

THE BIBLE HERALD;

FOR THE EDIFICATION OF BELIEVERS, AND THE
SPREAD OF GOSPEL TRUTH.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”—2 Cor. iv. 6.

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BIBLE HERALD.

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER iii. 7.

It is possible for a sincere Christian to make too much or too little of his church associations. To be gathered with the best, and on the principles of truth, while a great blessing, cannot recommend us in any way to God. We must ourselves seek to stand perfect and complete in all His will (Col. iv. 12), otherwise our church association may itself be a deception. On the other hand, the allowed presence of evil must defile (compare Hag .ii. 11-14; 1 Cor. v.; Gal. v.; 2 John viii.).

In a time of failure and declension, the direct word of Christ is that which the Spirit uses to guard and set right the saints of God; thus every address begins with—"These things saith HE," and the ear of each individual is called to hear for itself, and thus practically enjoy and be sustained by what is said to all. A failing church condition cannot sustain the individual condition (Acts xx. 29-32).

To other churches the judicial glories of Christ are presented, but to Philadelphia the Lord speaks rather of what He is. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true," comprehending thus, in a word, the truths unfolded by the Spirit in John's gospel and epistles (John vi. 69 R.V.; 1 John ii. 20, v. 20). We have

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thus a simple but encouraging testimony to what an assembly may be in the midst of abounding failure. Whatever the public profession of Christianity may become, the Holy Spirit abides in the believer, the power of God to keep the smallest and the feeblest company out of the mire.

Christ, too, loves the church, and to these beloved saints He speaks as counting on their love for Him. Sinners once, but washed in His blood, they would find in this revelation of Himself that which feeds the divine nature, of which they were made partakers.

Ask the disciples of Balaam, the children of Jezebel, the formalists of Sardis, or the self-complacent of Laodicea, their thoughts of the church. The answers are all around us, and the truly godly soul must sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the name of the Holy One, and the True, while the world mocks at scandals, too patent through the flimsy veil of mere profession.

Let us turn to the Lord, as speaking of and to His beloved Philadelphia ("I have loved thee"), and the heart and mind will find something worthy of Him.

It is well to meet objectors, to notice that from the time Jezebel and her adherents were allowed a settled place in the church, and repentance hopeless, the doers of her works, and the keepers of Christ's works, could not go on together. "The rest" are at once distinguished as a company apart (ii. 22-24), and the Lord holds out no hope of restoration, but presents His coming as the immediate event before the soul. Thus there can be no plea from these chapters, to go on in associations contrary to the Lord's claims and word. The boasted Holy Catholic Church is neither holy nor catholic, and the claims of every other must

be equally put to the one and only test—Christ and His Word.

In Philadelphia we have an encouraging proof that it is not strength, but heart that is needed. They had only “a little strength,” but enough to cleave to the Lord and let go everything else. Ask the Marys, James, Peter, and the other disciples what kept them together. They were of like passions as ourselves, but His grace was sufficient. No distinctive truth was their bond, still less their apprehension of it. Nothing but faith of Him (John vi. 68, 69 R.V.).

Now the Holy Spirit has been sent to unite all believers to Christ, as a body to the Head, and if we own this divine appointment we must gather, move and act in a unity of which Christ alone is the centre. This is the unity of the Spirit. No distinctive truth, however blessed, can be this. It is at best but a part; Christ Himself is the sum, and each distinctive truth and point of testimony centres in Him. Oh, that the Lord Himself were more simply and truly the object of our souls.

Beautiful is His testimony to Philadelphia. “Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” Safe, happy, holy path. His Word their guide, His name their care. Shall some seek to instil the thought that His Word was not necessary for every step, they resisted it, as contrary to Him to whom no act of theirs could be unimportant. Did others attempt to sully the glory of His person, they resented all indifference to the honour due to His name. To them He was THE HOLY ONE and THE TRUE; and their crown depended on holding fast, when *man* was seeking to take it from them.

Still they knew and felt their weakness, and they

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had to be girded with a strength not their own. Thus the Lord adds, that "He hath the key of David, he openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

Allusion is made to Is. xxii. Weakness then characterised the people of God, and serious dangers were imminent. Instead, however, of looking to the Lord in lowly dependence (v. 11), they adopted human methods of defence, and gloried in hoped-for success. Fatal mistake (12, 14). Assumed authority and usurped power also for a moment had the upper hand, (15, 19), but the "chosen of God," was established (Eliakim), and became the hope and dependence of every faithful heart (20, 24). Surely in a day like this, such an allusion is full of instruction.

To this church the Lord gives an opened door, *out of all the enemy has brought in, and into all the blessing, the standing and the hopes which other churches had either lost or given up.* This opened door must not be confounded with that spoken of, 2 Cor. ii. 12. That was for *individual* service, This includes service, but much more. The position of the church in the world, as a chaste virgin waiting for Christ, was practically gone in Pergamos. Its place in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was lost sight of in Thyatira. Its very vitality was denied in Sardis. Like blind and captive Samson, when he lost his Nazariteship, it either ground food for the world (Jud. xvi.), or made sport to amuse it. The Lord opened the door out of all this degradation for His beloved Philadelphia, and blessed be His name, for all who, like Philadelphia, will keep His word and not deny His name. Yes, things may be at their worst, as with David at Ziklag,

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yet they who will encourage themselves in the Lord, shall, "without fail recover all" (1 Sam. xxx.).

But, as now, these feeble saints were face to face with a synagogue of Satan, seeking openly or covertly to drag them back into a false Judaism, false in its claims, its teachings, its ordinances and its hopes; putting forth every effort to rob them of *nearness to Christ*. Oh, that those we love, the dear, dear saints of God may be kept from their wiles.

Let us consider the seven-fold promise given to those who are thus standing in an evil day. A brief note may, with God's blessing, call attention to a most important truth.

(Verses 9 to 12.) The corrupters of truth, however great their pretensions and high their assumptions, shall be humbled, and that before the very saints they despised and persecuted. As these proud ones shall be compelled to do homage to the Lord (Phil. ii. 10-11), so shall they to them, as they own at last, seeing them with and nearest to Christ in glory, how much He loved them.

Second. Called to keep the word of His patience now, sorrows from the world will beset their path while they wait for Him from heaven. But what is the worst sorrow the world can inflict on God's children, compared with what is coming on the world? This, book describes the successive strokes of judgment, intensifying in severity, till they reach the climax. "Men's hearts will indeed fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." But, before a drop of the coming storm has fallen, they that are Christ's shall be taken up to be with Him in the Father's house, to rest there, where He rested before the world was, and where, as Man, He has rested since the day He was taken up. He

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awaits this moment of joy in patience, when His home shall no longer be His alone, but theirs also whom He loves.

The rewards of the kingdom will follow, and each one is exhorted to hold fast, "Let no man take thy crown." Wondrous moment! The wickedness of man on earth receiving its dire, and terrible judgment, the glorified saints, taken away to reap the rewards of grace in heaven.

To His sorrowing disciples Jesus had said, "I will come again:" to Philadelphia He says yet more, "BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY." This is the third promise.

Fourth: As David had his worthies, pillars in his kingdom, who were once distressed and outcasts in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 2; 2 Sam. xxiii. 13, &c.), so shall those who have stood for the Lord and His truth here, be advanced as pillars where all is worship and praise for ever. This is the first promise to the overcomer: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out."

Fifth. "I will write upon him the name of my God." Notice how it is constantly said, "my God." The blessed God as known, and served, and loved by Jesus: as He said to Mary, "My God, and your God." Ineffable delight! To know, and serve, and love; to be owned, and blessed; and to rest in His immediate presence, in His unclouded glory, in His infinite love, even as Jesus rests. As it is written, "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

The sixth connects the overcomer with the grandest work of God, the City made for His Son. Beautiful is the description of it. Angels have their delight in calling attention to its glories, and the

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kings of the earth will do homage to it. Dear reader, do you love the *church* (not man's, but God's)? Such love shall not go unrewarded, even though now you can only express it in sighs and cries for all the abomination man has sought to work in it. When it comes down out of heaven your tears will be for ever wiped away. Serve it now (see the widow, Luke xxi. 2, 4), in its ruins. It will soon come forth in perfectness and purity, in dignity and beauty, "THE BRIDE THE LAMB'S WIFE." Surely nothing will so wither up the narrow sectarianism of our hearts as this truth of the church in glory.

Seventh. "And I will write upon him my new name." Many a weary day and night have been cheered by the thought, "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." When all has been loneliness, sorrow, and desolation, the heart has had its song—

"There is a name I love to hear."

Proclaimed in Scriptures so numerous, so varied, that no mind could recall them all, yet blended in sweetest harmony to the ear that loves the name of Jesus, how welcome has every unfolding of its fulness proved to the soul.

"Thy name is as ointment *poured forth*."

One note, however, has yet to be sounded. The Lord reserves it till we are with Him. Then, and then only, can He disclose His NEW NAME, and *He will write it on us*, will publicly and openly avow us as His own.

"What am I, Lord! An emptiness, a nothing,
Thou art my boast, in whom all fulness dwells
Of the great Godhead. Thou whose name I bear,
Whose life is mine, whose glory and whose bliss,
All, all are mine."

“IT IS THE BLOOD THAT MAKETH AN ATONEMENT FOR THE SOUL.”

LEVITICUS xvii. 11.

“And He said unto them, ‘With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’”—Luke xxii. 15.

THE reason why the Lord Jesus Christ so specially desired to eat that particular passover with His disciples was, I doubt not, because it was the last He would keep on this side death and resurrection. “I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” It was that which brought Him close up to the cross, close up to that work of atonement by which God should be glorified with respect to sin, and by which the door of divine mercy should be thrown wide open to sinners. This was emphatically that will of God which He came to do, according to Heb. x. 5-10. “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. . . . : By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE.”

It has been well remarked by another that in this tenth chapter of Hebrews we have three things brought prominently before us in relation to atonement.—The *will of God*—the *Work of Christ*—and the *Witness of the Holy Ghost*. The sacrifices of the law could not purge sin. They were but types and shadows, figures of Him that was to come. And even when He had come, atonement was not made either wholly or in part while He remained living amongst men. Incarnation was not atonement, and the new and living way, by which

alone the believer has access to God within the holiest, could only be "consecrated through the veil, *that is to say His flesh*" (Heb. x, 20). While that remained unrent "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." The blood had not been shed, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John xii. 24). "For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Levit. xvii. 11.)

There was abundant evidence while He was here, of His deity, His works, and especially His raising the dead, declared Him according to Rom. i. 4 to have been "the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." Not *from* the dead here, as if it referred to His own resurrection. That could not have borne witness to Him while He was here, for it had not taken place; but His raising others did conclusively. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, so that if it had been only a question of His power, He could have done far more than He did in the merciful exercise of it towards our wretched sin-stricken race. But atonement was not a question of power, but of the purging of sin. Till that was accomplished, neither the counsels of His Father, nor His own knowledge of what was needful in order that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth, admitted of His letting out His Father's love to the full. All things have their time and place with God. He did, however, exercise His Godhead power in grace. He cleansed the leper—He cast out demons—He opened the eyes of the blind, and He raised the dead. But these cases, *one here and another there*, were no adequate expression of the tender compassion of the heart of God. Neither did

they satisfy His own, which was ever in unison with, and in subjection to, His Father's. They were not independent of the atonement, far from it, but like all the mercies of God from Adam downwards, they were drawings beforehand, upon the credit of that work which was accomplished on the cross. It was in the sense of this that He uttered that touching lamentation—"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished." (Luke xii. 50.) He longed for the accomplishment of that work by which alone the floodgates of divine love could be thrown open to their widest, and He should be set free to give eternal life to as many as (*i.e.* ALL) the Father had given Him (John xvii. 2). What thorough devotedness to His Father's will! What unspeakable love to us!

The history of Moses in the early chapters of Exodus, bears striking testimony to the truth we are here pressing, not as in any way new, but because of its immense importance, viz., that redemption is alone by the death of Christ.

God had, surely, seen the affliction of His people, He had heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; and knew their sorrows, and had come down to deliver them. The rod in the hand of Moses was made to be the symbol of His presence and power. With that rod wonderful signs were wrought, but deliverance was not effected till the paschal lamb was slain. Accordingly, the twelfth chapter opens with these remarkable words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron *in the Land of Egypt*." Why so emphatically, "*in the Land of Egypt*?" You could not suppose from all that is previously recorded that they were anywhere else. Is it not that God would signa-

lize the fact that all the *power* that Moses was invested with and exercised had left Israel still in Egypt unredeemed? The blood of the lamb was about to be shed, and it alone could deliver them. And see how jealously the Lord instructed them in that chapter for the future annual observance of the passover, in remembrance of their deliverance. In the ninth of Numbers we read that in the first month of the second year after they came forth out of the land of Egypt, *i.e., before they had time to neglect the observance*, "the Lord spake unto Moses . . . Let the children of Israel keep the passover at his appointed season, in the fourteenth day of this month"! So jealous was God for His people's remembrance of that by which their deliverance was wrought. And have we not the counterpart of this in our Lord's appointment of the supper after that of the passover was ended? (Luke xxii. 19, 20). If God put such value on His earthly people's remembrance of the passover, what must be the value the Lord sets upon our remembrance of Him in His death? What place does His table hold in our interests and affections, as setting forth His death? May we not truly say that the value we set upon an object determines the value that we attach to that which represents it? There were (Num. ix. 6) certain men who could not keep that passover in its season. But they were not indifferent to it. They were not glad of the excuse to avoid it. They were in communion with God about it, and felt their position, and took counsel of the Lord, who had respect to their godly exercises of heart, and gave them by Moses a most gracious answer (verses 9, 10, 11). Let us see to it that we are in God's mind about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rightly value the

12 INDIVIDUAL STONES ; OR, BUILDED TOGETHER.

weekly recurring memento of it, " For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come " (1 Cor. vi. 26). It was in His death that atonement was made, and how gracious of Him to have given us so simple an ordinance by which to remind us of His finished work. G. O.

INDIVIDUAL STONES ; OR, BUILDED
TOGETHER.

WHAT a difference it makes whether we look at ourselves as separate individuals, or as parts of the Temple, builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. When it comes to the individual the works may oft-times cause the cry, " Unclean, unclean ; " but as parts of the temple this same people are precious stones, God's own workmanship in Christ Jesus, and laid as living stones on that foundation, there to rest shining in all the beauty of another, even His own Christ ; all the weight of the building resting on Him, the eternal foundation. There are these two things ; first, God dealing with every individual heart ; and, second, God counting you as a part of His building—a city where every stone is bright and polished, and each one reflects the glory of Christ. There every saint will show forth to the mind of God the Lord Jesus, because all will reflect His glory.

Can you say I am a called one ? (Jude 1.) What, then, is the hope of His calling ? (Eph. i. 18.) How does such a hope find expression here ? " This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

INDIVIDUAL STONES ; OR, BUILDED TOGETHER. 13

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Nothing less, then, than *reaching* the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus is your hope. It is a real thing that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God in all His beauty and glory, and the hope is seeing Him *as He is*, and being like Him (1 John ii. 2, 3). The Father of glory sees you in all your present weakness and failure, and calls you to such a hope. He will not leave His workmanship, or leave off His work till one by one millions shall be made like to Him who is now sitting at His right hand. He is moulding all to the likeness of that One, and when we shall see Him as He is, these vile bodies shall be changed, and fashioned like unto His glorious body. What a thought! Each believer like a vase moulded of God, *full of glory*. Thousands, thousands of vases, all filled with His glory. God will not cease working till He has made *me like His Christ*.
G.V.W.

WE are wonderfully screened from the fruits of sin, as we pass along (thank God its wages have been paid in full tale in His bosom, who, in grace, stood for us in the judgment), and when permitted to reach us, they become the discipline of our Father's hand for our profit. They yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby. The "light afflictions . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What a change the "tree" has made in the "bitter waters!"
F.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

CHAP. x. 24-42.

THE case which the Lord suggests in this parable, was a defiling of the land; and all that the law could do in it was to find out the wrong doer, and exact eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Nor could the ministers of the altar under the law, provide for the case. They had their service elsewhere. But a stranger, in the liberty of his own love, may attend to it if he please. And so with us sinners. God must come forth in the activities of His own love to meet our sad condition, for it lies beyond all other help. The services of a temple will not do for those who have no cleanness fit for a temple. Man is not there by nature, his heart is no sanctuary for God, but he lies in an unclean place defiled in his blood, and what he wants is to be sought out and brought home by one who will laze his shoulders with him, as a shepherd does with his sheep. For man has been made the prey of a strong and a cruel enemy, and it is that love which will go, and at a great cost bind him up, that he needs. And such an one has met him in the Son of God in the Gospel. Under the law God was in the holy place, and the unclean must be removed, and the priest and the Levite attend that sanctuary. But in the Gospel, God is in the unclean place, seeking the ruined ones, Jesus is going about doing good, the stranger from heaven has come where man lay in his blood, and has looked on him and had compassion. The priest and the Levite, the

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

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ministers of the temple, must pass by on the other side, for this blood would defile them ; but the Son of God can go and meddle with all that pollution untouched by it, and wash the wounded sinner from his blood, and anoint him with oil (Ezek. xvi.) And He has done all this, and changed places with the wounded sinner also. For though rich He has become poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich—though without sin he was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him—as the good Samaritan here changes places with the wounded traveller, getting down from his own beast and setting him on it. And he has even done more than this, for he has told us that he has his eye upon us for ever, that whether present or absent he thinks of us, as here the stranger charges the host to take care of the poor helpless man, and that when he comes that way again, as surely he will, he will as surely repay him.

All this love, this costly and needed love, we have in the Son of God, the stranger from heaven, the true good Samaritan. He kept the law of love to His neighbour, but only He, and we must go to learn the way from Him, “do likewise,” kindle our heart at His heart if in anywise we hope to answer that end of the law. This lawyer was making his boast in the law, but he had evidently reduced and qualified it, as everyone must who seeks like him to be justified by it. “Who is my neighbour,” said he, little judging that he was about to hear such a tale of love to one’s neighbour as was coming forth. The law was too high, too noble for this man’s thoughts—and so it is for us all—we see nothing worthy of that word, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,” till we trace the well-spent life

of Jesus. He would have stood on the law, and refused Jesus, but he has to learn if his ears could hear it, that Jesus alone upheld the law or gave it efficacy on the hearts and consciences of others.

It is thus our salvation to know Jesus as the stranger that met us in our wounds with his oil and wine. Our Evangelist alone gives us this parable, but this is quite according to the largeness of the spirit of grace which fills his Gospel throughout.

The little scene which then closes this chapter, is also peculiar to Luke, serving his general purpose of instructing us in great principles of truth. For the two sisters here introduced, were differently minded; and being brought to the trial of the mind of Christ, we get the judgment of God on matter of much value to our souls.

The house, which we now enter, was Martha's. The Spirit of God tells us this, as being characteristic of Martha; and into her house with all readiness of heart she receives the Lord, and prepares for Him the very best provision it had. His labours and fatigue called for this. Martha well knew that His ways abroad were the ways of the good Samaritan who would go on foot that others might ride, and she loves Him too well not to observe and provide for His weariness. But Mary has no house for Him. She was in spirit, a stranger like Himself, but she opens a sanctuary for Him and seats Him there, the Lord of her humble temple. She takes her place at His feet and hears His words. She knows as well as Martha that He was wearied, but she knows also that there was a fulness in Him that could afford to be more wearied still. Her ear and her heart therefore still use Him, instead of her hand or her foot ministering to Him.

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And in these things lay the difference between the sisters. Martha's eye saw His weariness, and would give to Him: Mary's faith apprehended His fulness underneath His weariness, and would draw from Him.

This brings out the mind of the Son of God. The Lord accepts the care of Martha, as long as it is simple care and diligence about His present need; but the moment she brings her mind into competition with Mary's, she learns His judgment upon all this and is taught to know that Mary by her faith, was refreshing Him with a sweeter feast than all her care, and the provision of her house could possibly have supplied. For Mary's faith gave Jesus a sense of His own divine glory. It told Him that though He was the wearied one, He could still feed and refresh her. She was at His feet hearing His words. There was no temple there, or light of the sun, but the Son of God was there, and He was everything to her. This was the honour He prized, and blessedly, indeed, was she in His secret. When He was thirsty and tired at Jacob's well, He forgot it all in giving out other waters which no pitcher could have held or well beside His own supplied, and here again she brings her soul to the same well, as knowing that in spite of all His weariness it was as full as ever for her use.

And O, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us. Our God is asserting for Himself the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fulness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render to Him. Entitled as He is to more than all creation could render Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love and draw from His treasures. The honour which *our confidence* puts

upon Him is His highest honour, for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from unexhausted fulness. Under the law He had to receive from us, but in the gospel He is giving to us; and the words of the Lord Jesus are these—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." And this place He will fill for ever, for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from everything that hath breath, but forth from Himself shall go the constant flow of blessing, the light to cheer, the waters to refresh, and the leaves of the tree to heal, and our God shall taste His own joy and display His own glory in being a giver for ever.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh."—Matt. xxv.

"He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!"

The "Morning Star" appears,

"The cloudless morning" sweetly dawns,
Saints, quit this vale of tears.

Your absent Lord no longer mourn,
Reproach no longer bear,

"He comes! He comes!" Rise, happy saints,
To meet Him in the air."

"He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!"

The church is now complete;

Her Lord beholds her clean and fair,
A partner for Him meet.

"He comes!" His purchased bride to claim,
Her mansion is prepared;

"He comes! He comes!" Rise, waiting saints,
To meet your coming Lord.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

19

"He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!"

He shouts, for great His joy;
Unseen as yet by mortal flesh,
He tarries in the sky:
The marriage o'er, to earth He'll come,
No longer hid from man,
He'll come! He'll come! *with* all the saints,
As "Son of David" then.

"He comes! He comes!" The "Son of Man,"
The "Lord from Heaven" now;
The "King of kings," the "Lord of lords"
All knees before Him bow.

"He comes!" His Israel in "the Land
Of Promise" to instal;
"He comes!" He comes!" to clear away
The ruins of the fall.

"He comes! He comes!" The "Lion" now;
Alas, rejecting world!
He'll meet your rebel standard raised,
Defiantly unfurled;
But nought shall stand before Him, then
In terror you will cry,
"He comes! He comes! Alas! alas!"
"Where from Him can we fly?"

"He comes! He comes! The Bridegroom comes!"
Oh, sinners, hear the sound!
Accept Him *now*, if you among
His chosen would be found,
Still mercy's *offered*—costless—free,
No longer turn away,
"He comes! He comes! Oh, linger not,
Come, while 'tis call'd "*to-day*."

A.M.

EXTRACTS FROM PRIVATE LETTERS.

