessed thing to the true christian—a touching remembrance of Himself, given us by the Lord, who is present with two or three gathered to His name. We are there with the one object of remembering the One who died for us and who loves us with an eternal love. He who thus loves us has taught us from His word that nothing can separate from that love.

Let us, then, respond to the drawings of His love; let us be careful to be at His table in good time, our hearts filled with the love of God, and with earnest desire to keep the feast, in response to His own word, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

A.B. (*New Zealand.*)

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

(2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10.)

THIS deeply important subject comes before us in Cor. v., in connection with the fact that here, in this world, everything is passing away. We dwell in a tent or tabernacle which is to be taken down one day. But we have the comforting assurance that "we *know*" that if the tabernacle in which we dwell is

dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"We know," it is the word for inward, conscious knowledge; there is no doubt, no misgiving nor uncertainty. And it is a house, not a tabernacle, it is eternal, not temporal; it is in the heavens, not on earth.

If this tabernacle be dissolved, we shall be "clothed upon." This is the true christian hope—to receive the glorified body without passing through death; and this will be the case with all who are alive when the Lord comes. *Then,* when He comes, mortality will be swallowed up of life, death swallowed up in victory, and we shall be for ever with the Lord.

And in this scripture it is impressed upon us that we are to be zealous to be agreeable or acceptable to Him. The Revised Version gives the meaning of the word very well, "to be well pleasing to Him." We do not labour to be *accepted,* we *are* "accepted in the Beloved," but we are responsible to use diligence to be *well pleasing* to Him.

This exhortation is in view of what follows, "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ"; a solemn fact, yet a wholesome and salutary one to remember. The object of the Spirit of God in bringing this truth before us is, so that it may have a present effect upon believers *now,* that we might live and walk in the light of that day *now,* and be diligent to be well pleasing to Him *now.*

But there is no fear connected with this judgment seat, at which every true christian shall appear. The sin question has been entirely settled for him, and the Saviour is Himself the Judge. When we appear there we shall be clothed with glorified bodies like His. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and the epistle to the Hebrews tell us that, in virtue of the one sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, there can be no imputation of

sin to the believer, who has a purged conscience and a perfect title to glory.

Yet it is a solemn fact that, "We must all be manifested"; there everything will come out in its true light. If, however, we have understood the meaning of *grace,* this fact will be welcomed by us.

And many things that we have misjudged now, will then be seen as they really are. No doubt our actings in the assemblies of God's people will be then reviewed, as well as our conduct in our everyday life in this world. How careful this should make us in our dealings with our fellow-christians as well as with the world.

"The things done in the body . . . . whether good or bad." This covers a good deal. There the "good"—all that has been for the glory of Christ, the result of His grace, yet reckoned to us—will receive its reward: and the "bad"—what has been of the flesh and of the natural man in us—will be burned up as worthless rubbish. It is well to remember, however, that this is not a judgment of persons, but of acts, "things done in the body."

But, oh what a tale will come out in that day—a story of the marvellous grace of our God who could bear with our manners as He did with those of Israel in the wilderness; and who could carry us right through the journey to the end. And, as someone has said, *then* God's ways with us, which we do not always understand now, will be clearly understood and interpreted aright.

In Romans xiv. 10, we read "For we shall all be placed before the judgment seat of God" (new trans.). This is also the judgment seat of Christ, for it is to Him that all judgment is committed. And again, "Each of us shall give an account of himself to God (verse 12).

This is in connection with judging our brother or putting a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in the

way of our brother. The whole chapter deals with our responsibility not to stumble a weak brother; but to follow the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another.

How often this mutual forbearance and consideration one for another has been overlooked, leading to the scattering of the sheep and the dishonour of the Lord. But let us take to heart the fact that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.