WHAT difficulty is there about "the victory that overcometh the world?" It is not power that does it, but conscious weakness, that hangs upon Another—draws its resources from Him who *has* "overcome the world." I know of no subtle meaning, though assured we know in part, and that it is *infinitely* full. But it is *faith* which overcomes the world, *faith* that lives and moves in a higher scene, and can look down upon this, that knows all *below* the sun to be vanity; because its home (the home of faith), its own sphere is "where Christ sitteth." "This is the victory that overcometh the world." Faith judges from the place a risen Christ has; consequently, for *it*, "the prince of this world is judged," and the world is that evil thing, which its prince led onto accomplish his designs in killing the Prince of Life. "They have seen and hated both me and my Father." Connect with it the overcoming of the "young men" in chap. ii., where it is a question of the "wicked one," but immediately merges in "the world."

I trust you will have a good day to-morrow. It is *He* who is there in the midst who makes the feast. May you "keep the feast," in His holy and happy presence! Honour Him by trusting His love, for it is a love that "sold all that he had" to possess you, and that breathes out the earnest longing and *will*, that they "whom thou hast given me be *with me* where I am."

F.

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER iii. 14.

IN the last of the seven addresses to the Churches, a most momentous change in the Lord's ways is declared as imminent. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God : I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

The vilest nations on the earth, after long patience, had been so judged. The children of Israel, too, after repeated admonitions, were not spared. They were vomited forth, even as Moses had threatened (Lev. xviii. 24, 28), and now the Church in Laodicea has to hear from the Lord Himself the same solemn warning. "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." How contrary this judgment of the Lord to every thought which this vain, self-commending people cherished of themselves ! "There is a generation, Oh, how lofty are their eyes, and their eyelids are lifted up."

The Holy Spirit, as in every case, calls attention first to Christ Himself. In the midst of all the changes in the Church, there is One who changes not. The light of the candlestick may utterly fail, but "the true light now shineth," and Christ is that true light. It will be of inestimable profit to receive the light as thus shining in Him for the darkest times of the professing Church. The words are remarkable, and no doubt intentionally so, to awaken attention. "*The Amen ; the faithful and*

true witness; the beginning of the creation of God."

The Church received the truth, professedly at least, but the effect of knowledge, not held in the presence of God, is pride. Souls get puffed up (1 Cor. viii. 1), and Satan succeeds in alluring them into the path of self-confidence and self-exaltation, even in the things of God. This leads to the Laodicean state, the most offensive of all to Christ. It is real unbelief; it is sinfully, fearfully, hopelessly negative as to all that is essential to vital godliness. Let us reverently trace the contrast in the Lord Jesus.

He suffered being tempted (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15), but He was ever "the Amen" before Satan, to his utter defeat. In the wilderness, he answered every suggestion of the devil by pointing to Scripture—"It is written." In Gethsemane, in agony at the prospect of the cup before Him, His one desire was, "Not my will, but thine, be done." On the way from the garden to the cross, he met the untimely zeal of Peter with the simple word, "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" and, even "at the ninth hour, when all things were accomplished, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled*, Jesus saith, I thirst." How precious was Scripture to Him from first to last.

He was also "the Amen" before the people, to their entire condemnation in rejecting Him. From the first word of blessing to poor, sinful man, down to the last, for every dispensation, and for the completion of all dispensations, whatever is of God for man, the Amen of all is in Christ Jesus alone. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Not a prophecy, not a word but He fulfilled, or will fulfil. He entered by the door into the sheepfold, and when He left it, yielding Himself to the

wicked hands that crucified Him, it was still as the Amen to God's will. "As the Father *gave me commandment*, even so I do."

And how perfectly He was "the Amen" before His Father. What a living expression of absolute confidence, perfect subjection, and full satisfaction in Him He delighted in the guidance of God, and hoped perfectly in His Word (Is. l. ; Ps. xvi.).

Being thus the living Amen, He was emphatically "the faithful and true witness," shining brighter and brighter as the power of darkness closed in on everything, and on every one. To all this, Laodicea is the most painful, the most repulsive contrast. The Church was called out to be a faithful and true witness, "the pillar and ground of truth." To this end God committed to it a perfect revelation, the Word of God completed (Col. i. 25, 26). Does the Church of to-day, any more than that in Laodicea, put its solemn amen on that perfect revelation? Does it "live by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord?" Does it not rather consent to teaching and practice that sets aside any portion that it is not convenient to obey? Does it not overlay its most precious truths by intellectual theories, and supersede its plainest directions by human rules and commands? Is it not lax as to doctrines that dishonour Christ, and are dangerous to souls? Is not every opinion tolerated on certain occasions, rather than disturb amiable associations?

The boast of this age of Christianity is, that "it embraces alike adherents of the oldest traditions, and the newest developments of religious thought." It puts itself forward as the earnest advocate of social reform, of intellectual progress, and of beneficent philanthropy. Man's thoughts and the improvement of his earthly

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condition absorb all, and Jesus Christ as the only way and truth, and life (John xiv. 5), is lost sight of and forgotten.

Such is Laodicea, having still the name of *the church*, and thereby gaining an influence over souls for the abuse of which it will be judged; deceiving itself and them by its pretension to spiritual wealth, and thus its ability to help and bless, while really "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

A place in such a body, or any association with it, cannot be for the Lord's glory, for He has no place in it. He knocks at the door as one outside. He is also "the beginning of the creation of God," and can own no other. The vilest sinner that comes as such to Him, He will in no wise cast out, for He sees His Father's work in drawing him (John vi., 37 to 39 and 44); but the world as a system, and man as of it (John viii. 23), have rejected Christ. It is the same world still, and men have the same prince as they had 1800 years ago (John xiv. 30; xvi. 11). Satan's soldiers may claim and appropriate Christ's garments, but they do not become Christ's servants thereby. A false profession is the worst of lies. The death of the Lord Jesus is the witness on God's part of what man is—"All are dead" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Eph. ii. 1, 2), and whatever "the moral bustle in the school, the platform and the pulpit," *death*, not mere moral disorder, is still the condition of all who have not come, as lost sinners, to Christ alone for salvation. If a man own not Jesus as delivering him from the wrath to come, the mere owning Him as giving strength to be outwardly moral is a fearful mockery and delusion. If he is not a *new creature* in Christ Jesus, he is under God's wrath, he has nothing but sin. Therefore, let none be deceived with vain words.

God is not teaching the world morality. He is warning it of its coming doom, and beseeching men in it to be reconciled to Him before it is too late. This is His gracious attitude towards all, as He points them to the work done for the sinner on the cross (2 Cor. v. 20, 21). There "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The whole question of sin was brought out then, and in Him who was made sin. It was also finally settled, and in resurrection a new state is reached beyond sin, and sins, and judgment. Christ Jesus thus takes out of their lost state *all who receive Him by faith*, into His risen state. They are not of the world as He is not. On the contrary, as He is, up there in glory, so are they in this world (John xvii. 16; 1 John iv. 17). Christ is there "the beginning of the creation of God," and they are also a *new creation*. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." The old creation is all to be judged and removed, that the new may be brought in. When the secret of God's will is accomplished, Christ will be seen the CENTRE OF ALL GLORY, and all who believe will be with Him. Laodicea knows nothing of this. It forms no part of its ministry, which is summed up in "I AM rich." The Lord graciously stoops to correct this fearful delusion, for it is "wretched," the last but greatest dupe of the enemy. Satan's greatest efforts are put forth to make the outside of the cup and platter clean, that if the vessel looks well, the absence of the treasure in it may not awaken anxiety. A church that knows no difference between the lost and saved, provided all be externally right, is well suited to this end. But as a false witness for God, a pit-fall for souls, an instrument of destruction in the hands of Satan, Christ will reject it, spue it out of

His mouth, though lingering in mercy over individual souls in it ; rebuking, chastening, and exhorting them to repentance. What encouragement this to many an afflicted one. Oh, to be warned in time, to be aroused to a true sense of their real condition in His sight. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." It is the last testimony, but marvellous in its freeness and abundance. The gold which the Lord offers in contrast with their wretched want of it is His own worthiness in the sight of God, His own acceptance and eventually His glory. Christ, in all the efficacy of His work, placing them in Himself in living association and acceptance with God—THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

The white raiment is the life of Jesus manifested in the daily walk (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11), for Scripture never separates doctrine from practice. And what life can we live in here so as not to display our own evil nature? Christ alone must be our life, or we shall display ourselves. There cannot be two lives, any more than two righteousnesses accepted before God. Christ alone is our righteousness and our life. All the rest is worthless and worse. The eye-salve is spiritual understanding in the Word in contrast to mere natural understanding. Nature is blind to the things of God, though loudest in its boast—"We see." (1 Cor. ii. 14 ; compare John ix. 39, 41 and Prov. xxx. 12). Thus all is treasured up in Christ. "I counsel thee to buy of ME."

One terrible thing in Laodicea is, that it really has nothing of intrinsic value for souls, yet, professing to have everything, it deceives them by fearful fraud. The

Lord Jesus has imperishable, eternal good, and, by the simplest of figures, invites all to have business alone with Him. If we *buy*, the fact of purchase gives a legal title, and though we know from Isaiah lv. it is without money and without price, this in no wise invalidates the title, while magnifying the GRACE which can give a full and indisputable title, while bestowing all and receiving nothing.

But the solemn fact is its condition before the Lord. Laodicea is neither cold nor hot. Would it were, either cold or hot ! Solemn words from His lip, and no less touching than solemn. They fall like the last knock on the closed door, the last opportunity of recovery. Another testimony is about to be raised, for the Church has hopelessly failed, and the Lord lingers if, before He finally puts it aside, there should be one left who will hear His voice and open to Him. So unwearied is His grace, seeking even to the last to separate the poor deluded heart to Himself, and from what pretends to be the Lord's candle, but never shines to His praise. Precious truth ! No degeneracy in the Church can hinder a single soul that hearkens to the voice of Christ, from the enjoyment of the sweetest, fullest communion with Him. "I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." Did Paul himself know a deeper joy ? (John xiv. 23). It is remarkable that service is not promised. Not that there may not be work for the Lord, but in a time of boasted labours and vaunted successes, the Lord abounds in all wisdom and prudence by presenting *communion* with him rather than service. In a day of meetings, of conferences, of lectures, and of bustling excitement, this may prove a salutary word. The Lord would accustom us here to a companionship more fully to be enjoyed

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with Him hereafter. Such, to speak with reverence, was His own path, though unwearied in service, His communion with His Father was the deep well-spring of joy in this dry and thirsty land. Thus He can say, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit WITH ME in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Dear reader, if we are Christ's we are on the way to the dignities and glories which He will bestow on His bride. His throne is to be ours; but, remember, we are *not on the way* to His love; WE HAVE IT NOW, infinite as it is; and what can we give Him in return?

"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

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WHERE there was the fullest consciousness of authority (as in Paul), so that he might have carried it with a high hand, using the rod, there was the patient exercise of grace. His object was not the assertion of his authority, but the awakening of their conscience, and the calling out their faith into exercise. The immediate presence of the apostle at Corinth would doubtless have had the effect of silencing faction. He might have authoritatively ruled the many points in discussion, some bowing through real respect, others through fear; but this would have defeated his object. His authority, and with it himself, would have come in between their consciences and God; and thus he would have habituated them to bow to some present authority, and to feel it as a positive need, so that conscience and faith would never be exercised at all.

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The apostle, with unquestionable authority, and the full consciousness of the possession of it, saw the danger of this and avoided it.

The history of the church has too plainly proved the reality of the danger, by Christians doing that which the apostle avoided. Is there an ordered and regulated society of Christians to be found, which has not interposed its own authority, where the apostle would not introduce his, and in which personal influence is not extensively used? If personal influence ever could be safely used, it surely might have been by the apostle; but he acted in a manner, even to lose it, because his object was Christ and the real blessing of saints—not himself and a party of Christians. . . .

Where there is power in the church pretended to be of God, but really humanly derived, it is ever accompanied with the impatience of personal feeling—so as to require immediate bowing to its authority. Such humanly derived ecclesiastical power has for the most part been exercised against Christ, not for Him, for destruction and not for edification. Those who claim it take the very place the apostle dared not take as lords over the faith of the saints, so as to render it impossible for them to stand by faith, by this interposing of their presumed authority. But this does not lessen the great sin of the professing body, in allowing the claims of derived authority to supersede the authority of God Himself, over their consciences. . . . Many among the Corinthians would readily allow him “to have dominion over their faith.” This is what the saints have in all ages desired. They desire to be led by men, men of God indeed, but *they desire to be led*, and this, when the higher leading of the Spirit of God is the privilege of each individual saint (1 John ii. 27). There is no

faith in attaching one's-self to a gifted teacher, but there must be faith in order to be led by the Spirit. . . .

But there is a charm in this usurped authority. Men, and men of superior mind, and of high moral worth will "suffer if a man thus exalt himself." Whence this phenomenon ! It tends to lull all exercise of conscience towards God. It keeps man in his natural element of distance from God, while persuading him that he is honouring God. We have seen at Corinth authority most unquestionably of God refused, and usurped power acknowledged (2 Cor. x., xi.). The one appealed to the conscience to lead it into exercise before God ; the other claimed subjection to itself and prevailed ; and thus interposed itself between God and the conscience. Such usurped authority carries with it a strong conventional claim. . . . Real Christians need serious warning as to the danger of allowing their faith to rest in the wisdom of man, instead of in the power of God."

From "*By Faith Ye Stand*," 1849.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

(Read Ps. xvi. and Heb. xii. 1-3).

THERE are three things which naturally prompt and shape a man's course of life and action :—

First : A distinct *object before* him ;

Second : A powerful corresponding *motive within* him ; and

Third : The power of *circumstances around* him.

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It is especially the first two which produce this influence; for provided the *object* be very distinct, and the corresponding *motive* very strong, *circumstances* will, comparatively, be rendered inferior, though more or less they will not fail to exert their influence.

Take a case from common life.

A young man, on starting in life, wants soon to get rich. His all-absorbing *object* is prosperity in business. The corresponding *motive within*, either the desire to accumulate wealth, the love of the "*treasures of Egypt*;" or the hope soon to possess a pleasant country residence, or retire altogether and enjoy the world for the remainder of his life—the love of the "*pleasures of Egypt*;" or the wish soon to obtain an honourable and influential position amongst his fellow-men—the love of the "*honours of Egypt*." That *object* in its absorbing attraction being distinctly *before* the eyes of his mind, and the corresponding *motive* powerfully at work *within* his heart, he sets to work with all his means, talents, and energy to attain that object. His whole line of action is, to speak after the manner of men, comparatively a very *simple*, if not always a *straight* one. He does not swerve to the right nor left from his course. Unavoidable, untoward circumstances may come in and make themselves felt; some unforeseen "accident," such as a dull season, or a great crisis in commerce, may now and then upset him and throw him off the line; but he at once sets to work, and like the disturbed spider, soon repairs the rent net, for the distinct and attractive *object before* him, and the powerfully compelling corresponding *motive within*, render him comparatively superior to the circumstances *around*.

And if this be true as to a natural man's course of life and action, it certainly holds good as to the

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Christian's race, only that the third element, I mean the power of surrounding circumstances, ought *not* to come into account as influencing a Christian's course, provided only that the *object before* him and the corresponding *motive within* him be *right*, and *true*, and *distinct*. This being the case, circumstances, I repeat, *ought* to have, and *will* have, no power nor influence. And you know, beloved, that for a Christian to run the race set before us in *patience*, there can be only *one true* and *right object*: *Christ*; and only *one true and right* motive: the constraining love of *Christ*.—*Christ* is God's great object, as God was *Christ's* great object when he walked this earth in the days of His humiliation, always setting the Lord before His face. God does not permit anything to come between Him and his well-beloved One at His right hand, at whose face He ever looks with the perfect complacency and supreme delight of a God and Father, and He will not that you and I should permit anything to slip in between *Christ* and us. *Keep Christ between you and everything—whatever or whoever* it may be—and you'll *walk over the waters*, *i.e.*, be superior to all circumstances; but let anything slip in between *Christ* and *you*, *down you go*, and it is the old tale of Peter all over again.

This superiority as to circumstances, we find strikingly, and blessedly exemplified in the life of one of the most faithful, and therefore most opposed servants of *Christ*. Let us take, as an instance, Paul's Epistle to the *Philippians*. There is great need in these days for the *Philippian* line of divine truth, for these are times of high spiritual pretension and intellectual attainments, and *lamentably low practice*!

Scarcely was ever a letter written under such adverse

circumstances as Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. He was a prisoner at Rome, in the lion's den, in the hands of the most cruel of all Roman tyrants—some of the so-called "Vicars of Christ" in "Christian Rome" only excepted! He was at the mercy—as men would say—of the terrible Nero, who, like his prisoner in former days, though from very different motives, was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against his own subjects and nearest relations, and soon after against the disciples of Christ. And though Paul was, at least during the first two years of his captivity at Rome, permitted to live in his own hired house, yet he was constantly "*kept by a soldier*," as we read at the close of the Acts of the Apostles, and this meant, according to Roman custom, nothing less than being chained to a soldier, which rendered escape almost impossible. And, as most likely those military guards or sentinels were changed every two hours, it is not difficult to believe that Paul's chain must have been by far the least impediment to Paul in writing such an Epistle, considering what may have been the characters and habits, and manner of life of the divers soldiers to whom the great champion of Christ was fastened by that chain.

And if we take in additional account, the circumstances of the churches as a whole, of whom the writer of that Epistle could but say that, with but few exceptions, "all were seeking their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, and that even at Rome, amidst some few encouraging circumstances, some preached Christ in the spirit of contention, supposing to *add affliction to Paul's bonds* ; if we bring all this into account, one can, but repeat: Was there ever *such a* letter written under such naturally adverse and trying circumstances? Never. But never was the effect of a single eye to Christ, in

rising superior to circumstances, the most trying to nature, more blessedly manifested than in that lovely Epistle written under such surroundings. Every page of that Epistle, written by the Lord's prisoner, breathes the spirit of joy, peace and liberty. No less than 18 times the word "joy" or "rejoice" occurs in those few sacred pages, inspired by that Spirit whose fruits are love, joy, peace, and who is the spirit of liberty.

How many of us, beloved, would have written, even to our dearest and nearest friends, such a letter under such circumstances? For it would be a great mistake to suppose that the mere fact of being inspired is sufficient to explain Paul's superiority over circumstances. For, however true it may be that the Holy Ghost, being the "Power from on high," was able to take those whom He chose to be His inspired instruments, far above the reach and power of circumstances, yet we must not forget that He chose such vessels whose faith and spiritual condition of soul in true-heartedness to Christ had made them, through grace, suitable instruments of divine inspiration. The key, then, to Paul's superiority to circumstances of the most trying, yea, provoking nature, is not to be sought in the mere fact of his being inspired, but in his whole-heartedness to Christ and a single eye to His glory. The very first chapter of that lovely Epistle furnishes us with that key.

"For me to live is *Christ*, i.e., Christ was to him both *object* and *motive*. His Christian life was summed up in one word: *Christ*. He did not say, For me to live is *preaching* or *teaching*, or pastoring the flock and caring for the church, or visiting the sick and helping the poor, blessed as all these things are in their time and place. He did not, like beloved, though cumbered

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Martha, allow service and good works to slip in between Christ and him ; but as Mary sat close at the feet of Jesus on earth, and the sweet savour of her spikenard filled the whole house, *when she served*, so Paul sat at the feet of Jesus Christ in glory, and certainly his service, like the gifts of his dear Philippians, went up a sweet savour to God. But I intend, if the Lord permit, later to offer a few more meditations on this precious portion of true Christian pasture. For most blessed and instructive, and *searching* for us as are that blessed servant's singleness of eye to one glorious object, and whole-heartedness and purity of motive (the *love* of Christ in constraining him) which thus rendered him superior to *circumstances*, and made him "run the race in patience" and "finish his course"; still there is One, infinitely greater, who in this, as in every respect, has left us an example, as the One, who has run the whole race, and "endured the *cross with all its circumstances*, and triumphed in Himself openly over Satan and all the principalities that surrounded Him at the cross. Let us turn now to the first portion of our meditations : Psalm xvi.

(*To be continued.*)

FRAGMENT ON DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH.

MANY overlook the nature of the assembly of God down here. It is, as in 1 Cor., the house of the living God in contrast with the world (ch. v. 12, 13). It may be owing to want of intelligence, or to want of careful-

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ness to use language expressive of what they do see, that some speak of one put away from among saints, in obedience to the word, "as a brother or a sister still." Paul never does so. If they are inside the house, they are of the household of faith, be they orderly or disorderly members thereof. If outside, he says, "that wicked person."

But then again, many think of discipline as merely external, and vindictive of a breach against orderly government, and so look at the assembly as a court of law.

If I admit that it is, in any sense, a court of law, it is *the court of the law of eternal life as to those who profess to have it*, and that being therein, they and I must walk according to the divine nature and eternal life in us. How can any one walk, save according to the nature and life he has? Life within and action without go together. I have human life, and my actions accord therewith. If I had a dog's nature, or a sow's, I suppose I should do as they do. If I have not eternal life, or if I *will walk* as the dog or sow, the assembly must patiently examine the case, and it is bound, if *will* in me is too strong to bend, to put me outside as a wicked person, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (still remedial even this). This is a characteristic of the extreme act of the assembly, as pronouncing on a wicked person out of communion.

In Paul's day he could say more, for he had a power which we have not, though power, we have to put out or keep in if we walk with God.

Now observe—sins differ, though all be sins. At Corinth incest was defended as being in the assembly. In Galatia the *foundation stone* was given up. Paul

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tolerated neither sin, but went fully into the case. Through mercy, and his patient wisdom, success crowned his efforts. The incestuous man was put out, but the Galatian churches were not, nor was Peter, nor Barnabas, for the Lord granted restoration in Galatia, but not in Corinth without the final act, by the assembly of exclusion.

Peter, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, sounded the case of each to the bottom, yet was not divided against himself; and when Paul could write 2 Cor. vii. 7, 12, he could not talk any more of coming down to break all up and make his power known. Nor could he have written 1 Cor. v. 3, 5, if 2 Cor. ii. 7 had been the state of the one who had been an incestuous person.

Thorough self-loathing and genuine repentance, not to be repented of, with true contrition of soul, blended with looking to, and confession of Christ's salvation as the rock, mark one whom the Holy Ghost would not call a wicked one, an enemy, one to be put outside as one at the present of Satan's kingdom of darkness.

But the saints have to be as the mouth of the Lord, taking forth the precious from the vile. There was all this in the judgment pronounced by Peter. Look through them in detail, they are not a few. Also by Paul, see the case of the incestuous person, &c. The case of each is unravelled first and then judgment takes its course, and the judgment varies in connection with the persons, whether deceived or deceivers. G.V.W.



THE MAN CHRIST JESUS,
 ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.
 CHAPTER xi. 1-13.

IT is the Lord's way in this Gospel, as I have already noticed, to bring His mind into contact with all the exercises of the hearts and consciences of men, that thus we may get the judgment of God (for that He ever carried in Him) on all that concerns us. These verses illustrate this. And the subject here is *prayer*, one of deep interest to our souls. May the Lord guide the counsels of our hearts upon it!