It is quite true that this spirit of forbearance must not lead to palliating or excusing what is fundamentally wrong in doctrine or what is evil in practice, this would not be true love or true forbearance but failure in our responsibility to judge evil, and even, it may be, to "purge out the old leaven" from the midst of the assembly. It is easy to fail on either side; but even in dealing with what is wrong, we need to act in the spirit of considering ourselves lest we also be overcome.

May the Lord lead His people to that sober self-judgment and godly consistency which is so much needed to-day; without it there can be no real testimony to our Lord Jesus amongst His people, either collectively or individually. It is also surely much called for in view of the fact that we shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.

F.G.B.

What the Grace of God Can Do.

ISABELLA M—— was a wife, a mother, and a widow at the early age of 20 years. The same dread disease (consumption) which had carried off her husband, had now fastened itself upon her; and, while she was in this condition, we were asked to visit her.

After some conversation about her illness, we found her anxious to be saved and to know that her sins were forgiven. God's Holy Spirit had evidently been exer-

cising her as to her need; she had already accepted the truth of the third chapter of Romans, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

And so we read together, "And when they came to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him," pointing out to her that death had no claim upon Christ, the sinless One. Then the question arose, Why did He die and for whom did He die? So in simple language we told her the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

She expressed a desire that some of the neighbours should be invited in when we paid our next visit, in order that they also might hear the good news. So that our being there resulted in our holding a little cottage meeting every Lord's Day evening for about four months. And then came the well-remembered evening when the dear one rested on the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

The change in the poor wasted countenance, now lit up with a joy that was not of this world, was wonderful. Then, desiring to give expression to her new-found joy, she sang,

"All my sins were laid on Jesus,
He has washed me in His blood,
He will keep me pure and holy
And will bring me home to God."

Turning to the others who were present, she sought to persuade them to rest in the work of the Lord Jesus also.

One evening, when leaving her, she asked the question, "Where do you go on Sunday mornings?" We explained about the wonderful privilege we had, together with a small company of the Lord's people, of being gathered to remember Him in His death on earth each Lord's Day, according to His own desire.

"Oh," she said, "if I could only have that privilege once before I go to be with Him!" So, on being

assured that she really desired this, we looked to the Lord that He would guide us as to it.

Next Lord's Day evening we went as usual, taking with us the few necessary things for having the breaking of bread in the sick room, and some hymn-books. Three others who had professed to accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, myself, my wife and the invalid thus remembered the Lord together. It was a very joyful time, as well as a solemn one, knowing that it would certainly be the last (as well as the first) time for the dear one to partake of the Lord's Supper, and that she might now pass away any day.

Next Lord's Day, on meeting her, I asked, "Did you enjoy remembering the Lord?" She replied, "Yes, but what a wonderful time it must have been for Himself!" We did not expect such an answer; but there can be no doubt that she had indeed truly responded to the Lord's desire and partaken of His supper that day.

On the Wednesday following this she passed away, "Absent from the body and present with the Lord," where there is no more need to remember Him for we are actually in His presence.

What a joy it is to be able to look forward to that time when, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away"! (Rev. xxi. 4). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

J.G.M.

God's Promises to Abram.

IN chapter xv. of Genesis it is said that "after these things" the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." The words, "after these things" refer to two events in particular. Abram had gone down into Egypt through want of faith. He was with Lot his nephew, and their wealth being increased a quarrel had taken place between the servants of Lot and those of Abram.

What do we see then? Abram had renounced his rights to what seemed best from a worldly point of view, because he had now retaken his character as a pilgrim and a stranger. Lot had his heart set upon things here below; he gravitated towards the world, and we know what was the end of that. Abram remained faithful to his calling.

We find then that Abram entered into conflict with the world on account of Lot who was involved in the disaster to Sodom and Gomorrah, then overcome and led captive. Abram, on hearing of it, went with three hundred and eighteen of his servants and delivered him; won the victory over the kings, and set him free.

The King of Sodom desired to give Abram riches, but could he receive anything from him? Could he allow himself to be enriched by the prince of this world? He does not accept even a shoe-latchet. He thus places himself in opposition to the powers of this world. On whom will he depend? The Lord said to him, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Abram had been faithful, and the Lord Himself had just told him what He was for him. What had he to fear having God for his shield?