The law generally did not require prayer, for the law was testing man, and calling on him to use his strength, if he had any; while prayer on the other hand, comes forth on the sense of our weakness and dependence. I remember, however, two forms of prayer provided by the law; but one is on the ground of innocency, the other on that of obedience, and thus both were suited to the dispensation with which they were associated (Deut. xxi. xxvi.). John's ministry advanced beyond the law, convicting flesh of being but grass; and as we learn here, that he had taught his disciples to pray, we cannot doubt but that, like the law, he provided an utterance for their hearts, suited to the standing in grace and knowledge up to which his ministry was leading them. So in the same wisdom here with the Lord, He provides a prayer for them suited to the condition of faith and hope to which he had conducted them. And all this is perfect because seasonable, because suited to them who had just said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

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But it would not have been thus perfect or seasonable, had it been an utterance altogether according to the increased light into which the church has been since brought. The Lord had not then entered, as the High Priest of our profession, into His heavenly sanctuary, nor was the Holy Ghost then given. Thus His own name is not pleaded here, as the Lord Himself says after this, "hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." But shortly after saying that, He adds, "in that day ye shall ask in my name"—thus plainly telling us that there would be an advance in the character of the worship of the saints. And so indeed we find it. The prayers which the Apostles, through the Spirit, make for the saints, entertain higher thoughts and deeper desires than what this prayer (perfect doubtless in its place) of our Lord expresses (see Eph. i. iii.; Col. i., &c., &c.).

And from all this, I do indeed judge that we may easily admit the perfectness, *because of the seasonableness*, of this holy form of prayer, and discern spiritually that the Lord was not providing it as the abiding utterance of the church. I do not at all say that the soul may not still use it, and find its desire at times expressed by it. But I believe the soul, fully aware of its new place under the Holy Ghost with Jesus ascended on high, is doing no despite to the Lord's holy furniture of his own sanctuary not to use it. He is the Lord of the temple still, it is most true, and our joy to own Him thus; but the Holy Ghost He has now given to be the living power there, and He fills it with true and spiritual worship, with groanings which cannot be uttered, with supplications, prayers, intercessions and givings of thanks, with the spirit of adoption which ever cries "Abba Father." For the same Lord of the temple

has thus so now ordained it, and it is obedience to walk onward with Him. What was once the beauty of His house is now beggarly elements, because the Lord has gone onward, leaving Jerusalem and its worship behind; and it does not become us to look back on the goodly stones with admiration, if Jesus have gone forth to the Mount of Olives.

But the Lord knows our frame; and when faith is weak He is gracious, ever gracious. As one, beloved in the Lord, observed to me, when the Israelites refused to go forward, though invited by the bunch from Eshcol, and had then to travel for forty years in the desert, the cloud became a wanderer in their company also. The Lord of Israel would go back even with His faltering and unbelieving people, and still wander in a tent or tabernacle with them. "Gracious Shepherd," the soul may indeed breathe out. The Apostle only reflects the mind of the Lord towards us, when all the coldness of the disciples towards Him drew out this word, "though the more I love you, the less I be loved." Hard to believe it, but still so it is, full, unchanging, everlasting love—a love that can stand every trial. As we sing together :

" Nothing changes God's affection,
Abba's love will bring us through."

And so towards us his poor weak children. He waits to be gracious. The saint should be far on in the desert, having seen and tasted Eshcol; but if faith be weak, the Lord does not refuse to meet us in the more southern parts, even such as border on Horeb again.

(To be continued.)

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

JOHN I.—*Continued.*

IT is sweet beyond all words, and it is as strengthening as it is sweet to find in immediate connection with His personal divine glories, the Lord Jesus presented as the Lamb of God. What a tale of grace have we here! Higher heights could not be than those we have seen Him filling; "the Son which is in the bosom of the Father." Depths so deep have never been sounded, even in this world of woe, as those to which He went down in grace as the Lamb of God: "the place of a skull," "the dust of death," the "horrible pit," the "deep mire where there is no standing," the "depths of waters where the floods overflow." Who but He—eternal God in His person—could have stooped in grace to such depths? Who but the *Son* of God could have become His *Lamb*, or offered an adequate sacrifice to meet His claims, or to bear away the sin of the world? But an *infinite* sacrifice has met the utmost claims of God and the utmost need of man. The peace of conscience which flows from it is according to the excellency of that sacrifice—according to the worth of Him who offered Himself without spot to God: "perfect as pertaining to conscience," "no more conscience of sins."

The words of faith almost wrung from the heart of the patriarch on the hill Moriah: "God will provide himself a lamb," find their answer and their accomplishment in the Lamb of God pointed out by the Baptist on the plains of Jordan. He was already, "foreordained," when Abraham bound his son on the altar; He was "manifest" when John bade his disciples "behold the Lamb of God."

Those among whom John bare his testimony were not strangers to the sacrificial lamb. They traced their very existence, as a nation, to the "night to be much observed unto the Lord," when the first paschal lamb was slain; and daily at even and in the morning a lamb was offered upon the altar, in the place which the Lord had chosen to put His name thereon. The Lord in taking the children of Israel to Himself, to be His people, has founded all His relations with them in the blood of the slain lamb, and these relations were *maintained* on the same basis of righteousness.

But now it was no longer "shadows," the substance was there. God's Lamb was among them. The blood of the lambs slain in Egypt, and the blood of those daily offered in Israel, would have had no value, had they not told beforehand of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This blood, and this alone, availed to establish and to maintain Jehovah's relations with His people. And for the wider sphere of God's work, in grace, the Lamb of God, and He alone, could re-establish the relations of God with a world which had gone away from Him, and establish them in grace, upon a new and imperishable basis of righteousness. Christ was to die for that nation (Israel), and that also He might gather together in one (the church) the children of God which were scattered abroad. Further, He "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Here, as in our chapter, it is a question of *sin* and not of *sins*. True, Christ was the *substitute* for every soul that comes to God through Him. Such souls can say, "Who His own self bare our *sins* in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed" (1 Peter ii. 24). God can in righteousness

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pardon—He loves to do it—the *sins* of everyone who believes. But, besides this, the Lamb of God has wrought a work by which every claim of God is met, as regards the *sin* of the world. This is the firm and eternal foundation of all the overflow of grace toward man ; the basis of all Gospel testimony. It furnishes the righteous ground of all God's merciful dealings with a rebellious world. And it is upon this ground that all things on earth and in heaven shall be reconciled to God. All the blessings of the reign of Christ, flow through the blood of the cross, by which He made peace (Col. i. 20, 21). The believer enters even now, into the full blessing which that blood has procured for the conscience, and as to the relations of his soul with God : “ You *hath* he reconciled.” But peace is made for a world estranged from God, and made by the Lamb of God. He has made possible relations of the world (not Israel only) with God, relations closer and better than could have existed in an unfallen creature. Without the cross, God might indeed have blotted out the defiled scene from before His holy eyes, but He could not deal with it in mercy, nor even support it ; the Lamb of God must bear away the sin of the world.

Oh, that we apprehended better the value of that work—the infinite worth of Him who accomplished it ! How simple would be our message to sin-sick souls ! How earnest withal ! Through that work God *can* meet *any* in righteousness and pardon them ; and He delighteth in mercy.

Can any fail to see the beautiful, the divine appropriateness of the introduction of the *Lamb* of God in this Gospel, in this chapter, just where it is ? If Christ was the Word of God making Him known, impossible that this revelation could be restricted to Israel, its

sphere must be *the world*; and for this world the Lamb of God has wrought a work of transcendent efficacy which meets and manifests the righteousness of God. Into the value of this work faith alone enters. Unbelief will never profit by it, save as an infidel profits by the long-suffering of God through the work of the cross. Nor is it in this verse a question of the individuals who profit by it, but of a righteous ground upon which God can make Himself known in the world, and ultimately bring it into blessing before Him. A period is hastening which is called in Scripture, "the regeneration" (Matt. xix. 28), "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts iii. 21), "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Eph. i. 10). Then the reconciliation of all things in heaven and in earth will be manifested, "and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." Precious fruit of the cross! All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship . . . they shall declare his righteousness to a people that shall be born, that HE HATH DONE THIS" (Ps. xxii. 29, 31).

Further testimony follows to the dignity of the person of Him who is the Lamb of God. He is preferred before him, He *was* before him. He is not only sealed by the Holy Ghost (and that *before* the blood of the sacrifice has been sprinkled or has even flowed), but "the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Who but He—Son of God, one with the Father—could baptize with the Holy Ghost? And whom could He have baptized with the Holy Ghost had He not been the Lamb of God?

John in his blessed contemplation of Jesus as He walked exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God," and the chosen of God are gathered around Him. Centre of all for God and for faith! Blessed is the ministry that

"LOVE NEVER FAILETH."

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turns the eye and the heart from itself to Him. Happy John, greatest of woman-born! Happy Simon, too, in another way—"brought to Jesus," and if possible happier Andrew who brings him!

Jesus takes His place as head of a new order of things, and in sovereign authority gives a name and a character which His own grace and power justifies in those to whom He gives them. Simon is "A Stone," and Nathaniël "an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile."

"LOVE NEVER FAILETH."

ALTHOUGH their former sinful actions had so sorrowfully affected him, Gen. xlii. 24 abundantly proves that Joseph's affections were in full exercise when his brethren *first* visited Egypt. Though they had treated him in a most unbrotherly manner, the lord of Egypt could not forget that those needy Hebrews were his own brethren, toward whom he could only cherish a brother's most tender affections.

But why did he hide his tears from his brethren?"

Because there was, at the moment, in existence, that which hindered the manifestation of his brotherly love. Moreover, while his brethren were occupied in blaming one another (Gen. xlii. 22), this obstacle could but continue.

The effectual removal of all that then prevented him from openly expressing his affection, was the one object he had in view, when he "spake roughly" to his brethren: It needed that their consciences should be rightly exercised on account of the sins which they had already committed; and that full confession of these should be

made before God, before they were made conscious of his heart's pent-up affections.

It was when he could no longer restrain these, that "he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again," &c.

Upon their *second* visit to Egypt, now accompanied by his brother Benjamin, how graciously he received them! How anxiously he inquired after the health of their common father! But, at the sight of Benjamin—"Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."

Benjamin, as yet, remained totally unconscious of the yearnings of Joseph towards himself! Why did Joseph suffer even Benjamin to remain ignorant of all this? Because the before-mentioned obstacle to the manifestation of his love had not yet been removed.

Am I now addressing a beloved saint of God, whose bowels yearn upon a brother or a sister, who has caused grief; upon a child of the same Father—a member of the same family—one redeemed by the same precious blood; and who has "obtained like precious faith" with ourselves. *Suffer then the word*, are you also *grieved* because there exists an obstacle to the outward expression of your Christian fellowship with such an one?

Did Joseph love his brethren less because his love was mingled with grief as he wept in his secret chamber? That child of God, who has been overtaken in a fault, is none the less our brother! Should our grief on account of fellowship hindered, cause our love to grow cold? Should this tend to alienate our affections from our brother?

If we are distressed, as Joseph was distressed, when he lacked opportunity to express all that he felt, before

his brother ; have we also " gone into the chamber, and wept there ? " And there fully expressed before our God and Father, what we lack opportunity to express before our beloved brother ?

How mercifully the Lord dealt with Joseph ? The very brother who had been the instigator of the cruel action that robbed him of liberty, home and friends, was the very instrument in the Lord's hands to effectually remove that which had hitherto hindered Joseph from expressing his love. But the repentant Judah's open confession of guilt, on his own behalf, and on behalf of the rest of his brethren, was made *after* Joseph had wept in secret. If Joseph had gone and told the Egyptains the deplorable position of affairs, between himself and his brethren, instead of going into his secret chamber to weep before God, how different would have been the final result of his actions !

Was Judah's *open confession* (Gen. xliv. 16) the answer to Joseph's *secret yearnings* before Him who seeth in secret, but who rewardeth openly ? And if we are so often grieved at the shortcomings of a brother, why are we so seldom found in our secret chambers, weeping before God ?

We pause, a moment, that we may notice the manner of Judah's resistless appeal on behalf of his younger brother. He said not one word about his own love for Benjamin, yet he risked his own life, when he courageously stepped forward, to plead for him. He grounded his eloquent, heart-stirring appeal, solely upon this—his aged father's love for the "little one." Because Benjamin was now the especial object of his father's love, rather than that father should for a time be deprived of the comfort which the presence of Benjamin afforded him, Judah willingly offered to surrender his own liberty,

to become a slave for ever, that Benjamin might be free.

If Judah pleaded thus earnestly for a brother, before the unknown governor of Egypt, what should be the character of *our* pleadings before the throne of grace, on behalf of a "little one," who, though he may have gone astray, for that very reason is the especial object of a Father's love, and of the tender solicitude of Him who is "an advocate with the Father?" Viewed in connection with the scene just referred to, how 1 John iii. 16 tests our hearts!

It was love that constrained Joseph to weep in secret, it was love that prompted Judah to plead openly, but how shall we speak of *His* love, who has taught us in His Word, that He "goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray." And if the Chief Shepherd's love for a sheep has led Him, at such infinite cost, to do all this, surely none of us ought to think it beneath our calling to live and act in communion with His love. Especially after He has also expressed His peculiar joy at the restoration of one that had gone astray, and, moreover, has in the same Scripture comforted us with the assurance that, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii.).

We must not now linger to speak of the complete triumph of love—that love which never faileth—which forms the theme of Gen. xlv.

Is not the present, for saints of God, "a time to weep;" a time during which it behoves us each one to go into the chamber; and also to plead earnestly before God on behalf of every "little one" who is an object of the Father's love? Though many hearts are now in heaviness, be assured of this, that the love which passeth

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knowledge, will ultimately triumph. And faith looks onwards to a bright and glorious day (in the which there shall be neither sorrow, nor crying), when He who went forth, weeping, bearing precious seed, shall return with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him; and He shall present every one of these "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

Beloved, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth."

A. J.

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER IV.—(INTRODUCTORY.)

THE opening words of this chapter, rendered literally, introduce a new scene, and point to a sphere of judgment, differing in the most important particulars from what has gone before. "After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here and I will show thee the things which must take place after these things."

"These things" are the churches as responsible to act up to their profession, that is, to bear testimony to the Lord Jesus. The seven selected by divine wisdom, give a complete picture of the various conditions of the congregations professing Christ from the time of John in Patmos, to the coming of the Lord.

God called Christians to be separate from the world, to shine as lights in it (Phil. ii. 15), but profession is in many cases unreal, and the churches receive and acknowledge numbers that are not converted. This state of things grows worse and worse, and the *coming of the*

Lord is pressed with earnestness on individual souls. Separation must take place then. True believers will be caught up to meet their Lord in the air. The thought of such a moment is most solemn, most impressive, and how much more so when we see from Scripture, that it may be at any time, "perhaps to-day." As multitudes of the dead will be left behind in the graves to await the summons to stand before God in judgment (Rev. xx. 5 and 11, 15), so, it is to be feared, many of the living in the Christian congregations will be left behind, to sink rapidly into the debasing corruptions portrayed in chap. xvii., or to fall under the power of the dragon, in some of the multiform delusions of the closing days of his tyranny. No warnings are more solemn, no appeals more earnest, no revelation of the immediate future more vivid, no descriptions of evil more graphic, no visions of impending judgment more appalling, no symbols of glory more dazzling, or of beauty more lovely, than those which the Lord gives to John to show to us. Other prophets have seen and heard wonders, yet Israel, we know, could read and hear unmoved, the deep and secret things made known to Daniel, the visions of God as given to Ezekiel, the heart-breaking sorrows that made rivers of tears run down the cheek of Jeremiah, while only the smallest remnant gave heed and escaped. And so to-day—Who are in earnest as to the words of this prophecy?

Nothing will help in the study of this book so much, as tracing the connection of the various scenes and actions in it with the position in which Christ is revealed, because the one design in it, simple and beautiful to every true saint of God, is to glorify Him. While judging the Churches Christ is alone, and, in vision, down here, walking in their midst. In chap. iv.

the scene is heaven, and all is changed as to the objects before us on earth. The tribes of Israel, the nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues, not the churches, are in view, and the Lord on the throne, the Creator of all, about to disclose the secret purposes concerning them. He is, therefore, surrounded with those who are to be with Him in every display of His glory (John xvii. 24). How they were brought there forms no part of prophecy, it is fully given by revelation to Paul (1 Thess. iv. ; 1 Cor. xv.). John, as a prophet, is shown every phase of ecclesiastical history from his own time to this coming of the Lord *for* His saints. Then he passes on to the things which must take place when Church history ends. This is real mercy, for the results to the unsaved of our being called up to meet the Lord, and leaving them to come under the righteous judgment of God, when He visits the ripening iniquity of the world, must, if realized, intensify our interest in their never-dying souls.

If we hitherto have thought but lightly of the danger of the unbelieving, with the words of this prophecy before us, there can be no uncertainty as to what may *soon* befall them. The principles of evil, which every day are gaining ground, are seen developed in this book—the near, as well as the distant, future, is not left in mystery or doubt. The Lamb (instructive title!) makes every successive stage of ruin known, as the malignant energies of Satan's agents are clearly set forth, and the anguish and the horror of those who fall under their influence, with the awful final result in eternal judgment, are fully disclosed. The refined ministry of the day too often shades off the darkness of the doom of unbelief, but here the terrible truth is laid bare in all its reality. May it not be in vain to many precious souls.

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The testimony which God gives of human wickedness begins early in Scripture, and His ways in respect to it are recalled in the symbols in this fourth chapter. This makes necessary a short introductory paper, before attempting to elucidate them, grouped, as they are, with divine wisdom and skill, in this vision of the throne of the Lord God Almighty.

There have been three principles or dispositions of God, under which men have been placed in responsibility to Him since the flood. The first has been called *providence*. Its gracious character may be gathered from Gen. viii. 21 to ix. 7. Its sign is God's bow in the cloud (ix. 12). Its sphere is as wide as the span of the rainbow—the whole earth. Its basis is the sacrifice of Christ (viii. 20). It is independent of man's character (verse 21), and is for the display of God's long-suffering patience, notwithstanding all man's protracted and increasing wickedness (Is. xxvi. 10).

The second principle is *government*, formally embodied in Israel, where God dwelt between the cherubim. That one nation was chosen as a special people unto the Lord Himself (Deut. vii. 6), that all other nations might see in them "a wise and understanding people," in their obedience to statutes and judgments so far surpassing those which other nations knew; the Lord Himself being ever nigh them in all things that they would call upon Him for (iv. 7, 8). As the centre of the whole system of nationalities, then debased with abominable idolatries, they were to be a living witness to them all of "how happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, how happy is that people whose God is Jehovah" (Ps. cxliv.).

The third principle is *grace*—the divine form of doctrine that reveals GOD AS SAVIOUR. According to this,

absolute and eternal salvation is offered freely, in and by Christ Jesus, to all. This infinitely merciful disposition, or principle of God in His ways towards men, began on the descent of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the rejection of the Lord Jesus on earth, and His ascension into heaven.

It has been lengthened out till now, because the Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But it may be terminated at any moment by the coming of the Lord ; then to be followed by the scenes and action of this book.

The results of the first principle, embodied in God's ways with men in providence, were manifested early in the world's history, and remain to this day. They are briefly related in Genesis ix. x., xi. Shame and sin are seen at once in the first family. Then ambition led on to self-exaltation and defiance of God. The judicial separation of the families of men into nationalities which followed, defeated their design of one mighty confederation, but opened the way for wars and bloodshed. Idolatry at the same time rapidly spread throughout the earth, and the Most High God was continually insulted in His own possessions by demons getting the praise and worship due only to Him.

Out of this dreary apostacy God called Abraham. The GOD OF GLORY raised in him a testimony against all the idols of the nations. But not only was he externally separated from the corruptions around, he himself *believed* God. Faith in the word of God, and simple obedience to it, were to mark a people separated from all other peoples, yet living in their midst. This was the character of the root, and this ought to have characterised the tree ; but the golden calf at their very start, and their abominable idolatry in the land, ex-

ceeded that of any nation on the face of the earth. In vain did the God of Glory, again and again, reveal Himself; in vain did the prophets describe their visions of the majesty and glory of His throne; the people became more hardened than the heathen. Great and marvellous was the patience and kindness of God toward this rebellious people, until, to all their manifold transgressions and sins, they added the rejection of their Messiah, the Lord of Glory, of the gospel, and of every offer of mercy. Then, and then only, were they set aside as the living testimony for God, and Churches were established to bear witness to Him.

The case against the churches has been already given. Alas! they have not stood the test more than Israel. Satan has sown all manner of corruptions, and the public professing bodies are threatened with judgment, even as Israel before them.

The state of *individuals*, and the judgment of public bodies must at all times be carefully distinguished, and jealously maintained. Though Israel, as a nation, has stumbled, and is now under God's sore displeasure, how many an Israelite we shall meet in glory! Touching and beautiful are Paul's description and vindication of the ways of God with His people in their fall and their rise again (Rom. ix., xi.). Yet if, as a nation, it must be set aside, there is always a believing remnant, he himself being a distinguished example.

Peter's epistles are addressed to the believers among the dispersed of Israel, a further proof of the truth we are considering, while that to the Hebrews confirms it.

So as to the churches, the sufficiency and the freeness of sovereign grace to sustain each soul brought to hear and heed the word of the Lord, is clearly revealed for the comfort of the feeblest, but this in no way interferes

with the responsibility of the sphere, or vessel of testimony. The public body, as such, may be cut off in judgment, but no individual believer can ever be lost "*He giveth more grace,*" and grace will win the day.

The symbols in this chapter, the throne, the rainbow, the living creatures, so manifestly point to these principles, that the deepest interest is awakened in all God's ways toward men. We are led to a more devout study of the *whole word of God*, and become humbled in the consciousness of how little we know of His deep perfections. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

II.

IN offering a few remarks on this lovely Psalm, which gives us the expression of the *Godward* heart and mind of the only perfect Man who ever trod this earth, it is not my purpose to enter upon its details, though most precious and instructive, except as to one or two verses of its second portion, which begins at verse 8.

We have in this Psalm, as I said, the expression of the ever Godward divine life in the Man Jesus, in His constant dependence upon, and communion with, His God, and the uninterrupted flow, "*like an even river,*" of peace and joy in His soul. It is true, *circumstances* are not mentioned in this Psalm (as in the following, where they come in largely), though implied and alluded to. It is the perfect *object*, and the perfect *motive*, in that ever perfect blessed Man. But the Psalm consists of two parts. The first (verse 1-7) gives us the Godward and

heavenward aspirations of the divine life in Jesus, and its goings out after God's "excellent of the earth," and at the same time its entire separation, in holy jealousy for the glory of God, from all that would be inconsistent with the fealty due to God from men, and especially all that would be contrary to the very first of the ten commandments, *i.e.*, *idolatry*, which, as to Christians, has a very broad margin, let us remember it (compare 1 Cor. x., 7 ; Col. iii. 5, and 1 John v. 21.)

In the second part (verse 8-11), we have the effect of the unimpeded, unchecked divine life in Jesus, manifested in His daily life on earth. It is this part of our Psalm, which the Holy Ghost takes up in the first gospel preached at Pentecost, in recalling to Israel's hearts and consciences, the humanity of that God-approved Man, even their Messiah, whom they had rejected and crucified.

Before entering a little upon this second portion of our Psalm, it is well to remember that the human life of Jesus on earth was but the natural and perfect expression of the divine life in Him, so beautifully described in verses 1-7. Just as God *does* what He does, and has done what He has done, because He *is* what He *is* : *Light* and *Love* ; and as man does what *he* does, because *he* is what *he* is : a *sinner* and *enemy* of God by nature ; so *Jesus*, that blessed, perfect *God-man* on earth, did what *He* did, because of what *He* was : "*God manifested in the flesh.*"

In verse 1 of our Psalm we have, at the very starting point of His human life, the expression of His entire dependence upon God. In verse 2, the perfect *Servant*, whose innermost soul says to God : "*Thou art my Lord !*" In verse 3, His association with the "Excellent of the earth, in whom was all His delight," so beautifully manifested in the latter part of the first

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chapter of John's Gospel, and in the synoptic Gospels, in taking His stand with them in the baptism of John, that marvellous and unique scene in which the heaven is opened and the whole Trinity appears. Then (verse 4) His entire separation from "those that hasten after *another God*," even the idolatrous hankerings and doings of men, and, alas ! of God's own people on earth, whom Jesus had to call "an adulterous generation." Then (verse 5), His Godward and heavenward aspirations and hopes (compare 1 Pet. i. 3; 4). And lastly (verse 7), the response of that perfect heart to God, in blessing Him for giving Him counsel.

The way in which God gives us counsel is by His own *written word*. But we must always remember that true principle : "*Never the Word without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the Word*." The same Spirit who wrote the Word of God, and dwelt in Christ, dwells in us to instruct us and to guide us into all truth. The disciples and the Old Testament saints before Pentecost, had the Scriptures, and they possessed a new nature. But in order to have the understanding opened in a Christian way, something else was required; first: *resurrection-life* (John xx. 22 ; and Rom. viii. 2), and then the being indwelt by the Spirit of God (Rom. viii. 11), the "new wine in the new bottles." But there is something else : "*My reins also instruct me in the night seasons*."

It is well, dear brethren, to remember this. It is not only God giving us counsel by His written Word, as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, but there is also the intelligence of the divine life in us as such, who "*have the mind of Christ*." During the silent, solitary seasons of the night, when *circumstances*—things seen and heard—disappear and are comparatively powerless, and when flesh and self are more subdued, it is that

"*our reins instruct us,*" producing deep exercise of heart and conscience "*before God, with whom we have to do,*" and the intelligence of the divine life within, at such times shines more brightly, and illuminates our life path, as to its many difficulties, often more than in the daytime, when it is impeded by the visible scenes around us.

Christian reader! How much do we know of *such seasons*? I do not mean only those solitary hours during forced night-watches in times of illness, when we "watch for the morning" (though our Father's chastening yet loving hand, may, and often does, turn even such seasons, into springs of blessing); but when "*out of the depths*" of exercised hearts, we cry to the Lord, and "wait for Him," "*More* than they that wait for the morning;" when we learn to say in truth, "I wait for the Lord, and in His Word do I hope." It is at such seasons when the voice of conscience, so often disregarded in the excitement of the noisy day, makes itself more loudly heard in the stillness of the night; when the Word of God, often, alas! so little heeded during the changing scenes, and absorbing claims of domestic duties or business of the day, asserts its powerful claim upon conscience and heart; when every unkind or unjust word or action towards our beloved ones or fellow Christians rises as accuser against us, whilst the voices of the wronged ones are hushed in the silence of sleep, though not yet of death, when wrongs committed against them, are beyond repair; it is at such wakeful night-seasons when we are above all, face to face with Him about all these things, even God, with whom we have to do, and before "whose eyes all things are naked and open," that "*our reins instruct us.*" And the heart and conscience thus being truly before God, flesh and self are laid bare, and

discerned and judged in the light of His all-gracious, but all-searching Presence. How often does it come to pass, that during such divinely real seasons, divine light bursts in upon the soul, and shines upon the most intricate difficulties in world and church, and of our private path—difficulties merely produced by our want of singleness of eye, and by our complicity of motives, such as fear of men, and pleasing self in all its various shapes. Thus it is that

“Our reins also instruct us in the night seasons,” and we get a *divine clue* for the *human labyrinth*, and in the light of God’s sanctuary we exclaim: “So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee.” But we then can add, in a still higher and better sense than Israel: “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory,” and we finish with: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee.”

But again, let us remember, beloved, that God gives us counsel by His *written Word*, whilst it is quite true, that by virtue of the divine life within us (the same life that was in Jesus when a man on this earth), and by the Spirit dwelling in us, “Our reins also instruct us in the night seasons.”

To be in God’s sanctuary, where His written Word takes us, is not a matter of mere religious imagination, but of *sober, i.e., real faith*; and “our reins instructing us in the night seasons,” is not produced by the religiously deceptive feelings of the natural heart. The words of warning of a well known servant of Christ (J.N.D.) are of great importance, especially *in our days*. I could not conclude this first portion of our Psalm, better than by giving them to the reader:—

“That to which the Christian has to give much heed

(is this) that he neglect not the holy suggestions and conclusions of the divinely instructed life, when freed from the influence of surrounding circumstances. It may seem folly, but if found in humbly waiting on God, will, in the end, prove His wisdom. It can always be discerned from an *exalted imagination*."

"In the first place, the state of soul is exactly the opposite; *for pretension to special spiritual guidance is never humble*. But besides, *the controlling judgment of God's Word, which overrules the whole divine life, is there to judge false pretensions to it*. To this, divine life is *always absolutely subject*. Christ, who was this life, yea, was the Word and wisdom, yet (and because He was) *always honoured the written Word, as the guidance and authority for man*."

Sober and wholesome words of warning exhortation these! May we heed them, Christian reader, now, more than ever!

Let us now, after what may appear to some a digression, but is essentially connected with our subject, proceed to the second portion of our Psalm, as more immediately bearing upon it.

(To be continued.)

The Lord be with you and bless you, drawing your heart into a deeper sense of how *real* a thing it is that God's joys are *our's*, and will be, throughout His eternity! All else passes without satisfying in its passage. This satisfies without passing away. When God breathed into man's nostrils, it made it impossible for less than *Himself* to satisfy the craving of man's soul, however low man might fall. Hell will be the hideous unrest and despair of a soul created for the highest end, which has sought its weal away from God, and in spite of God. Heaven will be the perfect enjoyment of God, lost through sin, made known in redemption more excellently than ever.

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER i. 35 to chapter ii.—In this portion the Spirit of God brings before us types of some of the dealings and *dispensations* of God which are not as commonly referred to in this, as in some of the other Gospels. That which is most characteristic of our gospel, as has been more than once remarked, is the revelation of God Himself in the Lord Jesus, “the Word ;” and of God in the highest relationship, Father. This is above all dispensation. It connects itself rather with eternity. Yet, assuredly, there is no contradiction between the nature and being of God, revealed in the Son of His love, and His blessed ways with men. Our God has taken care to manifest the perfect harmony there is between these ways, and that highest revelation in giving us the portion now before us.

The sweet meditation of the heart of John—the exclamation which escapes his lips has its true and divine effect upon two of his disciples ; they follow Jesus. Won for Him by a divine testimony, which embraces the whole length, and breadth, and depth, and height of His work for God and for man, they seek nearness to His person. What a tale their earnest inquiry tells “Rabbi, where dwellest (abidest) thou?” Others had need of His power and His mercy for their blindness, or their leprosy, or their palsy ; *the one need of these was HIMSELF.* Whilst John in his own contemplation and meditation, exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God,” another voice sounds in their hearts. They hear and

learn of the Father, they come to Christ, "Rabbi, where abidest thou?" And what a reception, "Come and see!" They had been drawn of the Father; the Father had given them to Christ who receives them from His hands; John vi. 37-44. "Come and see!" Unknown path—the vulture's eye has not seen it! Unknown abode, but they abide *with Him*! On that day the eye and heart of God rested upon one unnamed spot. All the interest, all the delight of God was there. It was because Jesus abode there. And in that very spot these two disciples abide. Sweet the rest of that eventide, and clear its heavenly light! Jesus abode there, and they were with Him.

Surely we learn here somewhat of our own privileges in this present period of pure and heavenly grace. Darkness is over the world, but there is "marvellous light" where Jesus abides. Ineffable rest, peace that passeth all understanding where Jesus abides! And His own are with Him. "They came and saw where he dwelt (abode), and they abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour."

Nor are the activities of grace wanting to a soul in nearness to Christ. How could they be? "The love of Christ constraineth us." That love has made a place of peaceful rest for Andrew near to Christ, and he would fain lead his brother Simon there. "First" activity of grace in his heart, but surely not the last! "And he brought him to Jesus." It was to Jesus that God was gathering. Andrew had proved it to the refreshment and rest—to the salvation of his soul. And now he is a co-worker with God in gathering to his own new-found Saviour. Would that we knew more of this abiding with Christ, of this *nearness* to Him! Would that the precious fruit of this nearness in winning souls

for Christ were more found in us and among us! A rare fruit for our God, precious to Him as that of His own grace in hearts touched by it and filled with it!

"The *next day*" we have a very different scene dispensationally, though the grace is the same and the centre too. When the Lord has finished His good work of gathering souls to Himself, to know Him whilst He is unknown in this world, to taste communion with Him in His path of loneliness and rejection here, and to share His throne of glory in its coming day, He will call others to fill scenes now desolate, with the glory and fragrance of His Name. There is a people now in unbelief who "as touching the election are beloved for the father's sakes." The remnant of this people He will bring "through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried . . . I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9). Blessed for us as well as for Israel that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance!" This people, like Nathanael, at first met their Lord with unbelief, and even scorn; "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But like him when they are a people willing in the day of His power they will exclaim, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel." Like Thomas, too, later in this gospel, they who *would not* believe, will when they see Him greet Him as "My Lord and my God!" See also Is. xxv. 9. The "stubborn and rebellious generation" (Israel under the old covenant) cried "Away with him;" "we will not have this man to reign over us." The "generation to come" (Israel under the new covenant) will cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

For three years the Lord sought fruit on His fig-tree

—Israel under the old covenant—and found none. The lips which spake as never man spake at length pronounced its doom, "Let no fruit grow on thee for ever; and presently it withered away." A cumberer of the ground, a tree fruitless for God, it was "cut down." Impossible that a people under the covenant of Sinai could have any other end! But Rom. xi. and a host of passages show us that the blessing which Israel under law could not obtain, God will bestow on the ground of mercy, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. When He brings forth His "Servant the Branch," the thoughts He thinks of Israel, "thoughts of peace and not of evil," will have their worthy accomplishment. His joy, according to Zeph. iii. 17, will be full. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and *under the fig-tree.*"

Nathanael, type of Israel under the new covenant, was seen of the Lord under the fig-tree before he was called. He is drawn, according to promise, "with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." The Lord speaks of him according to His own purpose and grace. He is an Israelite according to the 32nd Psalm. Called thus by grace, and in power he owns Christ after the manner of Ps. ii., "Son of God," and "King of Israel." But Christ takes His place, not according to Ps. ii., for He is rejected, but in the wider glories which God had prepared for the rejected One. He is "the Son of man" (Ps. viii.; Heb. ii.; Matt. xi. 25-27), and, not only in the day of His glory, but *thenceforth*, object of the service of those ministers of God who most excel in strength.

The *third day* blessing is brought in; blessing which could only be poured out on the ground of resurrection

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The marriage is celebrated. In the type He was only a guest, His hour was not yet come. Yet, before the close, He furnishes the wine which it was the place of the bridegroom to provide. In the anti-type He *is* the Bridegroom.

What a scene of untold brightness for "Galilee of the nations" (Is. ix. 1), when His hour is come! How truly it will then be said, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined!" But for the water-pots of purification to be filled with wine, "that cheereth God and man," He must drink to its dregs the bitter cup of judgment. To this we owe the "cup of blessing" which *we* drink in communion, on the day of resurrection, week by week. We have indeed "rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." "The fruit of the vine" for the Father's kingdom, and Christ drinking it with *us* in the day of His joy and gladness, we owe, too, to His death, and shall enjoy it in the power of His resurrection. Israel, in like manner, when they have looked on Him whom they pierced, and been in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born, will drink deep draughts of "the good wine" of the kingdom. Beauty for ashes, indeed! The oil of joy for mourning! The wine of cheering and gladness for the water of purifying! *His* hand will furnish it—"fruit of His toil," His servants bear it, the people that sat in great darkness drink it. Great their joy on that third, that resurrection day, but greater His! "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married!"

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER IV. 2 & 3.

THE difficulty to such minds as ours of realizing the divine majesty, makes the use of symbols indispensable to convey right thoughts of its greatness and glory. In speaking of grace, God has deigned to use words expressive of well known human relationships, to instruct us in divine ones, "Be ye followers of God as *dear children*." "I have *espoused* you to one husband." "I will shew thee *the bride, the Lamb's wife*." But glory, especially judicial glory, requires another form of presentation. The symbols of this fourth chapter set before us, in a striking way, the power and authority which will govern and control all the varied scenes and actions on the earth, though mysteriously, at the time when the foes of Christ will gain a terrible ascendancy, and until those foes are made His footstool (Ps. cx.) ; a crisis to which all prophecy points, and of which the Revelation furnishes the fullest details.

"Behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone ; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

The rival throne is seen on the earth in chapter xiii. The Roman empire, which took part with apostate Israel in killing the Prince of life (Acts iv. 27), will be revived by Satanic energy, and again ally itself with the Jew under their false Messiah. "The beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion ; and the dragon

gave him his power, AND HIS THRONE, and great authority" (R.V.). His ally is then described from verse 11 to 17. The amazing fact is disclosed in Scripture, that the devil offered to Jesus this throne of the world, if He would but do homage to him (Luke iv. 5-8).

This horribly daring impiety was rebuked, and the devil silenced by a word from Scripture, and Satan's rage blazed out at the cross. THE LAMB is, therefore, the title continually applied to the Lord Jesus in this prophecy, not the same word as John uses in the Gospel, when speaking of Him as the sacrificial victim, but a diminutive, touchingly, yet forcibly, expressive of the unresisting sufferer in the path of absolute self-surrender to His Father's will. What light this throws on the whole book! How perfect is Scripture! If man instinctively thinks chiefly of himself, and forgets the past, He who sits in the heavens has not forgotten. The wrongs of Jesus at the hands of men have never yet been redressed *where those wrongs were inflicted*, but they shall be redressed. This throne is set in heaven to this end.

No subject demands from us such simplicity of faith, such yielding up the whole mind and heart to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the Person of Christ. He is "the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Is. xl. 10, 31), yet "God's holy Servant Jesus" (Acts iv. 27, R.V.); and this is the uniform testimony of Scripture. Therefore, we are not left in doubt as to whose presence fills the throne (verses 8 to 11). None other than the Jehovah of Israel, the Creator, revealed in the Son. It is in and by Him that the perfections of the Godhead are made known (Col i.-ii.). Absolute perfection, yet displayed in Him as far as the creature can behold it (1 Tim. iii. 16).

The effulgence of His glory here is compared to a jasper and a sardine stone. Of the symbol jasper we are not without instruction. In chapter xxi. it is, as an emblem; described as most precious, brilliant and pure, suited as a wall to secure, and as a foundation to sustain, the holy city Jerusalem (verses 11, 18, 19). This symbolic description of the church, as a city descending out of heaven from God, *having the glory of God*, affords us thus much help as to the character of this display of the glory: "Her brightness was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

Jasper, then, symbolizes, not the essential glory of God; not the light which none can approach to, but that glory which, while perfectly displayed in Him who is on the throne, yet can be given to the church according to the words of the Lord (John xvii. 22, 23).

Governmental glory; most precious, most holy, most pure and effulgent, sustaining and securing blessing for the creature without possibility of failure, is surely some part of the truth which is conveyed by the jasper stone.

But the sardine stone, what is expressed by it? Here, as far as the writer knows, there is not the same direct help from Scripture. It forms no part of the radiancy of the glorified church. It is not communicated glory. In Ex. xxviii. 17, it is the first of the precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest, each several gem of which, in symbol, presents the light and perfections of God in Christ, in reference to the need of His people. We must wait to know all that these wonderful types, the shadows of *good things to come*, express; but, oh! even now how much there is to know of Him who thus, in such glory and beauty, bears the judgment of His people upon His heart before God. Sardius is also seen in the foundations of the holy city. If, in addition

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to the perfect beauty suggested by the colour of the sardius blending with that of jasper, we find thoughts of perfect grace in judgment and of glory to come, the heart at least will be filled, if the understanding may long to be more fruitful.

(To be continued.)

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

THIRD PAPER. PS. XVI.

WE now come to the concise and beautiful picture of the Lord's perfect human life on earth, as given by the Holy Spirit of prophecy in the second portion of our Psalm, and taken up by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. It expresses, as this Psalm does throughout, Christ's perfect trust in His God, as indicated by verse 1, which as in the Psalms generally, gives us the key-note for the whole. But it is in the second part that this characteristic feature of the life of the perfect, obedient, and dependent man, Jesus, is especially prominent.

Verse 8 is but the natural result of verse 7, and of what precedes. His God—Jehovah—was the constant object before Jesus during His life upon earth, until His death, which ended that life, because He took up our cause. Unshaken in His confidence in His God through life, death leads unto resurrection, where we get God's answer to the immoveable trust and confidence of Jesus, in showing Him the path of life up into His presence

at His own right hand, "where there are pleasures for evermore." His God was His sole *object* before His face, and He was at His right hand as the staff of His confidence and dependence.

And why, beloved Christian reader, was God always the sole object before the Man Jesus on earth? Because He had "*set*" Jehovah *always before His face*. What a perfect *purpose of heart*, that little word: "*set*" does indicate, dear reader! During how many hours of a day—or shall we say, how many minutes of an *hour*—is Christ our object *before* us? A searching question for us all! And why, beloved, has Christ been so little our *object*? Is it not because we did not "*set*" Him before our *faces* with *purpose of heart*? And why have we "*set*" the Lord so little before us with *purpose of heart*? Because we did not "*cleave to Him with purpose of heart*;" as Barnabas, that "son of consolation," enjoined the disciples at Antioch (Acts xi. 23).

How was it that Jesus "*stedfastly* (mark the word *stedfastly*) *set His face* to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 51), knowing that the Cross, and all that the Cross meant, was awaiting Him there? It was because He had "*set*" the Lord *always before His face*. How was it, Christian reader, that the Lord of glory, who at His rebuke dried up the sea, and makes the rivers a wilderness; who clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sackcloth their covering, did "*set*" His face like a *flint*, not hiding it from shame and spitting? It was because He had always *set the Lord* ("*Jehovah*") *before His face*." What is harder than a flint? And what more tender and more sensitive than the human face? The face is the mirror of a man's whole being, of his heart and mind. It is his most honourable part; and, consequently, no insult is considered more outrageous, and

therefore more resented amongst men, than spitting in the face.

Behold the Lord of Glory and Creator of this world; in the midst of the band of common soldiers, placing the mock crown of thorns (the produce of that field upon which the rain in vain had come down in showers of blessing, and which was, therefore, nigh unto cursing, and its end to be burned), upon His head—putting the mock purple upon Him—saluting Him with the mock title: “Hail, King of the Jews!”—bowing their knees before Him in mock homage—smiting Him on the head with the mock sceptre, and spitting upon Him, who bore the reproaches of them that had reproached God, and not only bore them, but “set His face like a flint” against it all. Can we imagine circumstances more overwhelming and crushing, more affronting to the feelings of the commonest among men, even the *Pariahs* of human society, than being fixed to the pillory, helplessly exposed to the loathsome missiles of scorn, insult, taunt and contempt? Even Pilate, vainly endeavouring to move the chiefs of “that nation,” who were “His own,” to pity, exclaimed, “*Behold the man!*” Yes, there is a kind of *circumstances*, unparalleled even in men’s history, as to their revolting awfulness—circumstances that are far (only that blessed One who placed Himself there, knew *how far*) more awful than even those of the pillory of deepest shame and degradation—scenes, circumstances, such as never have been, nor ever will be again in this world, until with all its vain glories and lying vanities, whereby it vainly attempts to varnish and hide its blood-stained guilt, it will be folded up like an old garment, and committed to the fire by the One who was the centre of those awful circumstances—even the *circumstances of the CROSS*.

They are given us by the Spirit of God in all their awful completeness, in the Gospel of Matthew, whilst the Spirit of Christ in prophecy, especially in Ps. xxii., which begins where Matt. xxvii. ends, gives us, in the wonderful language of prophecy, the inmost feelings produced by those circumstances in that Holy One of God, the perfect obedient man, whose spotless body was fixed to that cross.

What do I say? Feelings produced by *circumstances*? Oh no! It was not the realization of circumstances, even those of the cross, that drew forth from the lips of our Saviour that heaven-piercing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was the withdrawal of the face of His God from Him, during those three hours of complete darkness, when the sun hid his face, refusing to countenance that culminating act of Satan's and men's rebellion and wickedness, and when the God, whom that holy Sufferer ever had set before His face during His life on earth, hid His face from Him, because He, whose eyes are purer than to behold iniquity, then and there "laid our iniquities upon him." It was this that filled the cup of the lowly obedient Sufferer up to the brim, when his seeking eyes could no longer discover the face of His God, the smiles of which had cheered Him in His solitary rugged earthly path. It was not the bulls of Bashan that beset Him round and gaped upon Him with their mouths as a ravening and a roaring lion, the dogs that compassed Him, nor the assembly of the wicked that enclosed Him, and looked and stared upon Him, and parted His garments among them and cast lots upon His vesture, that drew forth that cry of deepest agony from the Creator of this world. Neither was it those deep waters of death beneath the Prince of life, that were about to enclose him, when at the noise

of God's waterspouts, deep called unto deep. But when that blessed face of His God withdrew from His own dear Son, and all the fiery billows of a sin-hating God began to roll over Him, whilst His holy body was fixed to the tree of curse in the agony of death, then it was that the appeal of the holy Sufferer, the Creator of heaven and earth, went up to His God, in its heaven and earth moving power.