Is God really sufficient for us? Is He sufficient for our hearts and our affections? Do we hanker again after the fleshpots of Egypt? Do we, when we have this word from God, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and

thy exceeding great reward," seek support from the world?

Abram then replies to God and says to Him, "What wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" God grants his request, far beyond what Abram hoped for. He believed God and this was reckoned to him for righteousness. The Lord's promises to Abram take in both the heaven and the earth: the earthly people are Abram's seed, and the heavenly people have Abram for their father, "the father of the faithful," all this is by Jesus Christ.

In chapter xvii. 1, it is a question of his walk; "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Abram had yielded to a suggestion of the enemy and had wished to hasten the moment of the fulfilment of the promises. He had a son of the bondwoman, a son after the flesh, but what is becoming in the man of God is *faith,* and not the activity of the flesh; what is of the flesh and of the will of man must be taken away and put an end to. "Cast out the bondwoman and her son"! It was hard for Abram to separate himself from his son Ishmael, but what is of the flesh cannot go along with what is of the Spirit. We have, then, seen, in the first place the call of God which drew Abram out of the world, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will shew thee."

Secondly, Abram having answered to this call, God shows him what He is for him, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Thirdly, Abram is called to walk before God who would lead and guide him, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

Abram is henceforth called the friend of God, and he lives in this communion and this nearness which is so sweet to the heart. And how precious it is also for us

to be able to enjoy this intimacy through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter xviii. God comes to visit Abram in his tent. What condescension! And how precious it is for us also—the reality of God dwelling with us by His Spirit (John xiv. 23). Abram had deep reverence for God, and there was no fear in his heart.

Further, God speaks to him concerning His purposes; he enjoyed God's blessings and drew near to Him. God's intimate thoughts are for those who love Him, who live in communion with Him and walk in His ways.

What intimacy there was in the words, "Shall I hide from Abram the thing which I do?" The Lord reveals His purposes and His judgments on Sodom and Gomorrah to Abram. What attitude does he take as to this revelation? That of an intercessor. He urgently implores the Lord to have pity on the guilty.

Moreover *we* can, as did Abram, show to the unconverted around us by our life, on what road we are travelling, so as to be a testimony to them here below. And we can intercede for them at the throne of grace that they may be led to the Lord for salvation.

But does the history of Abram finish there? No: we see further on, in chapter xxii., that God puts His seal on all that he desired Him to give. After all the trials that he had gone through, Abram had still to learn that God was *all* for him; and to be ready to give up, in obedience to God, what was most dear to him—his beloved son Isaac.

He did not doubt that God would fulfil His promises, and he learned to know the power of the God of resurrection, for it was thus, in a figure, he received back his son. May we, too, live by faith and trust in the promises of God, and in the God who gave them, and who will certainly fulfil all that He has spoken.

A.L.

The Coming of the Lord—When?

IT is a fact well worthy of our attention that the Lord Jesus Himself, when speaking of His coming again, never gave a hint as to the day and hour of that event or the exact time when it would take place. In His parting words to His disciples in John xiv., which come to us with such unchanging freshness now, He simply said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

"If I go . . . . I will come again," so far as *the words* are concerned, it might have been within the lifetime of the men to whom He was speaking.

We refer to this because of the number of attempts being made to fix dates and make calculations as to the time of His coming. But times and seasons, dates and premonitory signs and events, have nothing to do with the Lord's coming *for the church;* they have much to do with His appearing in glory to put down all opposition and establish His millennial reign on the earth. This is quite a different thing.

If we take the Lord's words in Matthew xxv. 6, the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," no date or time is indicated, save a very general one, that it was after "midnight." What is set before us is the coming of a *Person* rather than the exact time when that event takes place.