May that cry, heard during those hours of darkness, reverberate in our hearts and consciences, dear Christian reader! If this were the case, how different would be our testimony in our daily walk in this world, as such who are crucified to the world, and to whom the world is crucified; as such, who have crucified the flesh with its lusts and desires! How different would be our demeanour towards one another in the church which is the house of the living God! And what epistles of Christ would we be, as being not only written by the Holy Ghost, but distinctly known and read by all men! And what power and blessing would we bring with us into "the assembling of ourselves together," especially on the first day of the week, when remembering the Lord in His death?

Years ago, one Lord's Day morning, an aged servant of Christ rose at the Lord's Table to read the 22nd Psalm. No sooner had he read those words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when, overwhelmed by the power of them, and realising—as far as can be done by poor, frail ones like us—something of their meaning, he sat down, and, burying his face in his hands, burst into tears. There was no dry eye in that meeting, and when the bread, the memorial of His holy body bruised for our sins, and the "cup of blessing," the memorial of His precious blood shed for

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their remission, passed round, and were partaken of, it was done truly "in remembrance of Him," in the remembrance of hearts bowed down before our God and Saviour under the sense of being, not only *dearly beloved*, but also *dearly bought* ones.

Such meetings around the Lord's Table are rare, alas! in these days. . . . "And there was *also* a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke xxii. 24).

Let us now consider the results, in the earthly life of our Lord, of "*setting His God always before His face.*"

(*To be continued.*)

THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH.

Notes of a Lecture by J. N. D., in 1860, on 1 Samuel vi. and 2 Samuel vi.

THE ark, the symbol of God's presence, is the great thing here—the symbol of the Spirit's presence in the Church, not in heaven but on earth. The grand argument of the apostle in urging us to cleanse ourselves, &c., is the divine presence in our midst (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16, vii. 1). The Holy Ghost down here is the fruit of the solicitude of Christ for His people. He had a deep sense of the high and holy ground on which His disciples were placed, one on which they cannot stand but by the power of the Holy Ghost. No sin, no coldness, can wear out His perseverance. He abides with them *for ever* (John xiv. 16). Have you learned the mystery of oneness, the unity of Christ's members

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with Himself? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" (Acts ix. 4). "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of *His* eye" (Zech. ii. 8).

Anxieties must be in the heart in order to faith and trust, to which they give place. Looking into the future, Jesus committed His mother to the care of John. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother" (John xix. 26, 27). He anticipated all her anxieties (comp. Phil. iv. 19). Transcendentalism, so much in fashion now, is not *faith*, it is not of God. We have to *walk* by faith, not through sublime illusions of the imagination, but amid the solid realities of the scene and circumstances we are in, and we need what is of God, real and immoveable, to lean upon. The Holy Ghost descended in consequence of the going up of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is that other Comforter who shall abide with us for ever; the witness and the expression of the sympathy of His heart toward the weakness of His people. Before the interests, so dear to the Lord's heart, for His people were met, He went about among them forty days. He then went up, and for ten days God, personally, was not on the earth. No wonder they shut the door! (John xx. 19 and 26: Acts i. 13). His fortunes were left to them, and to us, too; we are His representatives, though so very weak. The world would hate them as they had hated Him, and they should be put out of the synagogues (John xv. 18; xvi. 2). Nevertheless they had this, they loved Him, and were loved of Him. He spake peace to them; He had also promised to send the Holy Ghost; they waited in expectation, and He came, in answer to the name of Jesus Christ, and to give Him glory. Where does

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He abide? Where does He act? Do you really believe in the Third Person of the Trinity as actually here on the earth? If you do, you will walk carefully, and look to hear Him speak in your midst (1 Cor. xii. xiv. ; 1 Pet. iv. 11).

The second chapter I read, calls us up to the exceeding high place He has set us in ; calling forth emotions toward the object of love ; for the acts of God's love, taken hold of and appreciated by the soul, become creative, and by the power of the Holy Ghost produce the feeling that responds.

Do you believe in a Divine inhabitant of the church, and that for the name of Jesus Christ nothing can drive Him away? And do you hold this truth dearer than any, save the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The coming of the Holy Ghost was in answer to the purpose of the Father, and the prayer of the Son. True, but it was also connected with the prayers of His people. All the promises of God are the awakers of prayer and expectation in the souls of those to whom the promise belongs, before it is realised. The actings of God's grace are in answer to faith. Faith does not stagger at truth, yet I am free to say, that no one knows what faith is who has not staggered. True faith removes the staggering, but if a soul has not staggered at the immensity of the thing revealed, it is because he has narrowed it up into some little object that human thought can reach. What! He a worm and no man, yet God! Some object to the expression "blood of God."* What else? Was He not as truly

*This expression, which is nowhere found in Scripture, is derived by inference from Acts xx. 28. But verses 22 to 27 inclusive, are a parenthesis, and by reading the passage in that way the antecedent to "*He*" in verse 28, will be found to be "Our Lord Jesus Christ" in verse 21. Tr. (See also New Trans. by J. N. D., Acts xx. 28, and the note. Ed.)

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God as man? All the actings of divine love and grace become true only to faith. The grace of God must needs be invincible, and irresistible, too, or we should come badly off.

The multitude in the upper room were believers, they were in the Father and in the Son, yet they waited for another. The Holy Ghost was an object of faith, "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him" (John xiv. 17). He is the object of knowledge, too, not merely the power of knowledge. He recalls the sorrows of the Lord Jesus Christ, and unfolds His glories. He is not less the object of faith since He has come, than He was before. His actings are in the name of Jesus Christ. He is here to repeat Jesus Christ, and so emphatically fulfils the word—"I will come to you" (John xiv. 18). The Lord Jesus Christ was the unsolicited gift of the Father's love (John iii. 16). Who could ever have imagined such a gift? Faith and the Lord attract each other. The leper came to Him, He went to the house of Jairus. The woman's touch (Mark v. 28) became the pulse of life between them. This is found repeatedly in the Gospels. Never let us help one another to unbelief. I know that God is the Creator of faith, but He uses human hearts and human lips, therefore let us encourage one another. "Smite,"—"smite" (2 Kings xiii. 18, 19).

The Lord when on earth surrendered Himself to faith, and acted according to the measure of it, when it was great, "*As thou hast believed, so be it unto thee*" (Matt. viii. 13). "*O, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee, even as thou wilt*" (Matt. xv. 28). When faith was small, He acted according to *Himself*, see Matt. viii. 26, where the disciples' "*little faith*," was answered by a "*great calm*."

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Faith is not a human virtue, suspicion and distrust naturally grow with our growth. We are all liars (Rom. iii. 13), and because we are so, we think all men liars, and believe no one. But faith is the gift of God, faith in Him (Eph. ii. 8). The Holy Ghost *is here*, but how we use Him is another thing. My consciousness of His presence depends upon His acting, not upon the fact only of His divine presence. If I don't believe it, I lose the blessing. His presence does not depend upon our behaviour, but our perception and enjoyment of it do.

Love never cavils, never reasons, never argues, but runs to *obey*, and would have nothing to do with what is not according to the will of its object; it delights in the words of Him it loves. Jesus Christ must reign supreme, love says so. He would not be one among many gods, as the *heathen* would have placed Him, nor would we consent to such a thing.

The church was never crucified for me, and though very dear, I'll not put her in His place. Love seeks to dwell in its own place. Oh, how grievous, that when He makes such a promise as "there am I in the midst of them," we don't esteem it more. He who is present in love is *holy*, and we may not trifle with His holiness. What is the table? What but the highest communication of a living love, "Do this in remembrance of me?" The holiness of God is never overlaid by grace. The character of the grace of God is, that it makes a way to lift you up to be partakers of His holiness. Remember all the actings of the Holy Ghost are in answer to the name of Jesus Christ. Would you have that divine person to be less holy? Rather would you not have your hearts lifted up to understand that divine presence

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in all its holiness. The incarnation is for life and worship, not for reasoning about.

The temple, exceedingly magnificent, was left desolate (Matt. xxiii. 38). • Though the priests were very busy, all was hollow, the substance was gone; but in the upper room (Acts ii. 2) the Spirit was the glory. A wretched place comparatively, but the scene of the divine presence. The dove had its home there.

The Notes are very fragmentary, but the truth is precious, and calculated to help souls. Though the sentences want finish, they are sufficiently clear and very suggestive.—ED.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS,
ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.

CHAPTER XI. 1-13.—(*Continued*).

But these things, beloved, I rather suggest in connection with this subject of prayer. He himself further shows us here, in the parable of the friend asking for the loaves at midnight, the *value or success* of prayer; and then in His contrast between the human and heavenly Father, the *warrant or securities* of prayer. And these securities He shows us to be two-fold—one drawn from the *love of the relationship*, the other from the *positive goodness* of God Himself, that we may have strong assurance of heart, when we seek the Lord and His blessing

• But I cannot pass on from this, without asking, does not the little expression “from within” carry much moral value with it? I think it does. It seems to tell

us that being "within" has a necessary tendency to indispose us to enter into those sympathies, into which we should at all times allow ourselves to be called. Moses, it is true, though in the midst of the pleasures of Egypt, went out to look on the burthens of his brethren; and Nehemiah, though in the Persian palace and all its delights, still wept over the desolations of the city of his father's sepulchres. They were both "within," but faith thrust them out. But their circumstances made this trial of faith the severer, and its victory more excellent and unusual. For it is indeed, beloved, dangerous to get much or far "within," lest the soul surveying its condition should say, "my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise and give thee"—then the need of a brother "without" will scarcely be heard, the burthens of Israel or the desolations of Zion will be scarcely looked at or inquired after.

This is indeed a fruitful spot in our Gospel. The lessons which it reads us are weighty and various, as all is which we get from our great Teacher, had we fervency of heart to hang over it, as in the sanctuary of our God. *

* As a distinctive mark of this Gospel, I would observe that in the corresponding place in Matthew, the Lord says that the Father will give "good things," to them that ask Him, but here it is "the Holy Spirit."—And again in contrast with John, the Lord here says, that the Holy Spirit will be given on *our* asking, but there on *his* asking (John xiv. 16). But this distinction is also very characteristic of the two Gospels, for here the Lord is teaching His disciples, training them, and calling their own hearts and consciences, as I have said, into exercise; but in John He is presenting Himself, not exercising the disciples in truth and holiness, but revealing Himself in dispensation, and therefore in that Gospel He speaks of His place and ministry in the great matter of the grant of the Holy Ghost to the Church. •

(To be continued.)

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER IV. 3, 4.

A THRONE was set in heaven." A *throne* in Scripture is the source of power ; and, we may add, the *order* of power for the time then present.

This throne has never been revealed before. Israel had revelations of the throne in connection with God's ways toward them (Ex. xxv. 17-22 ; Num. vii. 89 ; Is. xxxvii. 16 ; so Is. vi. 1-3, and again Ezek. i. 26 ; Dan. vii. 9, and other Scriptures).

The Christian, too, is familiar with the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, the throne of God revealed as the true mercy-seat, approached by us through the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19) ; the throne of grace (Heb. iv. 16) ; and the promised throne of Christ (Rev. iii. 21). The theme is thus vast and grand, and of the widest range for the devout student of the Word, while, in this vision, the thought is concentrated on the special display of governmental glory and majesty in judgment (not without grace), to bring an *earthly people* through "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

The rainbow round the throne recalls the covenant with Noah. It is important not to confound the order of God's ways since the flood, with that which preceded it. Before that event there was no constituted government in the world, and no promise as to the earth. But after it, God, on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ, graciously guaranteed the continuance of "seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, *while the earth remaineth*" (Gen. viii. 20-22).

He also made a covenant with the four heads of creatures preserved alive in the ark through the flood—with man, with fowl, with cattle, and with the beasts of

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the field (ix. 9-17). The rainbow round about the throne speaks thus powerfully to our affections. It tells us of God's patient goodness, though out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices, symbols of terror. Even as when the Lord brings a cloud over the earth, the bow in the cloud re-assures the anxious and the trembling, that God is blessing still, so the heart is cheered with this token round the throne. Creation glory has indeed been cruelly blighted by sin, yet what object is so lovely as the rainbow? And the darker the cloud, the brighter its beauty. So here, its appearance like an emerald (a gem of purest green), suggests, in the darkest moment of the tribulation period, the coming blessing, "a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining, after rain."

It is striking here to observe, that before aught else is mentioned, however necessary to complete the view of the throne, four and twenty elders are seen encircling it. The Holy Spirit has not only taught the coming of the Lord for His saints, in the simplest and plainest language (1 Thess. iv.), but also, that they will, in association with Christ, be *the future judges of the world, and of angels* (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). Christians may have neglected this truth, and its practical bearings on matters of this life, but this enthroned company, clothed in white raiment, and crowned as kings, with crowns of gold may well recall serious attention to it.

It has its comforting aspect, too. How cheering the thought, that many who here, like Lazarus, have the hardest lot, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the tables of the rich, will so soon be on thrones around *the throne*, government theirs in fullest display in due time, but before this, at perfect rest as to all the

judgments coming on the earth, active only in worship, and entering intelligently into all the *then* interests of the Lord they love.

The number, twenty-four, in harmony with the other parts of the chapter, is symbolic. As the twenty-four courses of priests appointed by David for the coming reign of Solomon, included the whole body of the priesthood, yet were represented by twenty-four chief men of the house of their fathers, so these twenty-four elders represent the whole company of the saints, raised and glorified by Christ at His coming, and awaiting as kings and priests the manifestation of the kingdom.

How perfect is their peace! The holiness, the majesty the glory of the scene awaken no fear, the lightnings, and thunderings and voices serve only to deepen their reverential worship, which rises in clearest tones above them all. (Compare 1 John iv. 17).

It is a sweet, yet solemn thought, dear reader, that the saints of God are on the very eve of their translation to this very scene. Not to believe this, is to weaken our interest in it. In spirit we are already brought, by the work of Christ, with purged consciences into the presence of God, our scarlet sins made white as snow; but while this is true, there is nothing more powerful to test our ways than the daily expectancy of the Lord's coming. Our time for learning His perfections, in all His present ministry to our *need*, will soon be over. Our time of dulness, too, for we are slow of heart to believe. But, once there, who so interested, who so intelligent, who so prostrate in worship, in unhindered communion and joy, as we? And, happy prospect! from all the countless multitude of the redeemed, then gathered round the throne in heaven, not one discordant note can ever arise. It is not their own blessing that

occupies them, rich as that blessing is. It is not the knowledge of His ways, for these are not yet disclosed (chapter v. 3). It is His infinite worthiness as Creator, in calling into being creatures who are to be so eternally happy. The groans of creation are about to cease at their manifestation (Rom. viii. 19, 21), and every creature in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, to join in the unceasing celebration of His praise. Oh, what a God He is! Holy, holy, holy. It is this that draws out every affection of the heart in worship. How perfectly the question of sin must have been met, that not a spot can be found to disturb a single soul, not a fear to cause a tremor in a single note. All are prostrate in worship, and every crown is laid at his feet, in the joy and delight of ascribing all the worthiness, all their glory to Him." Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour, and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will, they were, and were created."

(To be continued.)

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

IV. •

LET me say a few words, before doing so, on the opening verses of the fourteenth chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. There we find a class of men with a very distinct object before them, and a corresponding powerful motive within. But both object and motive are the very opposite to those of the perfect Man in our Psalm.

God answers, through His prophet, such presumptuous inquirers, not according to their inquiries, but

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according to the real condition of their idolatrous hearts ; He—*takes* them in *their own hearts*, because they are “estranged from Him through their idols.—A solemn instance of this we find in 1 Kings xiv. Or, more solemn still, *God Himself* answers such a bold inquirer by setting His face *against* him who putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity (for instance, money, the “mammon of unrighteousness”) before his face, and makes him a sign and a proverb, and cuts him off from the midst of His people, that they may know that He is the Lord. Chapter xxii. of the same book furnishes us with an awful instance of such a personal answer of the Lord. The same chapter (1 Kings xxii.) shows us (as does Jer. xxviii. 15-17 in an equally solemn way) how the Lord, “the righteous Judge,” deals with such who take the place of leaders of His people, leading His people astray, “deceiving and being deceived.”

Solemn truths these, now more so than ever ! For these are the very last days. The closing epistles of Paul and Peter, and that of Jude, have forewarned us as to these perilous times ! May we heed the warning voices of those holy watchmen of God. The Lord shows Himself upright to them that are upright, and to the froward he shows Himself froward, now, as in days of yore. Whatever He may do for His people, in His rich and sovereign grace, He cannot, nor will He ever relax the reins of His government, nor forego the immutable principles of divine righteousness. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,” but as to them that “have made them crooked paths,” they “wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but they walk in darkness. They grope for the wall like the blind, and they grope as if they had

no eyes : they stumble at noonday as in the night. . . . They look for judgment, but there is none ; for salvation, but it is far off from them " (Isa. lix. 8-11).

The Lord does not, nor can He give light to them that prefer darkness to light, sacrifices to obedience, and the fat of rams to hearkening to His Word. To hypocritical inquirers, He answers with : "An *evil and adulterous generation*," &c., and to vain and reasoning questioners He says : "*Thou fool !*" (1 Cor. xv. 36).

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

"If, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

But the heart longs, after these solemn, though, alas ! but too needful reflections, to return and cleave to the bright and altogether lovely Person of the perfect Man, who is the attractive subject of our Psalm.

There are five things mentioned here, as the results of that perfect Man's setting His God always before His face, and having God at His right hand as His companion, "*walking with God*" (as did *Enoch**), never *stepping before Him*, nor *lagging behind Him*. They are :—

1. Jesus could not be moved ;
2. His heart was glad ;
3. His glory (or *tongue*), did rejoice ;
4. His soul was not left in *hades* ;
5. He was not suffered to see corruption.

I.—JESUS COULD NOT BE MOVED.

We may be sure, Christian reader, that Satan, the prince and god of this world, did not leave one stone

* *Enoch* and *Abel* are the only witnesses of faith, in that bright list in Heb. xi., who in the *Old* as well as the *New Testament* only obtain a *good report*. Even Joseph failed at his father's death-bed, to discern God's mind, and *Jacob then* was wiser than he.

untuned, to move the feet of that blessed Man from off the path of obedience, and out of the place of dependence upon God. So it was from the outset of His public testimony and ministry, when the arch-deceiver attempted to bribe His eyes with the splendid panorama of the kingdoms of this world, to turn His feet out of the path of allegiance to God, until, at the close in Gethsemane, Satan brought all the pressure of the power and terror of death he wielded, to bear upon that obedient Man, so that His sweat became as great drops of blood, and fell upon the ground, He could not be moved from His place of dependence upon His God. There never was a man on earth with so *large* a heart, and so *narrow* a path for his feet, as Jesus. There are many Christians, alas! who plead largeness of heart as an excuse for the *broad way* their feet are walking in, sacrificing divine truth on the altar of the smiling idol of latitudinarian love. They forget that *love* without *truth* is no *divine*, but *human*, i.e., idolatrous love, just as *grace* without *truth* is very foreign to Him, by whom "*grace and truth*" came into the world, and *wisdom* without *truth* very different to that "*wisdom from above*," which is *first pure, then peaceable*.

What heart larger than His, who embraced in that blessed word "*Whosoever*," a world full of sinners and enemies, when God was in that perfect Man, reconciling the world to Himself? And what path narrower than His, beset with traps and snares, and difficulties and opposition at every step of His life? It is comparatively easier (to speak after the manner of man), to turn aside, or upset one walking in a very *narrow path*, than to make one swerve from a broad way. Yes, if his heart becomes contracted and narrow at the same rate with the path!

But was that ever the case with the only perfect Man on earth? It is true, He made a scourge of small cords when He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves (necessary articles for the sacrifices) and the changers of money. He drove them all out of the temple, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables, because they made His Father's house a house of merchandise. Was He at that moment less than before, the gentle, loving Jesus, who could say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of HEART!" It was the glory of His God and Father that was the paramount object before, and the paramount motive *within* Him.

Or did He swerve from His narrow path, or try to widen it, when He, who came to magnify the law, was filled with holy indignation at the heartless narrowness of the teachers of the law, when He healed on the Sabbath, and unsparingly exposed their hypocrisy, or, when on a similar occasion He declared that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man's sake, and that the Son of Man was Lord also of the Sabbath?

There was a Man on earth, Jesus of Nazareth; disallowed by man, despised by the builders; pursuing His solitary, narrow path of obedience, in one straight unbroken line without a curve. His eyes were ever up to His God; the law of His God was in the midst of His bowels, and by the word of His lips He kept Himself from the path of the destroyer. He walked with the largest heart in the narrowest path, from which all the subtlety, malice, and opposition of Satan and his tools could not make Him swerve. And when the adversary attempted to turn Him aside from His path of perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, by the

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lips of the chief of His apostles, saying: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," Jesus turned—not from His path, but to the tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." "*He could not be moved.*"

And when at the close, the holy spotless body of the obedient Sufferer hung fixed to the tree of curse, and the prince of this world once more tempted Him with the taunting challenge flung at Him: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross;" and "He saved others, himself he cannot save:" "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him;" and when even the thieves which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth,

"He could not be moved."

(Oh! if He *had* come down, what of you and me, dear reader.") He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

"He could not be moved,"

nay, not even when His God had forsaken Him, and it was not merely Pilate's "Behold the man," but "*a worm and no man!*" But He was cast upon His God from the womb; God was His God from His mother's belly. To Him the holy Sufferer did cling, when He was poured out like water, and all His bones were out of joint; when His heart was like wax melted in the midst of His bowels; when His strength was dried up like a potsherd, and His tongue did cleave to His jaws; when God brought Him into the dust of death, . . . still "*He could not be moved,*" until He bowed His head and said, "*It is finished!*"

The victory was won ; Satan and all his powers and principalities were defeated ; the Rock of Ages, who had endured, had triumphed over them publicly at the cross. The veil was rent. When the One who could not be moved, had spoken the words of victory : "It is finished," and bowed His head upon the cross and died . . . then heaven and earth were moved. For His God had "heard his voice out of his temple and his cry came before him, even into his ears."

"Then the earth shook and trembled ; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken because he was wroth." . . . "He bowed the heavens also, and came down," &c. (Ps. xviii.).

God was now about to show "*the exceeding* greatness of His power" (far more than at the Red Sea, though not before men), which He was to work in that blessed Man who had been immoveable in His obedience in life, and was now lying a prisoner with the dead, *motionless* in obedience in death.

Dear fellow believer ! How far do those words, "I shall not be moved" come true in our daily lives ? We are passing through a cruel and subtle enemy's country, where all those "that will live godly in Christ Jesus," following in the footsteps of that obedient Man, "*must suffer persecution.*" How far can we say with the apostle : "None of these things move me ?" Paul was a man, subject to like passions as we are, yet he could say, "None of these things move me." So we see it was not on account of Christ's essential divine perfections as Son of God, that He was—

"Unmoved by Satan's subtle wiles,
Or suffering, shame and loss,"

but He *withstood*, and *stood* in the same way, in virtue of the same principle of dependence

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upon God and obedience to His Word, as His servant Paul or any of His followers have to withstand the subtle or violent attacks of the adversary. We find this beautifully expressed in Ps. lxii. 1: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God, from him cometh my salvation." Verse 2, "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be *greatly* moved."

The word "*greatly*" shows, that this does not refer to *Christ*. It could not be said of Him, that He was not "*greatly* moved," for our Psalm tells us that He was not moved at all. But it is, practically, very different with *young*, and in our days, sometimes with old believers, alas! For they are liable to be *greatly* moved unless they abide in Christ, their rock and defence, and have His Word abiding in them, thus building upon the *rock* instead of upon *sand*. But what do we read in verse 6, as the result of a constant abiding in Him? "He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence; I shall *not be moved*." He leaves out *greatly*, and says, "I shall *not be moved at all*!"

Brethren, God has placed His people on *everlasting, divinely solid foundations*. Eternal life is ours in Christ, an *eternal redemption*, wrought by Him; the Eternal Spirit abiding with us for ever; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever; no variableness, nor "shadow of turning" with the Father; further, a kingdom which cannot be moved; His Word, which abideth for ever, and above all the blessed hope soon—perhaps this very day—to be "for ever with the Lord." Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Next time a few words on the second result: "His heart was glad."

(*To be continued.*)

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. ii. 13-22.—In Galilee the Lord can bring in blessing at once : at Jerusalem judgment must first do its work. The “people that dwell in the shadow of death,” scattered hundreds of years longer than the people of Jerusalem and Judea, and kept even by their misery and dispersion from the guilt of rejecting Messiah, will be restored as a repentant people. The Lord will have pleaded with them face to face “in the wilderness of the people”—whilst still scattered among the nations—and will then cause them “pass under the rod,” and bring them “into the bond of the covenant” (Ezek. xx. 33-44). Restored, they will receive from the Lord's hand the refreshing cup of “the good wine kept until now.”

Judah, on the other hand, and especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will be restored to their own land, not by the direct action of the Spirit of God in blessing on an acknowledged people, but by the providence of God whilst they are still in unbelief. It will be manifested that that stiff-necked and Christ-rejecting generation has not passed away, that though scattered for more than eighteen hundred years, they have never been *lost* among the nations. This generation that refused the One who came in His Father's name, will receive Anti-Christ who will come in his own name ; and will pass away *as that generation* with his destruction ; but only, thank God, to emerge from the great tribulation as the “generation to come,” a people willing in the day of Messiah's power. For Christ shall thoroughly purge His floor. He will vindicate His Father's honour in that house, the latter glory of which shall be greater

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than the former (Hag. ii. 9). In His person Jehovah will come to His temple to fill it, when first He has cleansed it from the abomination of desolation, with a glory which might well make the posts of the door move as they did of old at the sound of His voice, were it not that the latter glory shall have been won in the dust of death, and secured to it in the power of resurrection. Compare Is. vi. and John xii. 39-41 with John ii. 19-22.

Twice during the Lord's ministry He cleansed the temple, at the beginning and at the end of it. The account of the former we have here; the other three Evangelists record the latter. The former is as distinct from the latter as is the aspect in which the Lord is seen in this gospel from those in which He is viewed in the others. In no other gospel does He so soon speak of His rejection and death: "Destroy this temple." The light was too bright for the eyes of man in the flesh, Jew or Gentile. Not only was it not comprehended by the darkness, but it was refused from its first shining. The Jews ask a sign even when the Son is moving about in His Father's house in a jealousy of that Father's outraged honour, and with a light and power which they could not resist. But if they are helpless to resist they can murmur out their unbelief and their hatred. The "sign" is, as ever, His own death, "Destroy this temple." And this, be it remarked, not towards the end, but at the very beginning of His service, even before John was cast into prison, and before the ministry recorded in the other gospels began. But not only His death is given as a sign but His resurrection, and this in a way almost peculiar to the gospel of John. He is here the One who had "life in Himself." "In three days I will raise it up," is but a further unfolding of "In Him was life." His personal glory shines but the brighter by means of His death. "There-

fore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John x. 18. It is true, and of the greatest importance, that He "was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4); "whom God hath raised from the dead" (Acts iii. 15). It is as true that Christ "raised up" the temple of His body. A precious truth which we cannot spare! Every ray of His glory is precious to us who owe all to Him. May our hearts ever bow in worship as we contemplate in such as verses these His divine glory as the Son of the Father, as that eternal life which was with the Father!

Blessed, too, the contemplation of One so glorious in His own Being, guarding with jealous care the sanctity of *His Father's* house! In the later cleansing, when He had gone up to Jerusalem to die, He spake of the temple as *His* house. How beautifully both were in season! The *Son*, before He begins the regular ministry elsewhere recorded, and in the conscious relationship of which His words testify, will not permit the dishonour of His Father in the house which still bears His name. But when, three years later, He is there again, the rejected Messiah, the servant come up for the service of death, the Son of Man about to give His life a ransom, then, indeed, He claims the house as His (though soon to be left desolate), and vindicates at once His claim, and His holiness, in an unaided and unresisted purification of the temple. Such is the perfection of His blessed ways! Such, too, the perfection of His holy Word, which gives each in its due order and place!

Let us note in passing, the essential falseness of the witness before the high priest, recorded in Matt. xxvi.

“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.”

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61. These false witnesses, and later, the passers-by at the cross, put words into the lips of Jesus, which those blessed lips never pronounced. So far from a vain boast of power, which might indeed have suited their evil hearts, it was they who were to “destroy,” He would “raise it up.” Never, never, could He destroy the temple of God. But if man destroyed it, He, for His Father’s praise, would raise it up in a glory which man could never touch.

For it was indeed the temple in which His Father dwelt, which they “destroyed” in rejecting and crucifying Him. It was in that temple which He raised up, in which the true worshippers might behold the “beauty of the Lord,” and might worship the Father. A new order of worship was to be brought in, as we see more fully in chapter iv. Already the “temple of His body” speaks of it. Here we are brought into *nearness to God*. The death of Christ rent the veil; and we *enter* the holiest by a new and living way. The way is *living* because He lives. Henceforth our place is where God is, “to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” *Nearness to Him*, in the value of a work to which He owes His highest glory, *nearness to Him* in a life which Christ is, *nearness to Him* that we may “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ”—such is our place! Surely “praise waiteth for thee, O God,” in such a place. “In His temple doth every one speak of His glory.”

“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.”

THE Good Shepherd—He who gave His life for the sheep—foretold that there should be one flock, and one Shepherd. He died, not for Israel only, “but that also He should gather together in one, the children of God

scattered abroad." Before His death—even upon the self-same night in which He was betrayed—Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, and prayed, not only for those whom the Father had already given Him (John xvii. 9, 10), but also for *all* who should believe on Him through their word (verses 20, 23)—"that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."

At the moment when He thus pleaded with His Father, concerning us who believe, He knew perfectly well that, after He had died for our sins, had risen again for our justification, and had ascended to the right hand of God, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, would come. He had so taught His sorrowing disciples (John xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7). He also knew (although he had not revealed this result as yet), that at the coming of the Holy Spirit, all that believe would be baptized into one body, and be thus brought into special relationship with Himself, as also with one another; every one members of that one body, He Himself the glorified Head, and they, in Him, members one of another (Rom. xii. 5). To this unity, so wholly of God, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, for the glory of the risen and ascended Christ, *man's* will or power can have nothing to say, any more than he can have to say to his own salvation.

Did any earthly parent ever express a wish that his sons and daughters might become members of one family, and be brought into relationship one with another? They are this already by birth. What a parent desires is, that his family may be manifestly one in everything answering to, and corresponding with, their relationship to himself, and with one another. And it rejoices his heart if he finds, in the course and actions of every member of his household, the practical fulfillment of so cherished a desire.

Before, then, the full result of the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth was made known, our Lord Jesus, in infinite wisdom and infinite love, prayed the Father that *all believers might be one*. Not simply that they

might be *one* in purpose, *one* in desire, *one* in action, of *one* accord, of *one* mind, of *one* heart and of *one* soul, but above and beyond all these, that "they might be ONE, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee,"—and this on earth, that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus. ONE, not so much for their peace and blessing, as for His glory. So blessedly and practically ONE that their every thought, word and deed might not only beautifully answer to the exalted relationship into which they should be brought, but be a standing witness to His praise in a world that crucified Him.

Although the *family unity* (i.e., the unity of the household of God), is not to be confounded with the "unity of the Spirit," or the truth of "the one body," the former must never be lost sight of in zeal for the latter. We are as children of God, responsible to promote family unity, for if discord and strife divide the children of one family, it is in vain to hope that that family can be recognised as *one* in any other relationship.

Our Lord has commanded us to love one another, as He loved us. If we keep His commandments, we shall abide in His love, and our ways, words and actions will testify to our unfeigned desire to promote the family unity, as an essential element in the endeavours to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let us never forget we are children of *God*, as well as members of the body of *Christ*.

Historically, we know that the church was no sooner formed, than the adversary commenced to attack it. Despite all his efforts, as detailed in Acts iv., "the multitude of them that believed were of *one* heart and of *one* soul and great grace was upon them all." Foiled, yet determined if possible to thwart the purposes of God, he attacked it with deeper subtlety from within (Acts v. and vi.). After this Stephen was martyred, and those that believed were scattered abroad by persecution, but Saul's conversion showed that the Lord was working with them, and we read, "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." Thus far, all ~~who~~ believed were *one*, not intrinsically only, but practically.

It was after God had opened the *door of faith* to the Gentiles that the enemy imagined a mischievous device. He would raise a question, by pressing which, he ~~hoped~~ to break up the family unity, and to sow discord among brethren.

It was *by the enemy* (Gal. ii. 4), and not *by the Spirit of God* that the question of circumcision was raised. Though division appeared imminent, the Lord Himself directed the way for its settlement (Gal. iii. 1, 2 ; Acts xv. 2), and the Spirit of God so guided and controlled "the Apostles and elders, *with the whole assembly*," that the question was divinely settled to the great comfort and joy of all (ver. 22-31). The church then knew her responsibility to act as "*the whole church*" in the locality in which God had gathered it ; and, despite the enemy's malice, if the church had never left her "first love," never abandoned her first principles, she would have continued as "*the whole church*," even though, as in Jerusalem, there were many thousand believers meeting in private houses or in upper rooms. Only unbelief can say, How could it possibly be ? Is God the Holy Ghost unequal to maintain the integrity of that for which Christ died ? for He died, not only to save, but to *gather into one* those whom He saved. Has the Head ceased to care for His body ? Has the Father provided ought for one member of the household of God, which he has not provided for all its members ? "Drink ye ALL of it," said the Lord Jesus Christ, as He gave the cup to those beloved ones who were gathered round Him, when He instituted the feast of remembrance (Matt. xxvi. 28). "And they ALL drank of it" (Mark xiv. 23). So the Apostle— "For we being many, are one bread, and one body ; for we are ALL partakers of that one bread." Is it asked who now are the "all ?" None less, and none more, than those who "by one Spirit are ALL baptized into one body, and have been ALL made to drink into (or of) one

Spirit." The Word of God alone gives the charter of privileges to the saint of God, and *can alone rescind any of them*. Disobedience to the Word of God, persisted in, calls for separation. "I have given them Thy Word," "*they have kept Thy Word*," the Lord could say of His own in John xvii. No less is worthy of Him now, and no less will satisfy His heart now (Rev. iii. 8).

Men press for a slight departure from the Word, but the point once conceded, the path is downward. It was the devil who first raised the question, "Hath God said?" We are not ignorant of the enemy's devices. If he can foster a sectarian spirit, and tempt saints to act as if the narrow path is narrower than it really is, or if he can lead them to count the narrow path wider than the Word of God declares it to be, is it not that souls may be entangled in a yoke of bondage, or seduced into walking disorderly, contrary to the written Word? Or further, if he can beguile souls into unduly exalting some favourite doctrine as a rallying point instead of CHRIST, and shutting out or shutting in all outside or within the rays of that particular doctrine, does he care what that doctrine may be? Nay, the higher the truth the better suited for his purpose; for the body gathered round it must be less than the "one body," and that is division, not unity.

There were at least four parties at Corinth, but Paul made no attempt to decide between them. He sharply rebuked them all by the Holy Ghost, and met the whole question by asking, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. i. 13; xii. 12). To this church, in which "heresies" were imminent, for schisms were rampant, the apostle wrote: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Alas! is not this Word and will of the Lord everywhere set aside most grievously? Not only in large towns, but even in small villages, believers, all "members

of that one body," are content to meet in separate communities, as if these had *a* cup of blessing, and those *a* cup of blessing. Beloved brethren, there is simply "*that one bread*," and "*the* cup of blessing," provided for all the members of the body of Christ. Where is the authority for diverse loaves and diverse cups?

And, as there is simply "*that one bread*," and "*the* cup of blessing" for all saints, so they have but one Head. The external sign is valueless without the vital reality. While the Corinthians were saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," &c., they were drawing their own circles round their own centres, and separating themselves not only from other Christians, but, what was far more Christ-dishonouring,—"*not holding the Head*, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." How solemn was the fruit of such ways the 11th chapter vividly portrays. How much was there at Corinth which the Spirit could not sanction, and which the Corinthians were to put themselves to the test as to any complicity with. But, blessed be God, it was the Word of God then, as it is the same Word now, that settles all questions. It is our only safeguard, as the Spirit is our almighty power. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, would not yield an iota of the one, or limit the power of the other (chapter ii.). He withstood Peter to the face when the truth of the Gospel was imperilled by him (verse 14), but he gladly acknowledged how the Spirit had wrought by him unto the apostleship of the circumcision (verse 8). This was *grace and truth*, and this only comes, and can come, from Jesus Christ. Grace might have tried to spare Peter the public rebuke, but truth with grace met all; and Peter retained his honoured place among the saints, and, in the fulness of a restored heart, could only write of Paul as "*our beloved brother Paul*."

A. J.

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER IV. 5, 11.

“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.”

THE forbearance of God has its limits. Favour, for nearly two thousand years, has been shewed to the wicked, yet he has not learned righteousness. The Lord is therefore about to lift up His hand (Is. xxvi. 10, 11), and these signs of terror fitly introduce this change in His ways.

The seven lamps of fire correspond with the golden candlestick in the Tabernacle. The allusions to the patterns shewed to Moses in the mount, confirm the thought that Jehovah of Israel is about to establish His government over the earth, that its kings “may know that the heavens do rule” (Dan. iv. 26 ; Ps. ii. 10-12).

These lamps of fire are “the seven Spirits of God,” a symbolic number of continual recurrence in the Revelation, and expressive of completeness, fulness, perfection. Satan even employs this number in his counterfeits (xii. 3).

The Holy Ghost is thus spoken of four times (i. 4 ; iii. 1 ; iv. 5 ; v. 6), twice in connection with the throne, and twice in connection with Him, for the maintenance of whose claims the throne is set in heaven. A study of these passages, compared with other Scriptures, would afford much insight unto the Spirit's ways in *providence*, in the *church*, and during the *millennium* ; but our limits forbid dwelling now on any but the one before us.

The Holy Spirit is here seen as pervading with the light of divine judgment the whole scene, bearing

perfect testimony to the righteous ways of Him who sits upon the throne, and, surely, no less to the perfect gift of righteousness to those who are seated round it. Their crowns of gold, in the light of those lamps of fire, tell that their righteousness is not their own, but the righteousness of God in Christ (Phil. iii. 9 ; 2 Cor. v. 21), for gold is the symbol of divine righteousness.

In harmony with this is the sea of glass like unto crystal. Purification will be accomplished and established then. The risen saints are not only crowned as kings, but robed as priests. They need no "molten sea" as the priests under the law, neither the towel, the water and the basin, so touchingly expressive of the Lord's untiring grace with each child of God on earth. The sea of glass speaks of purity gained, of holiness established in the sight of God (1 Thess. iii. 13 ; Jude 24).

Need it be said, that saints, while on earth, are not thus pure? A present condition of perfection and purity is a delusion. It is the proud attempt of a deceived heart to satisfy itself with its own state. Here our feet need cleansing, that our ways may, more and more, correspond with our standing in Christ. Only then shall we be fully "like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." May this *hope* in Him tell powerfully on our lives, there can be no real holiness without.

The most remarkable emblems in the chapter remain to be considered. The prophets had already declared the determination of the Lord to deal in terrible judgment with the nations of the earth (Zeph. iii. 8 ; Joel ii. 9-16). The world does not expect this, and it forms no part of the faith of many Christians, yet it is clearly revealed. God is *able* to do what He has determined, and the description of judicial and executive power, as connected with and surrounding the throne, is now

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given. "In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind."

The living creatures, in the number of their wings, and in their celebration of the holiness of the Lord, correspond with the seraphim of Is. vi. There is also correspondency with the living creatures in Ezekiel, there called the cherubim. It would lead too far now to take up all the Scriptures concerning these symbols, yet few subjects are more interesting, for they throw great light on the whole history of man. When he fell we meet with them first. Then when the Lord set up His throne as the Lord of the whole earth, He dwelt between them. Again they appear when He departed from Israel, and gave rule to the Gentiles; and we find them here, when He is about to resume this grant of power, judge the Gentiles, and re-establish His throne for ever.

With wonderful force of imagery they set forth the judicial greatness of God in His attributes of power. Whoever He may use as the executives of His government, these symbolic figures—the lion, the calf, the man, and the eagle—tell that their action is not only towards creation as on this earth, and on behalf of those creatures which He will bring through the coming judgments, as in the days of Noah, but also that every attribute of strength, of perseverance, of intelligence, and of discrimination, and readiness to carry out the purposes of the throne are there, awaiting its behests.

Their wings, as seen in Is. vi., speak of the reverence, the awe, and the alacrity of obedience suited to the solemnities of the scene; and in Ezek. x., of the divine majesty, accompanying their every movement.

"They are full of eyes round about and within."

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Nothing is left to blind chance. The most perfect, the most intimate knowledge of all events, of all persons, all secret thoughts and motives, characterize their actings. What a rule it must be! Who can escape it? Who can resist it? Who can circumvent it?

The first mention of the cherubim, as we have seen, is in Gen. iii., and is in connection with the display of God's government on earth. Man had sinned, and was an outcast. The sentence of God that he should die, was enforced. Nothing as to what is *after death* is here, for the cherubim have alone to do with government in time, not with the full result of sin in eternity. There will be a great white throne, and the judgment of the dead, when all that marks a time state will have passed away (xx. 11-15), but no cherubim are seen there. None will take part in that final judgment, with Him that sits on that great white throne. The rejectors of mercy must hear the record of their works, and receive their final doom from the lips of the once crucified Son of Man alone (John v. 27). No attendant angels or saints are seen there, no heavens or earth are in view there. It is the solemn judgment of the dead, small and great, in eternity and for eternity. *Temporal* judgments must not be confounded with *eternal*, or ground will be laid in the mind for destructive errors.

When it was the infliction of death on mankind as sinners, "cherubim and a flaming sword" kept the way of the tree of life as *on earth*. They are seen again in the Tabernacle (Ex. xxv. 18). Jehovah, who condescended to dwell with His people, was nevertheless a God of inflexible righteousness, and they were the symbols of His power. Their faces were toward the mercy-seat, gazing on the blood, a precious type richly unfolded in Heb. ix., x.

In Ezekiel they are seen over against the wheels of providence, the course of events that would display the mind of God at that time, as to His earthly people, and execute His purposes as to guilty Jerusalem. Thus they spread their wings to leave the city as no longer under the protection of the Lord, and reach forth their hand to take fire and cast it over it, the fire of the fury of Jehovah (Ezek. x. 2-7, xi. 22, 23).

They are seen again at the close of Ezekiel (xliii.), but their happy service then will be for blessing in the reign of Christ over a willing people. In harmony with this, cherubim were inwrought in the veil (Ex. xxvi. 31), the type of the humanity of Christ (Heb. x. 20), for He is "King of kings and Lord of lords;" and in the Temple they look out upon the whole earth, blessed under His rule.

Who, then, are the agents? The only answer seems to be, "Whomsoever God will," "He maketh His angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire; He rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind."

The visible agents in the judgment of Jerusalem, in Ezekiel, were Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans; "the whirlwind out of the north." How little they thought of Him who used them as His rod.

In the millennial age, Christ and the heavenly saints will reign over the earth. This makes the connection of the elders with the living creatures a subject of great interest, which we may notice farther on.

As Ezekiel saw the cherubim at the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles," John sees them at the close. The downward course of the Gentile dominion was revealed to Daniel, from Nebuchadnezzar, "the head of gold," to "the feet and toes of iron and clay," or the times

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in which we live. Men, yea, Christians, call it *progress*, yet tremble at the advance. Power given to the people fails to remove discontent, "the clay and the iron cleave not to one another." Surely the destruction of the image draws near (Dan. ii. 34, 35).

John, with the fuller light of God's purposes as to the Church, and of the final character of the universal apostacy, sees and describes the stupendous events which precede and accompany its destruction. To Ezekiel the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God. So to John, only yet more, he was caught up there, and his soul is filled with the glories and the service on high, before one dark scene of the ruins beneath is called before him.

The living creatures ceaselessly proclaim the holiness of HIM who has carried out, and will finally accomplish all the divine counsels as to creation, whatever Satan may have wrought during the wondrous drama of man's history. "His name shall be called Wonderful" Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"I'm apt to think, the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
Would speak but love: with him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology;
And John, 'tis certain had an eagle's eye."

"He saw whence all creation first began,
How now it lies, and where it ends at last,
He saw the mighty LOGOS moving through it
(Guardian of beings first within himself),
Ardent to educe the powers and varied beauties
Of the deep Godhead, image of the Father."

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

V.

2. *His heart was glad.*

IN this world of sin, grief, sadness and sorrow, Jesus was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," who "bore the sorrows of His people" on His heart before God, before He bore their sins in His holy, spotless body upon the tree. Before His healing power removed the infirmities of His people, He bore them in grace on His heart before God. Before laying His finger in the deaf man's ears and saying: "Ephphatha," *i.e.*, "be ye opened," He heaved a deep sigh. And why? Because He saw in that deaf man before Him, the very personification of a people that had ears, but did not hear. He saw in him, the expression of His people in their *present* state, not their future condition, when they will turn away from the false shepherds to their true and Good Shepherd, who died for them, and hear and know and follow His voice, and when they all shall be taught of God. At the grave of Lazarus, He stooped to weep with the weepers in perfect human sympathy, before He stood forth in His divine authority and power, and spoke the word of command: "Lazarus, come forth!"

"Jesus wept."