Again, in Luke xii., "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord . . . . that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." The one on whom the Lord pronounces a blessing here, is the one who is found *watching*. It is the attitude of the *heart* which is set upon Him, and is therefore watching, that He values.

Dates and calculations make no appeal to the watch-

ing soul; on the contrary, they are the most dry and withering things one could be occupied with, and quite at variance with the whole spirit and true hope of the christian in view of the rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air.

Just consider the Lord's word to the church at Philadelphia in Rev. iii. 11, "Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast . . . ." The responsibility is laid upon the hearer, in view of His speedy return, to hold fast. How could the early christians have derived any blessing from such an exhortation if they had been able to tell by calculation, even the approximate date of that event?

So also in the last chapter of the same book, "Behold, I come quickly" (ver. 7 and ver. 12). The only indication of the time given us is the word "quickly," and this covers what seems to us a long period. But the voice of the Spirit and the bride will surely respond to the words of Jesus when He presents Himself as the bright and morning star, and say, "Come."

The very last verse of the chapter closes with the words of the Lord Himself, "Surely, I come quickly"; these must awaken a suited response from His church, "even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is the *Person* that is before the heart.

It is quite true that there are many moral features in what is now taking place in the world which point to the close of the present dispensation; and we can well take note of these without presuming to forecast any date. As we have said, what should fix our attention most of all is *the One who is coming.*

The Lord has purposely reserved the knowledge of the time—the day and hour—from us because He wants His people to be always in the expectant attitude, always looking for Him.

Divine Miracles.

THE beginning and end of the whole circle of Christianity, as revealed in Scripture, is a miracle. The Church of God, beginning as it did, at Pentecost, owes its existence to miracle—God's great miracle.

1. *The birth of Christ* was a miracle. Years beforehand it was written of Him, "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel" (Isaiah vii. 14). The gospels, Matthew i. and Luke i. and ii., set forth the beautiful accomplishment of this prophecy—the blessed Son of God appearing in this scene in a body "prepared" for Him, as it is written, "A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. x. 5).

2. *The death of Christ* was a miracle. He Himself declared, "I lay down My life . . . . no man taketh it from Me, but, I lay it down of Myself" (John x. 17-18).

And, accordingly, we read in John xix. 30, that Jesus said "It is finished; and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost," thus giving up His life before the period of death as expected by the soldiers (John xix. 33). We read, "Pilate marvelled if He were already dead" (Mark xv. 44).

3. *The pathway of Christ* through this world was a miracle—the Son of God, born of a virgin, traversing, in a body prepared for Him, a scene of defilement and sin; and yet, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). He was the One, and the only One, of whom it could be written, "who did no sin" (1 Pet. ii. 22), "in Him is no sin" (1 John iii. 5), and "who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21).

4. *The resurrection of Christ* was certainly a miracle. Fancy self-styled advanced theologians, posing as shepherds of God's people, denying the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in face of Acts ii. 32, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are

witnesses"; and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9, R.V.).

5. *The ascension* and *exaltation of Christ* was a miracle. Who, but the deniers of the Christ of God, can gainsay this? And yet, what saith the Scriptures? "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him" (Phil. ii. 8-9). Glorious fulfilment this of Psalm cx. 1, "Sit Thou at my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

6. *The coming again of Christ* will be a miracle. He is coming again for His people. The dead in Christ will be "raised," and the living christians "changed," and all "caught up" to be "for ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv.; 1 Cor. xv).

The church's attitude is "to wait" for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 9-10).

"Caught up";—this again will be a miracle. The *changing of our bodies* of humiliation will be a miracle.

And, if any doubt the possibility of all this, we would ask, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 27).

7. *The coming of the Holy Ghost,* and His work, is a miracle. His action, as recorded in Acts ii. 4, was thus characterised :— "They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was at the beginning of Christianity. And, we read in Eph. i. 13, "After that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." All this is a miracle; and much else.