That verse of only two words, stands rightly by itself. It is because "*Jesus wept*" that we can "rejoice evermore." (1 Thess. v. 16). Why did our blessed Saviour weep at Lazarus' grave, when He was about to raise him from the dead? It was because His works

were not of that light, slight, superficial kind of men's way of acting. He who said to the sick of the palsy "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," before He removed his infirmity, to make him realise the root of every sickness and infirmity, realised Himself, as the perfect Man, what sin had done in this world of sin, sorrow and death. No doubt the divine eye of the Son of God surveyed all the centuries of man's trial, sin, misery and death, from that moment when He stood at the grave of Lazarus, down to the garden in Eden, when He had said to the first man, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Behind that gravestone lay the remains of *him whom the Lord loved*, and over whose body, not only sickness, but death, had been permitted to exert their power, and even corruption had begun its work. True, it was "for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." But this did not alter the fact, nor the sorrowful reality of the scene at Bethany, that green sunny spot, amidst the barrenness and darkness of Canaan. Dark clouds had gathered over Bethany, and every head and heart was bowed down under the sense of the power of death. But there was more. The divine eye of Him who stood before that tomb, beheld in that grave and its contents not only the sad fruits of sin in this world, from the fall in the garden of Eden, after which the sickle of death begun its terrible harvest (see Gen. v.), up to that moment, but it was the true and mournful expression of Israel itself, "*His own*," who had not received, but rejected Him. They had not known the voice of their true Shepherd, but just lifted up stones against Him. All was over with them, and that tomb with its contents was the expression of it.

And when the mourners of that nation stood around

that tomb, weeping in their sympathy with the bereaved sisters of Lazarus, not knowing how far greater a cause they had to *weep for themselves and for their children*, Jesus "groaned in the spirit and was troubled."

But did all this prevent, or even weaken, His perfect, genuine, personal sympathy with the mourners?

"Jesus wept."

Who can fathom the source and depth of that love, which passes knowledge, as it does excel all our loftiest praises, but before which we, through grace, can bow down and worship in silence.

Yes, beloved Christian reader, He, at the end of His perfect and blessed career, *wept with them that wept*, as none could weep.

Thank God we have learnt, in our poor way, to minister some token of Christian sympathy to sorrowing and bereaved ones; a blessed service indeed, which the Master will not forget, if done in His name. But how much have we learnt to "*weep with them that weep*," dear reader?

There is now a Man there above in glory, the same who wept at the grave of Lazarus, who not only comforts us in His absence, by His spirit, that blessed comforter, but *Himself* is "*touched* with the feeling of our infirmities," surrounded though He be by all the glories and joys, and homage of heaven, and the delight of His God and Father, at whose right hand He is seated. How much have we learnt of the sympathy of the Man who wept at the tomb of Lazarus? A heart-searching question for all, in days when the love of many is waxing cold, and "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

But Jesus not only wept with them that wept, but at the beginning of His career of blessing, He rejoiced

with them that did rejoice. Just as at Bethany His tears were the result, not only of the present, but of the past; so at Cana in Galilee, His rejoicing with them that did rejoice, had not its spring merely in the present occasion, but in the bright prospect of a happier age to come, of which none of the guests of that wedding, but Himself, had any thought or perception. *His hour was not yet come*, but He looked onward to that happier distant time, when "Lo Ammi" ("not my people"), will be "Ammi," His people again, to whom He spoke by the prophet: "Thou shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer." And when He filled their empty water-pots with the best wine, He, the true Bridegroom, whose voice John rejoiced to hear, was, I doubt not, looking onward to that "dispensation of the fulness of times," when, in joyful response to the longing appeal of His beloved One: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit,"—He will answer: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine

THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

III

with my milk ; eat, O friends, drink ; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

But though Jesus did associate Himself with His people in their joy as well as in their sorrow, and, in His wondrous grace, made Himself a "helper of their joy," it was not that joy, nor His gracious fellowship in it, that was the source of the deep joy of His heart, in a world that knew not its Creator, and amidst "*His own*," who rejected their Messiah and King, and where He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was not, "*therefore, that His heart did rejoice*" (Acts ii.), or "*was glad*," as our Psalm gives it. *His joys* had a better, deeper, and higher source than those of this world or of His people. In this world He was a heavenly Stranger, and all He said and did showed that He had nothing in common with it. There was not, nor could there be, *one single link* between that heavenly Man and this world of sin. And "*in the house of His friends*" He was "*wounded*." It is not recorded in Holy writ, that that heavenly Stranger ever *smiled* in this scene of estrangement from and opposition against God, and everything that comes from God, and belongs to Him. Alas ! fellow-believer, how many of us have learnt, not only to *smile* and to *laugh*, but to *make merry* in this world, where that blessed God-Man has been disallowed, rejected, spit upon, buffeted, nailed to the cross, handed back to heaven, sent back to His glorious home with pierced hands, feet and side. We have learnt to smile and laugh in this scene of His rejection and murder, not merely by reason of our frail bodies by which we are linked with it—and our Saviour God, even the "God of all patience," who knows our frame, forbears in His grace—but because the precious divine truths, which we hold

and profess to know, have not been truly *lodged* in our hearts, and therefore have not *dislodged* the "*vain thoughts*," of the world and of the flesh.

Truly, there was a deeper source than that of the wedding at Cana in Galilee, that *gladdened* the heart of Jesus, and made it *rejoice*. It was His God whom that perfect Man ever did set before His face. Surely, if the eye is fixed on a lovely object, the heart feeds and feasts on that object:

"Therefore my heart is glad."

What was it made Jesus "rejoice in spirit" (Luke x. 21), after He had just been pronouncing those solemn "*woes*," upon those privileged cities which daily had seen His mighty works, and heard the mighty and gracious words of Him who spake as never man spake? For Jesus it was the "day of small things"—not as to His mighty works and words, but—as to His people, "*His own*," who received Him not, and the solemn words of the prophet Isaiah was about to be fulfilled, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought."

Not so with His disciples. To them it appeared to be the *day of great things*. The seventy returned again with joy, saying, "Lord even the devils are subject unto us, through Thy name." Nature loves to wield power. Yet the Lord did not repel their joy. But He looked far beyond their present enjoyment, onward to the time when all the heavens shall rejoice, saying, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ; *for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night.*"

But He warns the seventy not to rejoice in power, and gifts, and influence (a dangerous thing, especially for

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servants of Christ), but *in God and the near and sure relationship to Him.*"

"But rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

What comes next? Jesus does the very thing He had enjoined upon them; for He always *did* what He *said*, for He was, and is, THE TRUTH.

In the same hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast 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."

When His relationship as to His earthly people was about to be broken, and He, their Messiah, to be cut off and have nothing, He turned to His God and Father, whom He ever had set before His face, and He rejoiced in spirit; therefore

"His heart was glad."

We find the same in His great Apostle of the uncircumcision and of the church. When Paul speaks, with weeping, of those that were the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;" he immediately turns *heavenwards, Christward*, and says, "Our conversation [or 'citizenship'] is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," &c., and then, a few verses after, he goes on: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say *'rejoice.'*" His heart was glad, like that of his heavenly Master, to whom he looked, and set him before his face, as that blessed Master had set God before His face, when He was on earth. Paul was the one to write words like

these: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus, the beginner and perfecter of faith." He also *did* what he *taught*, and could say, "Those things which ye have both learned and received, and *heard* and *seen* in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you." "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii.).

(*To be continued.*)

"ABSENT FROM THE BODY ; PRESENT WITH THE LORD."

THE hope of the church, and of its members individually is Christ in His coming again. It is of urgent importance not only to hold this as truth, but to have it ever in reality and freshness before the soul. With a wisdom that calls forth our admiration, Scripture is careful that this hope should not be in any measure obscured ; and that the joy of departing to be with Christ should not displace the still deeper and corporate joy set before us in our Lord's parting words, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."

That which concerns those who are absent from the body and present with the Lord does not occupy a large place in Scripture. This has caused surprise to some dear saints. It need not surprise us however. For, besides the reason just given, which is surely most

important, there is another : *the few words that are said, say everything.* Where is the heart which knows Christ, that desires more than "present with the Lord ;" "with me in paradise ?" Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the music of that heavenly voice, the beauty of that once marred face. Is it not *enough* to behold and to listen—to be *with* Him "who loved me and gave himself for me ?" Enough, Lord, enough ; we desire no more. In Thy presence is fulness of joy.

But there is the same comparative silence about the blessedness of those whom the coming of the Lord gathers from the tomb, and from the valley of the shadow of death. Details as to the shout and the trump, as to the glorious rising, and the instantaneous change, but for the whole eternity which lies beyond, a short line suffices :—"So shall we ever be with the Lord." Those who are anxious about the "occupations" of that thrice blessed scene, have need to look solemnly and searchingly into their title to be there at all. The one whose title is the precious blood of Christ—the one who knows what he owes to Him, will find every longing, and every hope fully satisfied in being with Him where he is to behold His glory. No words *can* pourtray such an eternity, none are needed when once the words have fallen on the heart, "so shall we ever be with the Lord."

"Absent from the body." We are bound by our bodies to a groaning creation. This condition falls far short, of God's purpose ; far short, too, of the full result of the death of Christ. We wait "for the *adoption*, to wit, the *redemption* of our body." Redemption has indeed been accomplished, and "we *have* redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." But as regards the body, this redemption has not been made good. It will be ; and the Spirit by which we

are sealed unto the day of redemption, is Himself the earnest of this redemption. He is also in our souls "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." But the adoption itself must extend to the body, for such is God's will, such the purpose of His heart; such too, the fruit, ripe and sweet, of the cross of Christ, "They are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 36).

For this, those who are "absent from the body" wait as truly as we do, and with an earnestness and intelligence to which we are, alas! strangers. But the link with a creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain is broken. Every link of these ransomed spirits is now with Christ. "In this (tabernacle) we groan." Freed from the tabernacle, far from the body of humiliation, the spirit groans no more. Personal suffering, and suffering in sympathy are at an end. No pain of body can reach those who are at home with the Lord. The still deeper pain of mind and heart is hushed to eternal rest. The last tear, not in personal sorrow only, or in family affliction, but in the fruits of sin which *others* reap, and for the dishonour of Christ in the church for which He bled—the last tear eternal love has wiped away. The "light affliction but for a moment" is over, the "eternal weight of glory" abides. The discipline of the wilderness was the expression of perfect love; *that* has done its work, the love abides alone.

"Present with the Lord." What did that happy spirit prove, whilst the weepers were still watching for another breath, as he entered the joy of his Lord? We must ourselves be there to know. The rapturous vision, those unutterable words, that holy restful joy never entered the heart of man. And what was the joy of Christ in welcoming him there? Ah, here we must

bow our heads and own that that joy is as measureless as the love that bowed in death to redeem the soul now, at length, *and for ever*, with Him !

But what a tale of blessedness ! The joy of the redeemed spirit "at home with the Lord" is henceforth lost in the deeper joy of his Redeemer, his Lord and his God. Surely among the "unspeakable words" of that heavenly paradise are some even less "possible to utter" than : "*Let US eat and be merry.*" Who shall say what that freed spirit feels as he witnesses the joy his entrance brings to the heart of the Lord Jesus ! Answer of ineffable sweetness to the sorrow of the cross ! He will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest (be silent) in his love ; he will rejoice over thee with singing."

The Lamb is there, my soul,
There God Himself doth rest,
In love divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.

It was Paul's to taste for a moment this supreme and inutterable joy of immediate communion with the joy of the Lord. He had no help from a "body of glory," but neither had he any hindrance from a "body of humiliation." "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." Like those who are now "present with the Lord," he had no consciousness of his body. But every inlet and outlet, every power of his soul was filled with Christ, with Christ seen in His ineffable glory, with Christ heard in "unspeakable words."

But, unlike those now with Christ, Paul had to return to this valley of the shadow of death. Soon the heavenly vision closes, and he knows he is, in very deed, "in the body." The thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet, is there because of "the abundance of the revelations." How blessed the

spirits who *live* in the "abundant revelations," and need no thorn! Happy souls! No pride can ever touch them, no coldness of heart nor wandering of desire or thought. All, all is the rest of their Saviour's presence, rest never to be disturbed! True, Christ will rise from the throne on which He sits, but they will never part company from Him. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Deepened and widened joys await them then. But the "abundance of the revelations" will never pass. The "unspeakable words" will never be memories of the past. *With* Christ is ever their place. "Unclothed" they are with Christ; "on the cloud" they are with Him; "clothed upon" they are with Him. And when all the ways of God are accomplished, and He enters His eternal rest, they are still and ever WITH CHRIST.

"Yes, in that light unstained,
Our stainless souls shall live;
Our hearts' deep longings more than gained,
When God His rest shall give."

Lord Jesus, 'Tis but "a little while," and we shall indeed be with Thee! Our full cup of eternal joy art Thou! But, oh! this glass through which we see darkly! Come, Lord Jesus, that we may see Thee as Thou art, and see Thee face to face. Till then, keep us for Thy Name alone!

"FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN!"

AMALEK TO BE DESTROYED.

Deut. xxv. 17, 18, 19.

HE who had the heart to find a shepherd in Ezekiel xxxiv., had first His sympathies awakened by the *need* of His flock (verse 21). "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because you have thrust with side and with shoulder and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad, therefore will I save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and most blessed that it is so. He knew what His people were when He gave them over to Jesus; and He gave them to Jesus because He knew what they were. All things were before Him. The past, present, and future, are as one with God. The womb of time gives birth to nothing but God foresaw it. That which is thus brought forth gives rise to nothing but God foreknew it. O blessed resting place, the consciousness of the Omnipotence of God, to us revealed the God of all grace.

Because He called forth His people whom He had redeemed, therefore Amalek hated them, and sought their injury. And their call of God, *and because He had called them*, exposed them to trial, even as it is this day. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

And what is Godly living but seeking after God *revealed in His word* and by His ordinances. And trials that arise from this are only laurel leaves—"family marks," as one has before designated them, by which His people may be recognised. But they call forth

God's sympathy, and are the occasion of it. They secure His protection. . . . These principles are developed in the portion of His Word under notice. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary : and he feared not God."

Could anything be more beautiful than that which is here displayed of the watchful eye of God over His people? Could motives for sympathy be more happily condensed, or ground for protection be more ably advanced? Was ever the unfortunate victim of undeserved calumny more skilfully defended? Did eloquence ever plead as God here pleads on behalf of His people? Whatever in weakness might provoke to pity is brought to the surface. Whatever increased the odium of insolent audacity is displayed to the advantage of the feeble. May His people not say, in holy exultation, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Could power be more maliciously exercised than in attacking the hindmost, even those who through very feebleness could not keep pace with the van, faint and weary as well; dropping one by one into the jaws of Leviathan, forgotten by their comrades in the hurry of self-preservation, yet remembered by God; and their enemy ere long to be visited with just retribution? He oppressed God's people, and he feared not their God!

Surely the God of all grace is our God and Father in Christ Jesus. Alas! how little progress we make in the understanding of His grace thus testified to us in the records of His dealings with His people of old, and still more fully in the light of His only begotten Son.

(EXTRACT).

“NOTHING COUNTS BUT CHRIST.”

A FEW days ago, the grave closed over the mortal remains of one who, “in labours more abundant,” had been permitted to serve Christ for half a century. More than one of his children in the gospel took part in the last service of love and fellowship in sorrow around his grave; and many more surrounded it with tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

The servant proves already the reality and the sweetness of his Lord’s words, “And where I am, there shall also my servant be.” After long years of active service richly owned of Him who had ‘wrought all his works in him,’ the servant was called to be a sufferer. The labours had been most abundant, the sufferings were scarcely less so. It was then that the good ointment of most precious grace sent forth its richest fragrance. Matured and mellowed for the heavenly ingathering were “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God;” deepened and widened the knowledge of “Him that is from the beginning” which characterizes the fathers (1 John ii.).

After the burden and heat of the day, in the eventide of retirement, this beloved servant of Christ could look back, could look around, could look forward and judge of everything *in relation to Christ*. Even his sufferings became a link of his soul with Him. “NOTHING COUNTS BUT CHRIST,” he said, with an emphasis which could not but burn the words into the hearts of those who heard them..

“Nothing counts but Christ.” All else is without value. All else will perish. The knowledge of God revealed in His person, and communion with Him, satisfy

the soul here, and they never pass away. True service to His name, faithful following of Him will "count" in courts above. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

How feebly have we learned God's thoughts of Christ! For Him, Christ is *exclusively* the centre, the purpose, the object and end of all. The ways of God are all for His glory. The purpose of God is, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And the heart of God:—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

For God, "Christ is all." Faith receives of His fullness and enters into His thoughts. Christ is for faith what He is for God, whatever the measure in which it is given to us down here to enter into it. The more simple faith is, the more the soul is with God, the more it thinks and feels and judges according to God, and Christ becomes its one object. Faith ever judges of things as they affect the honour and the interests of Christ. It lifts the soul above the influences and motives which would naturally govern us, and gives a new and divine test by which to try everything. An ambitious man is governed by his love of power, an avaricious man by his love of money, a Christian by Christ. To rule is the passion of the first; to amass wealth, the second eats his bread with carefulness; and the third—"for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord," "that I may win Christ," "according to my earnest expectation and my hope . . . that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ, shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—such is the object, such the life of the Christian.

"Nothing counts but Christ." What does power over

NOTHING COUNTS BUT CHRIST.

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his fellows avail a dying man? It would be less than vanity to one going to be with Christ, and a nether millstone round the neck of one sinking to the "place of torment." What is money to a miser, as he crosses the threshold of eternity? What means will he devise to take it with him? And if he could keep his grip of it, what value would it have for the soul that dwells with everlasting burnings?

But *Christ* in that solemn hour—so far from our having to part from Him, it is then that the soul knows how precious He is; it is then that His presence is fully enjoyed. When the eye is bright and clear for things down here, how the soul "sees through a glass darkly!" But now the lid droops, the eye is fixed, it sees no more! It is the very moment when the "glass darkly" is gone, the "heavenly vision" is in all its brightness, the ransomed spirit is with Christ. In the hour of death, wealth does not count, nor power in this world, nor a fair name in it;—"Nothing counts but Christ."

Paul had been a prisoner some four years. Personal liberty is sweet, sweeter for him because of his labours for Christ. To the one who, even in prison, could exclaim, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," it must have been a keen trial to be withdrawn from the field of freelabour. He loved the work, he had wrought at it as one who loved it—a model for us! But year after year he hears about it in prison, he thinks about it, he dwells upon it in memory, in interest, in longing. The walls which confine him, the chain which binds him to the soldier that keeps him, forbid the activities in which he has grown grey, but for which his heart is still fresh.

And now, the imprisonment is likely enough to end in his death. He is about to appear before Nero. He writes to his beloved Philippians, and we see right down into his heart, as he opens it to them. One word sums up its breathings and longings, its hopes and expectations—*Christ*. He hears of some who, taking advantage for their own exaltation of his absence from the work, are preaching Christ of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. At once his soul refers it all to Christ. He measures it, not by Paul's reputation, but by the interests of Christ. It is Christ they are preaching. Had they been false teachers of the law, he would have wished them "cut off." But it is *Christ* they preach. The savour of His name reaches souls, hitherto dry and cold, having no hope, and without God in the world. Not a word of reproach, nor even of righteous indignation; his bonds have turned to the furtherance of the Gospel he loves. Christ, the covering of his eyes, "Christ Jesus, my Lord," is preached. He rejoices, yea, and will rejoice.

As to his fate, how shall he decide? for it does not depend upon Cæsar; "What I shall choose I wot not." Blessed choice, though difficult to make, when either way it is Christ! For if it be death, Christ will be magnified in his body, and he will depart and be with Christ, which is far better. If he still lives in the flesh, he has the fruit of his labour, and Christ will be magnified in his body; *to live is Christ*.

For Paul, with the need of the saints on the one side, and the joy of being with Christ on the other, "nothing counts but Christ." His work for Christ is not finished. Christ, in the persons of the saints, has still need of him down here. His choice is made. The decision is come to, not in the court, but in the prison. Read Phil.i. 24-26, and

see how Christ *counts* in the heart of the Apostle. The happiest man in Rome was not the Emperor, but his (apparently) helpless prisoner. The purple cannot make the former happy, nor can the prison make the latter unhappy. Cæsar has not Christ—he has nothing! Paul has Christ—he has everything! “Nothing counts but Christ.”

Later, the same blessed servant of Christ is again in prison. Circumstances are greatly changed, but not Christ! Paul the aged has lived long enough to find himself all but *alone*. The energy of his faith, the steadfastness of his purpose, the devotedness of his heart, the faithfulness of his love, had carried him too far for the lukewarmness of those who, under God, owed everything to him. “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me.” But it was *Christ* for him to live. Not a regret that two years before his happy spirit had not escaped to be with Christ, and this isolation been avoided. Christ *had* been magnified in his body by life, and He stands by him now. Sweeter that company more blessed that communion, because of the moral desert in which he tasted it! His “earnest expectation and hope” were gained; by him the preaching was fully known.

And now the “heavenly kingdom” of that same Lord stands bright before his unwearied eye. His days are numbered. He has no choice to make. His service is complete, save the service of death; and he is “ready to be offered up.” Bright, and not far off, he sees “a crown of righteousness” in the hand of the One who stood by him when all forsook him. How well, through grace, he knew Him! It was He whose love he tasted, when, with bound feet and bleeding back, he sang praises at midnight in the inner prison at Philippi.

It was He whose power and smile raised him up after the stoning at Lystra. It was He whose presence cheered the long, lone day and night he passed in the deep. Happy servant, sweet has been thy toil and blessed thy sufferings with Christ so near to thee! But toil is past and suffering over; the day of reward hastens on, but already the rest of His presence, and the joy of being with Him are the portion of the one who learned so well, in the desert our feet still tread, the power of His name, and the sweetness of His company.

In heavenly courts, the noble descent of Paul, his high position, and his righteousness in the flesh, count for nothing. But all the knowledge of Christ he gained in paths of keenest trial and lonely sorrow, all the communion of His love that he there proved, all his services for Christ, these count, according to God's estimate of the worth of Christ. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Priceless honour in that eternal home of love! There, "NOTHING COUNTS BUT CHRIST!"

"JEHOVAH-NISSI."

"The LORD *my* Banner."

THE first two sentences of Gen. iii. 15, are full of instruction; but how many overlook their deep meaning. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;"—these words were spoken by the Lord God, and it is most important that we should lay hold of the fact—not only that there is positive enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—but that the Lord God has, in infinite wisdom, put enmity between them. There can be no conciliation of light and darkness, of Christ and

Belial ; and on this eternal principle is based the most solemn exhortation to the saints of God (2 Cor. vi. 14, 18). In the case of Eve we surely have no need to ask the reason for this. Had she not already experienced, to her sorrow, that though the serpent spake as if he were her friend, towards Adam and herself he had acted as the bitterest enemy ? It was, therefore, wise, to say the least, that enmity should hereafter exist between these ; since open hostility is, in every way, to be preferred to an iniquitous compromise effected with an adversary, the weapon in whose murderous hand was seduction ; as she said—"The serpent beguiled me." We should, however, ever remember that the origin of enmity is to be traced to the serpent, not to the woman ; above all, not to her Seed—Christ. For love is of God ; but envy, hatred, malice, each owe their origin solely to the serpent.