8. *The presence of the Lord Jesus* "in the midst" of His *gathered* ones, is a miracle,—a most gracious miracle. Not a mere promise, but a FACT. (Matt. xviii. 20).

9. *The whole fabric of Christianity* is a stupendous miracle of the grace of God. No wonder the Holy Scriptures refer to "the exceeding greatness of His power" (Eph. i. 19); and to "the exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. ii. 7).

10. *God's "so great Salvation is a miracle* from first to last; it is an "Eternal Salvation." We get it in *figure* in Exod. xiv. 13; "Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"; and we get it in *fact,* as we read in Romans iv. 5; for of whom, but of God, could it be said that He "justifieth the ungodly"? What human judge could do it? And yet, God is "a just God and a Saviour." Times may have changed; but God has not changed.

11. *Fellow Christian, art not thou a miracle?* Hast not thou "passed from death unto life"? Art not thou "born again"? Is not thy soul eternally saved? And, is not the glory, "the eternal weight of glory," before thee? "We shall be *LIKE HIM,* for we shall see Him as He is"! What a miracle! It will not take the fancied ages of scientists to effect *this* change. It will occur "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

N.L.N.

The Seal, Unction and Earnest of the Holy Spirit.

IT may safely be affirmed that no event since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ can be compared for importance with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The words of the Lord Jesus 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," would lead us to expect something of unusual importance; and the chief subject of these three wonderful chapters

of John's gospel xiv., xv. and xvi., may certainly be said to be the coming of the Holy Spirit to this world, and the effects consequent upon His presence.

Although not visible in person to our mortal (or natural) eyes, amongst other evidences of His presence, He would, when come, do three things in the world, and three things for believers. "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8-11); "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth" . . . . "He will show you things to come" . . . . "He shall glorify Me" (Christ).

Accordingly, when Pentecost was fully come, there were, not only the remarkable signs of His coming in a "Sound as of a rushing wind that filled the house" where the apostles were sitting, but "there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, which sat upon each one of them." Filled with the Holy Spirit many signs and wonders were done in the name of the Lord Jesus (not in the name of the Holy Spirit), which demonstrated most evidently the new power given to the apostles and other believers. But what may be called "signs" to the unbelieving world, both Jews and Gentiles, are not the subject of this paper, but rather those effects that resulted or brought about the conditions described in the end of Acts ii., verses 44-47, which, dear reader, pray read.

There is no spiritual tonic that can be compared, perhaps, to that which is produced upon the believing heart by the perusal of the early chapters of The Acts. Well has the book often been re-named, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit"; and again and again we read of one and another being "filled with the Spirit," and what the Spirit said and suffered them to do or not to do.

Long years, yea, ages of neglect, followed these bright days of spiritual power and blessing, and the wonder is that all this unbelief had not caused the with-

drawal altogether of the Divine presence and the consequent gifts. There has been, no doubt, during the last fifty years, a revival of faith in, and acknowledgment of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and much blessing to souls, saved and unsaved, has been the result. That this revival has brought along with it many regrettable excesses, prayers for Pentecostal showers and such like, as well as even more unscriptural desires, cannot be denied; but we must not allow ourselves, on that account, to be robbed of what is true and real, and characteristic of this present day, which is pre-eminently the Spirit's day.

Our remarks in this short paper must be confined to that aspect of those great and important truths bearing on the presence of the Spirit in the individual christian, and collectively in christians gathered for worship and testimony. Scripture clearly teaches that the Spirit is *in* us, with *us,* and *upon us;* that is to say, *in, with,* and *upon* all true believers, so that it may be said, in contrast to the former dispensation, and one would say it reverently, He is *now* a resident, while in those days He was a visitor.

The word of encouragement to the returned remnant by the prophet Haggai was, "My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not" (chap. ii. ver. 5). To believers in this day it is, "That He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). Who is there that, in the consideration of these facts, does not sigh for a return of such days as is described in Acts ii. 41-47?

But let us not be faithless, or allow the enemy to defraud us of our present possessions. What means such scriptures as 1 Cor. ii. 9-10, "But as it is written, 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; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God"?

Bearing in mind then that aspect of the Holy Spirit's work to-day, given in John xvi. 8-11, "And when He is come, He will reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness because I go to My Father and ye see Me no more; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged." Let us hold this in faith, whatever the outward evidences may appear to be, because it still remains true.

But now, as to the Spirit's work in the souls of believers—the "deepening of spiritual life" that we hear so often spoken of, and the decline of spiritual power so often lamented—where is the remedy for the one and the acquirement of the other to be found? Is it not in the heart being wholly subject to the leading of the Spirit?

In guarding against the dangers of seeking a revival of what is known as the "sign" gifts, we must be careful not to lose faith in the "subjective" gifts which are evidently to continue until the end of the church's history on the earth. Ephesians i. 13, is a warrant for the fact that every believer is sealed with the Spirit, and the fourth chapter, 11th to 13th verses, give us assurance for the continuance in the church of gifts for the edification of believers: "Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The first epistle of John teaches us clearly of the "Unction from the Holy One" which all the children of God receive, even the little ones; and that it abides, and teaches (chapter ii. 20-27). Ought we not, then, to expect a supply of all that is necessary for the spiritual growth of the children of God? It is an important and blessed fact that long years of neglect and practical unbelief have not driven away this divine Paraclete. He is still on the earth in the church, and

in the believer, to guide into all truth, tell of things to come, and glorify Christ.

The tendency of our day is to seek those gifts that glorify man rather than those that glorify Christ; but is it not a sign of decline that gatherings of Christians once marked by dependence on the Holy Spirit for both worship and ministry, have dropped into practical unbelief, and substitute human arrangement for Divine guidance? It is true that there may be trying cases of unedifying ministry, unsuitable hymns, etc., but better to have such mistakes, and occasional trials of patience, than to substitute human arrangements for the Spirit's leading. May the Lord graciously grant to His people a revival of faith in the Spirit's presence and power, and the consequent outpouring of showers of blessing upon a perishing world and a thirsty church.

T.R.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Letter to Dr. Barnes.

IT is not with any desire to write critical articles that we take up our pen to say a little on this subject. The matter is one of such gravity that it demands some notice by way of protest and to help souls.

The Archbishop says that, as regards the biological question, he has been familiar with Dr. Barnes' position for more than fifty years; and he refers to Dr. B.'s teaching as "admirable" and that which could be heard "with interest and advantage." He does not, however, plainly say that he holds the same as Dr. B. as to evolution, but he does not condemn it.

Then Dr. B., in his letter of October 26th, speaks of the Archbishop's "tacit acknowledgment of the truth of the biological doctrine of evolution" as having removed from christian ministers of our church any qualms in proclaiming it.

But, in touching upon what is said by these prelates, what we desire to point out is, that it is impossible to hold this evolution theory and yet remain a christian in the true sense of that word. To suppose that man has been evolved from protoplasm or the lower animals, is to deny the truth of the early chapters of Genesis, and consequently the whole Bible, which is interwoven with them—and these chapters are accredited by quotations from them by our Lord Himself.

Many scientists altogether deny that the evolution theories have any foundation in fact; but whether they do or not, for the christian, the word of God is decisive, and *it* speaks of mere animals as "natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed" (2 Peter ii. 12).

We might well apply to these speculations what is said of men of old, in explanation of how it was that they fell into idolatry, "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man," etc. (Rom. i. 21-23). In the case before us, the effort is to trace back man to apes, etc. What is this but the darkening power of Satan falling upon a guilty Christendom which is fast turning away from the truth?

With all due respect to the Archbishop we would say that what strikes us most is, the utter want of realizing the gravity of the position in this whitewashing of Dr. Barnes. And, what does this evolution theory lead to as regards our Lord Himself? He who, though subsisting ever in the form of God, deigned to take upon Himself, in divine love and grace, the form of a servant and become man?

Did He then, in taking up human nature, take up that which originally was made by God, "in our image, after our likeness . . . . in the image of God"? or was

it something which was developed from the brute creation? Even the thought of such an idea as this latter is, to the spiritual mind, rank blasphemy. We do not forget that *His* was *holy* humanity (Luke i. 35); whereas ours is *fallen* humanity; but this is not the point before us in what we have just said.

It has been remarked by someone that, in a war of antagonistic principles, he who temporizes, shows thereby that he has no principle at all, and will surely go down under that which he failed to combat faithfully. What can be more antagonistic than the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of evolution?

Christ Himself has laid down that "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Luke xi. 23). Christ is the test for everything. There can be no neutrality in a question of this kind. All attempts at reconciling the anti-christian theories of evolution with the truth of God as set forth in the Bible, are disloyalty to Christ. They will sooner or later bring down judgment on those who make them.

Two books recently issued on Evolution, viz., "Evolution and Revelation" by Prof. Fleming, D.Sc., etc., and "Science and Faith," by G. W. Bradley, B.Sc., can be had from our Publisher, Mr. C. A. Hammond, price 4d. and 1s. respectively. Without binding ourselves to every word that is in them, we can say that they are well worth reading.

The christian is one who, by divine teaching, knows the truth and authority and power of the divine word. He accepts it in the largeness and fulness in which it is given, thankful if learned inquirers, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, can give it to him as free from all human imperfections as possible, if they labour that no earthly particles of mud be in the water; but the water he knows to be water, and drinks it and lives.

J.N.D.

Faith and Creation.

Hebrews xi. 3.

WITH regard to creation; lost in reasonings, and not knowing God, the human mind sought out endless solutions of existence. Those who have read the cosmogenies of the ancients know how many different systems, each more absurd than the other, have been invented for that which the introduction of God, by faith, renders perfectly simple.

Modern science, with a less active and more practical mind, stops at second causes; and it is but little occupied with God. Geology has taken the place of the cosmogeny of the Hindoos, Egyptians, Orientals, and philosophers. To the believer the thought is clear and simple; his mind is assured and intelligent by faith. God, by His word, called all things into existence.

The universe is not a producing cause; it is itself a creature acting by a law imposed upon it. It is One having authority who has spoken; His word has divine efficacy. He speaks, and the thing *is*. We feel that this is worthy of God; for, when once God is brought in, all is simple. Shut Him out, and man is lost in the efforts of his own imagination, which can neither create nor arrive at the knowledge of a Creator, because it only works with the power of a creature.

Before, therefore, the details of the present form of creation are entered upon, the word simply says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Whatever may have taken place between that and chaos, forms no part of revelation. It is distinct from the special action of the deluge, which is made known to us.

The beginning of Genesis does not give a history of the details of creation itself, nor the history of the universe. It gives the fact that in the beginning God

created; and afterwards, the things that regard man on the earth. The angels even are not there. Of the stars it is only said, "He made the stars also"; when, we are not told.

By faith, then, we believe that the worlds were created *by the word of God.*

J.N.D.

"Whither I Go."

"Then said Jesus unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me; and shall die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will He kill Himself? because He saith, Whither I go ye cannot come" (John viii. 21, 22).

THESE three words "Whither I go" are found in three places in John's gospel, let us look briefly at them.

(1) In chapter viii. the Lord was speaking, not to the multitude or mass of the people, but to the Jews from Jerusalem. These Jews were particularly strict in following out their own dogmas, and specially opposed and bitter against Him.

And what a solemn pronouncement it was! Whither I go, ye *cannot* come. Their eyes were blinded to the truth of His Person and His mission, and their hearts were estranged from God. We know well that the avenue whereby the truth of God reaches the soul is through the heart and conscience, not merely through the intellect. In this case the conscience was unreached and therefore they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, indeed they were filled with enmity.

They boasted of being Abraham's seed, but they sought to kill Christ, and in the end they consummated their guilt by crucifying the Lord of glory. Such is religious man without Christ; and he is the same now as then—his eyes blind to all that is of God, and open to what is of self and the world.

(2) The next place we find these three words is in chapter xiii. 33, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." It is the same thing here as the Lord had said to the unbelieving Jews in chapter viii., and it shows us that even true disciples could not be with Him in heaven, any more than the unbeliever, except on the ground of faith in Him and what He has done. It is Christ alone that can bring any there.

But is it not sweet to see here that when the Lord is speaking to *His own,* He uses the words "Little children"—the only occasion on which He did use them? They are the same words which the apostle John uses seven times over in his first epistle. In the Lord's use of them it was an expression of that love which dwelt in His heart for those so precious in His sight: in the apostle's use of them, it was a term of affection on the part of that aged servant of God, to those dear to him in Christ.

Here Peter went a little farther than the other disciples when he said, "Lord, whither goest Thou . . . . Why cannot I follow Thee now?" He truly loved the Lord and he really meant what he said when he spoke the words, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." But oh, how little conscious he was of the treachery and weakness of the heart—and that even in a disciple.

And who could follow the Lord when it was a question of going to the cross and making atonement for sin? No man could. There is a striking verse in Leviticus xvi., in speaking of the great day of atonement, "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle . . . . when the high priest goeth in to make atonement in the holy place, until he come out," etc. (ver. 17).

"Alone He bare the cross,
Alone its grief sustained;
His was the shame and loss
And He the victory gained;
The mighty work was all His own,
Though we shall share His glorious throne."

We have the same thing in type in the crossing of the Jordan. The ark went down first and remained in the bed of the river till all the people had passed over dry shod. And there must be a space of about two thousand cubits between the ark and the people.

If Peter, as someone has remarked, tried to dip his foot in the river before the ark passed over, it was only to fail more seriously than the others. Self-confidence always leads us into circumstances where faith would not venture and where failure is the sure result of leaning on that broken reed—*self*.

(3) Lastly, let us turn to John xiv. 4, "And whither I go ye know, and ye know the way" (see new trans.). In all this part of the gospel the Lord was seeking to turn their hearts and eyes from earth to heaven. As Jews they would naturally look for an earthly Messiah, who would establish the kingdom here. But this was not to be then. He was going to the Father's house on high; and He was the Son, who was going back to God, to the Father who sent Him.

He gives them credit for knowing the way; but how little they rose to it in their actual experience is shown us by Thomas' remark, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" It was not till Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came, that these wonderful truths were illuminated and made clear to them.

They had seen the Father in seeing Him—His every act and word was an expression of all that the Father was; and who could so manifest Him as the beloved

Son, who ever dwelt in His bosom? Jesus was Himself, therefore, the way.

How privileged are *we* (christians) for whom the full light of the complete word of God shines, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, whose special office it is to glorify Christ, and to take of what is His and show it to us! Oh, why are we so often dull of hearing, and our knowledge so poor and limited? Is it not because, very often, other objects come in between the heart and Christ, dull our spiritual sensibilities, cloud our vision, and take away the keenness of appetite which we should have for heavenly things?

"Whither I go ye know"; the word "know" here is the word used for *inward,* conscious knowledge. We look onward and upward to where Christ has gone, it is to the *Father.* We believe we should not be far astray in taking verse 28 of chap. xvi. as a kind of epitome or summary of John's gospel; let the reader please examine it.

That gospel might almost be called the gospel of the Father; the words "the Father" or "My Father" occur about 100 times in it. And in chapter xx. the Lord adds those precious words, *"Your Father."* From the resurrection side of the empty grave, through the lips of that devoted woman Mary Magdalene, who loved Him so truly, He sent the message, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Blessed relationship, never to be broken.

We can say, then, in reply to the words, "Whither I go," it was to the Father's house; and, through grace, we are going there also. F.G.B.