How it saddens one to witness the existence of enmity between the different nations of the earth, and to see its terrible fruit in wars and desolation. Yet it is incomparably more sad to discern the faintest appearance of it between those who are *one* in Christ Jesus—who are commanded to love one another as Christ loved them. Scripture never sanctions it ; it is most dishonouring to God, and, at the same time, is an incontestable proof that the enemy is in some way suffered to work amongst those who are responsible to resist him at all cost.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart ;"—as the Lord commanded Israel (Lev. xix. 17). "Until seventy times seven," a believer is responsible to forgive his brother's sin against himself. Even when a brother's disobedience to the written Word constrains me to separate myself from him, 2 Thess. iii. 15, warns me not to count him "as an enemy," but, at least, while

"within," to "admonish him as a brother," and, if put away, to seek his restoration (2 Cor. ii. 6, 11).

To return. In all ages, from Gen. iv. onwards, faithful servants of God have encountered enmity. The faithful in Christ Jesus are sure, sooner or later, to meet the same opposing elements. In fact, these *prove themselves faithful* by withstanding them. There had been no need of the exhortation, "Fight the good fight of faith," if there were no adversaries to withstand. With whom, then, are believers called upon to wrestle?

Before we assay to answer this question, another question, even more important, demands solemn consideration. It is this:—How shall the Christian warrior proceed to "fight the good fight," so *that God may be glorified* in the conflict?

We now turn to Ex. xvii. Before Israel fought with Amalek, the Lord had, in spite of all the enemy's efforts to prevent His purpose being accomplished, brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand. "By faith" Israel had "passed through [the Red Sea as by dry land;," and, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, the Lord was leading Israel "like a flock" to Sinai—the mount of God. They had nearly reached Sinai, when Amalek appeared, the latter being as surely energised by Satan, as Israel was led by the Lord God. If the enemy could not prevent Israel from reaching Sinai, he was determined to do his utmost to harass and to distress the people of God.

A battle was fought near Rephidim, and Amalek was defeated: for Moses' uplifted hands ensured victory to Israel. "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Write *this* for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.'" *Jehovah had espoused*

the quarrel! The conflict was to be perpetual! Israel must never make peace with Amalek! Moses perceived this, and said, "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

How wisely Moses acted under such circumstances! He evinced no desire to sue for peace, but cheerfully bowed to the *revealed will* of God, and enjoined it on the children of Israel (Deut. xxv. 17-19).

In these "last days," these "perilous times," every believer should carefully avoid being caught in—what has already too often proved to be—a most successful snare of the enemy. For there is, in the carnal heart (1 Cor. iii. 1), a strong tendency to attempt to effect some sort of compromise between the seed of the serpent and those redeemed from his power by the Seed of the woman. In short, to attempt to bring about a peace which is not of God, a so-called "peace" which the Lord will never sanction. Alas! how often "popularity" has been sought after, and obtained, at the expense of the almost total surrender of "spirituality!" Yet God yearns over His saints, and will bruise Satan under their feet shortly (Rom. xvi. 20). Victory is certain, but the fight goes on.

When Moses discerned that there was to be perpetual conflict between Israel and Amalek, he built an altar and called it "Jehovah-nissi," rightly divining that Israel could by no means glorify God in the future struggle, unless their eyes were fixed upon the Lord throughout the conflict. Even so, the believer that would do battle with the enemy, to the honour and glory of God, can only perform this while his eyes are fixed upon the Captain of his salvation: thus only can he "war a good warfare."

During Paul's *first* visit to Philippi, he encountered most violent opposition. After he and Silas had been severely beaten with rods, they were cast into the inner prison, and the cruel jailor made their feet fast in the stocks. The enemy had done his utmost, but he was utterly powerless to accomplish one thing, viz., to prevent God's servants from fixing their eyes upon their Lord. In spite of all his efforts, they ceased not to count upon God. They prayed, and sang hymns to God, until, without any effort of their own, God wrought their complete deliverance: even the jailor received blessing; and their enemies were completely foiled and humiliated (Acts xvi. 22-40).

Had not Paul fought a good fight at Philippi? But when, by the Spirit, he wrote to encourage and strengthen those beloved Philippians, while they also had to endure the "same conflict" which they had seen in him, he did not set before them his own good example. He would not rear a "*Paul-nissi*!" Others of the apostles had already proved themselves "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He did not refer to either of them. A "*Peter-nissi*," or a "*John-nissi*" would have proved a fruitful source of weakness and trouble, rather than of strength (1 Cor. iii. 3, 4).

In order that the saints at Philippi might not be disheartened, because to them it was "given" to suffer for Christ's sake; that they might not be terrified by their adversaries, but, in the conflict, successfully "withstand"—yea, "overcome"—all that were arrayed against them, the apostle pointed them simply and only to Him who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Israel at Rephidim beheld an altar; but the Christian

warrior is privileged to behold, by faith, a Divine Person, and to adore and worship as he fearlessly exclaims, "Jehovah-Jesus-nissi!"

As by the Spirit they spoke or wrote, the apostles never wearied of pointing believers simply to Jehovah-Jesus. They preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: sincerely desiring every saint of God to look "off unto Jesus."

Can *we* sing with the Psalmist—"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord?" Are *our* eyes continually fixed simply and only upon Him whose actions furnish us with the only example of *perfect* obedience—obedience unto death? Upon Him "who fought the fight alone," and defeated our adversary, single-handed? He glorified God throughout the conflict; He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, and is now seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" where, by faith, we now behold Him "crowned with glory and honour."

He has already "brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" "He has led captivity captive;" what if He had, at the same moment, *crushed the serpent*, and thus, at one blow, brought all conflict to an end? If He had done this, we should never have had an opportunity to "fight the good fight." We never could have been associated with Himself in conflict.

A. J.

(To be continued.)

THERE are two things the Spirit witnesses to—as to my sins, and as to myself. As to my sins, that they are gone:—"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." But as to myself, His witness is, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

VI.

3. *His glory (or tongue) did rejoice.*

THERE is something very beautiful in the fact that in Hebrew the word "*glory*" means also "*tongue*." This was fully true in the perfect Man of our Psalm. His tongue was always His glory, and did rejoice, because He used it only for the glory of His Father and God. Every word spoken by the tongue of that blessed Man was a word of power—not yet in judgment and destruction—but power in healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, or bidding the winds and waves to hold their peace ; power in testimony

"as never man spake,"

laying bare the inmost secrets of men's hearts ; or power in withering rebuke to religious pride and hypocrisy. Or it was a word of comfort, a word in season to the weary, of grace to poor and broken-hearted sinners, or of restoring grace to a stray sheep ; a word of wisdom for the simple, of truth and instruction for the ignorant, of warning and exhortation for the careless, of mercy for the oppressed and needy ; of blessing for the little ones ; of prayer for His own, who were in this evil world.

But what pen, unless inspired, could attempt to describe that which is above all expression—even the tides of divine blessing, flowing from the lips of Him who spake "*as never man spake*." Who can tell which is greater, the riches of His words, or the greatness of His works, of which the inspired "*disciple of His bosom*"—as the most competent witness—could

but say, that "if they should be written every one, even the world could not contain the books that should be written."

An all-glorious and all-beauteous object before the eyes, and filling the heart, the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart. So it was with Jesus. He had set His God always before His face, therefore His heart was glad and His glory, or tongue, did rejoice. *His tongue was His glory.* *Ours*, alas! is but too often our *shame!* And yet there is none of the members of our body wherewith we might glorify our God and Saviour more than our tongues. And have not we, dear fellow believer, at seasons of especial blessings, experienced something of the meaning of "rejoicing tongues," when through 'grace we were enabled to use them for the glory of God and His dear Son? Did not our joyful tongues leap when, with hearts moved by the Spirit, we testified to a dying, perishing world, the virtues of the perfect Man of our Psalm, and announced the glad tidings, that through this Man is preached* unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses? Do not our tongues rejoice when, in happy fellowship at our Lord's table, remembering Him in His death, we render to Him, and through Him to our God and Father, the tribute of our hearts and lips in adoration and thanksgiving, in the joyful fellowship, power and liberty of the Holy Ghost? Or when, like those of old, speaking one to another words of encouragement and comfort at times of affliction and sorrow; or when, building up ourselves, in these days of small things, on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; or when teaching and admonishing one

* "Proclaimed," R.V.

another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord? Did not, I say, our tongues rejoice at such seasons when used in the Lord's service and for His glory?

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
All my boast and joy's in Thee."

Would God there was more of such "*joyful boasting*" and exultant rejoicing in Christ Jesus! We cannot boast too much *in Him*. It is because we have boasted so little in Him, that we have been boasting and rejoicing in ourselves and in one another. Thus flesh has dared to glory in His presence.

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Why have our tongues so often been the very opposite of "*our glory*," Christian reader? Because they have been our *vain glory*, and thus our *shame*, alas! They have been proclaimers of own own praise, instead of "proclaimers of His grace."

Why have our tongues been so unlike "the tongue of the just, as choice silver?" (Proverbs x. 20). Silver bells, as it were, in these "temples of God"—our bodies—ringing out the praises of Him who has called us from darkness into His marvellous light? Was it not because we had not set the Lord before our faces with purpose of heart, and therefore did not cleave to Him with purpose of heart, but had kept some secret idol closeted in some chamber of it? Thus it was that our tongues have not been like "the tongue of the wise," which "is health," and "useth knowledge," nor like "*a wholesome tongue, a tree of life*," but "perverseness therein" has been "a breach in the spirit." Thus "*the law of kindness*" has not been "*in our tongues*" (Proverbs xxxi. 26), and neither "*honey*" nor milk "*under them*" (Cant. iv. 11), and therefore they have not been like "a

soft tongue " that " breaketh the bone," but have broken not only the bones, but the *hearts* of our fellow-Christians.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

What a close connection there is between our *eyes*, *heart*, *tongue*, and *feet*! Let me see the direction of a man's *eyes*, and I'll tell you the direction of his *feet*. And out of the abundance of the *heart* the *mouth speaketh*. We find all the four: the *heart*, the *tongue*, the *eyes*, and the *feet* in Prov. iv. Only in that important and most practical portion of Holy Writ, the heart comes first, as the seat of all evil, to be guarded and kept by the Word, as it is not there the question of the Christian race, with one certain goal and object before the one who runs it, as in Ps. xvi., Acts ii., and Hebrews xii. The order, therefore, in Prov. iv. is different, though none the less important. It runs thus:

1. "Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."
2. "Put away from thee a froward *mouth*, and perverse lips put far from thee."
3. "Let thine *eyes* look *right on*, and let thine *eyelids* look *straight* before thee."

4. "Ponder the path of thy *feet*, and let all thy *ways* be established. *Turn not* to the right nor to the *left*: remove thy *foot* from evil" (Prov. iv. 23-27).

Here (in Prov. iv.) it is not a question of the good treasure laid up in the renewed heart, out of which a good man bringeth forth that which is good, but of the *natural* heart, and, therefore, we have the negative injunction of guarding and keeping it, as we would do a powder magazine.

Ah! Christian reader, how feeble is our sense of the dangerous character of that centre from whence the actions of daily life emanate; far more dangerous than the greatest stores of the most destructive explosives!

(To be continued.)

"THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

I.

"Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

WE are aware in how many different ways our fellow-disciples try and tempt us, as, no doubt, we do them. We see, or we fancy we see, some bad quality in them and we find it hard to go on in further company with them. And yet in all this, or in much of it, the fault may be with ourselves, mistaking a want of conformity of taste or judgment with ourselves, for something to be condemned in them.

But the Lord could not be thus mistaken; and yet He was never "overcome of evil," but was ever "overcoming evil with good"—the evil that was in them with the good that was in Himself. Vanity, ill-temper, indifference about others, and carefulness about themselves, ignorance after painstaking to instruct, were of

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the things in them which He had to suffer continually. His walk with them, in its way and measure, was a day of provocation, as the forty years in the wilderness had been. Israel again tempted the Lord, I may say, but again proved Him. Blessed to tell it; they *provoked* Him, but by this they *proved* Him. He suffered, but He took it patiently. He never gave them up. He warned and taught, rebuked and condemned them, *but never gave them up*. Nay; at the end of their walk together, He is nearer to them than ever.

Perfect and excellent this is, and comforting to us. The Lord's dealing with the conscience never touches His heart. We lose nothing by His rebukes. And He who does not withdraw His heart from us when He is dealing with our conscience, is quick to restore our souls, that the conscience, so to express it, may be enabled soon to leave His school, and the heart find its happy freedom in His presence again. As sings that hymn, which some of us know—

“Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimm'd my sight;
When pass'd, Eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er thou'rt bright.”

And I would further notice, that in the characters which, in the course of His ministry, He is called to take up (it may be for only an occasion, or a passing moment), we see the same perfection, the same moral glory, as in the path He treads daily. As, for instance, that of a Judge, as in Matt. xxiii., and that of an Advocate or Pleader in Matt. xxii. But I only suggest this: the theme is too abundant. Every step, word, and action, carries with it a ray of this glory; and the eye of God had more to fill it in the life of Jesus, than it would have had in an eternity of Adam's innocence. It was in the midst of our moral ruin Jesus walked;

and from such a region as that He has sent up to the throne on high a richer sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour than Eden, and the Adam of Eden, had it continued unsoiled for ever, would or could have rendered.

Time made no change in the Lord. Kindred instances of grace and character in Him, before and after His resurrection, give us possession of this truth, which is of such importance to us. We know what He is this moment, and what He will be for ever, from what He has already been—in character as in nature—in relationship to us as in Himself—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The very mention of this is blessed. Sometimes we may be grieved at changes, sometimes we may desire them. In different ways we all prove the fickle, uncertain nature of that which constitutes human life. Not only circumstances, which are change-ful to a proverb, but associations, friendships, affections, characters, continually undergo variations which surprise and sadden us. We are hurried from stage to stage of life; but unchilled affections and unsullied principles are rarely borne along with us, either in ourselves or our companions. But Jesus was the same after His resurrection as He had been before, though late events had put Him and His disciples at a greater distance than companions had ever known, or could ever know. *They* had betrayed their unfaithful hearts, forsaking Him and fleeing in the hour of His weakness and need; while *He*, for their sakes, had gone through death—such a death as never could have been borne by another, as would have crushed the creature itself. They were still but poor, feeble Galileans—He was glorified with all power in heaven and on earth.

But these things worked no change; "nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," as the apostle speaks,

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could do that. Love defies them all, and He returns to them the Jesus whom they had known before. He is their companion in labour after His resurrection, nay, after His ascension, as He had been in the days of His ministry and sojourn with them. This we learn in the last verse of St. Mark. On the sea, in the day of Matthew xiv., they thought that they saw a spirit and cried out for fear ; but the Lord gave them to know, that it was He Himself that was there, near to them, and in grace, though in divine strength and sovereignty over nature. And so in Luke xxiv., or after He had risen, He takes the honeycomb and the fish, and eats before them, that with like certainty and ease of heart they might know that it was He Himself.

In John iii., He led a slow-hearted Rabbi into the light and way of truth, bearing with him in all patient grace. And thus did He again in Luke xxiv., after that He was risen, with the two slow-hearted ones who were finding their way home to Emmaus.

In Mark iv., He allayed the fears of His people ere He rebuked their unbelief. He said to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still," before He said to the disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith?" And thus did He, as the risen One, in John xxi. ; He sits and dines with Peter, in full and free fellowship, as without a breach in the spirit, ere He challenges him and awakens his conscience by the words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter had betrayed special self-confidence. Though all should be offended, yet would not he, he said ; and though he should die with his Master, he would not deny Him. But his Master had told him of the vanity of such boasts ; but had told him also of His prayer for him, so that his faith should not fail. And when the boast was found to have been indeed a vanity,

and Peter denied His Lord, even with an oath, his Lord looked on him, and this look had its blessed operation. The prayer and the look had availed. The prayer had kept his faith from failing, but the look had broken his heart. Peter did not "go away," but Peter wept, and "wept bitterly." At the opening of John xxi. we find Peter in this condition—in the condition in which the prayer and the look had put him. That his faith had not failed, he is enabled to give very sweet proof; for as soon as he learns that it was his Lord who was on the shore, he threw himself into the water to reach Him; not, however, as a penitent, as though he had not already wept, but as one who could trust himself to His presence in full assurance of heart; and in that character his most blessed and gracious Lord accepts him, and they dine together on the shore. The prayer and the look had thus already done their work with Peter, and they are not to be repeated. The Lord simply goes on with His work thus begun, to conduct it to its perfection. Accordingly, the *prayer* and the *look* are now followed by *the word*.

Perfect Master! the same to us yesterday, to-day and for ever; the same in gracious, perfect skill of love going on with the work He had already begun, resuming, as the risen Lord, the service which He had left when He was taken away from them, and resuming it at the very point, knitting the past to the present, service in the fullest grace and skill!

J. G. B.

"Not as Thy ways, our ways!
We bow before Thy face;
Not like Thy thought, our thought,
As by Thy Spirit taught."

"Not as our ways, Thy ways!
Saviour, Thy name we praise;
Not as our thoughts, Thy thoughts,
Told by Thy love-work wrought."

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER V. 1-6.

It is a sad and should be a deeply affecting thought, that the choicest work of God's hand has been separated from Him. Man has been tempted by Satan to strive with his Maker, and has proved a quick and ready learner in his school. Many have been the advances on the part of the Lord. The story of Scripture is the record of these repeated proofs of His infinite compassion, with, alas ! the ever-increasing repulses from man. At last He came Himself. The cross was the world's answer to this unspeakable grace. By this, Satan hoped to establish his reign as prince, and his worship as god of this world undisturbed, even if some were taken from his rule and removed to heaven. "The Revelation" was given to rouse conscience as to this, though many have made it more a subject for the intellect than for conscience, to their loss.

It is a wonderful opening to this prophetic part to find ourselves in the presence of Him whose will alone must rule, and whose determination is, to give the kingdoms of the world to Christ. To oppose will be rebellion, *open war* against the Lord in the face of this Revelation.

As we have already remarked, the elders in chapter iv., in words few, but well chosen, ascribe glory and honour and power to Him who sits on the throne, not only as the Creator of all things, but because of his *absolute sovereignty* in their creation. "Because of Thy will they were, and were created" (R.V). Compare Daniel iv. 35, Psalms cxxxv. 6.

No tendency in the mind is stronger than to challenge

the title of the Lord to "do whatsoever He hath pleased." Few, like Job, bless the name of the Lord when He taketh away as when He giveth. Few, as the Psalmist, "praise the Lord seven times a day because of His righteous judgments." Few, like the Syrophenician woman, bow at once to His dispensational ways, so that if He sees well to give to some the children's place and to others that of dogs, cheerfully take the place He has assigned, and count on Him in happy faith in the fulness of His grace, to make the richest provision even for the dogs (Mark vii. 28). Great, indeed, is such faith! May it be ours to-day, as it was theirs in that day.

It is against this absolute sovereignty of God that man's pride continually revolts, yet it is this that lays the foundation of all moral responsibility, as it makes everything done by the creature to be good or evil as *towards Him*. This could not be more clearly expressed than in this first note of praise in heaven, and it is only as we keep in the presence of God, and, in spirit, view everything from the vantage ground whence John sees all, that we shall feel how truth tells on conscience; for truly "conscience never feels too much."

To our experience creation is a ruin. We see it subject to vanity, and groaning and travailing in pain as the result. Is it to continue so? Appealing again to experience we might well fear it must. The fifth chapter removes this fear. According to the counsels of God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—the Son will possess as *man* all that He has created as God, and He holds the full record of those counsels in the right hand of His power, ready to entrust it to the One who can carry out those counsels, without possibility of failure, to a full, glorious and triumphant issue. Every deposit of God to men for the creature's blessing has hitherto failed to

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secure it, yet the clearest, fullest promises of blessing to *all* the families of the earth remain unfulfilled. Who are the people to bring about their fulfilment? Who shall usher in the time of real joy to all nations? Who shall lift the thick veil of ignorance and superstition which clouds and oppresses the existence of millions? Who can hush the passions of men, and bid wars and bloodshed to cease? Who is able to wipe away the tears from off all faces; to remove Satan from the world, that he should deceive the nations no more for a thousand years; to swallow up death in victory; to take away from the earth all things that offend and them that do iniquity? Yet this, and more than this, God has pledged His word to fulfil, unworthy as the heirs of these promises will have proved themselves to be. But how? To whom can these purposes of grace be entrusted? If all have failed hitherto to whom the Lord has given His oracles; if the *open* book, the inspired Word, has been unfaithfully dealt with by Israel first, and surely no less by the church now, who can be trusted with the sealed book? This is the question raised in this chapter (verses 1-4), and none can answer the angel's challenge.

The *church*, the latest proof of God's mercy, is seen in two preceding chapters (ii., iii.) as utterly untrustworthy. It has not been a true witness to God's purposes concerning the claims of Christ over this earth, and to His coming to enforce them, or to the true position of believers as strangers and pilgrims in it till He comes. It has cared for ease and greatness, for place and authority, in open contradiction to the faith it professes. Ambition to reign *without* Christ has taken the place of waiting in patience to reign with Christ. As to the world, the rising waves of evil make the most thoughtful tremble lest every barrier should yield, and a moral deluge soon

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sweep over the nations. In neither the church nor the world is there any hope. Then in whom, or where?

To the natural mind it seems repugnant, that the future blessing of mankind should not in any way be traceable to the immense resources of the mighty "Christian nations" of the present time, but should depend on One of so despised a people as the Jews, on *One "of the tribe of Judah."* The pride of the Gentile revolts against this, and even Christians refuse the thought that the church is not worthy to bring the earth through her final throes into millennial rest. Hence many readily adopt "the spiritual or allegorizing school of interpretation" which, as a Jew once cuttingly said, "appropriates all the blessings to the church, while it gives over all the curses to the Jews." Such is not the thought of the "Lion of the *tribe of Judah.*"

But the first as well as the last lesson for the soul is—God will be God. That this earth should be chosen of God for the manifestation of His character and ways, yea of Himself, and that to angelic hosts, as well as to His fallen creature man, is but a proof of His *absolute sovereignty*. Many a star is materially more glorious, yet has He passed them all by, and made this earth the scene of the wonders of His love. It is true, and precious is the truth, that being rejected of men here, Jesus has opened the heavens for all who will come to Him now, but the heavenly calling, the mystery, and the Christian's hope are not all the truth, "the whole counsel of God." It was on *this earth* that Satan gained his first apparent triumph and obtained power over men, and it is from this earth he will be taken, in the moment of his last success, and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 7-10). So it was here that Jesus suffered and was crucified. Small a globe as it is materially, it thus surpasses

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heaven itself in interest. Surely, as we have said, it was an act of sovereignty in God to select it as the abode of man, and the place in which to develop all His counsels, and no less was it so to choose Israel from all other nations, Judah from the other tribes, and David before his older brothers. No truth can afford truer rest and consolation to the heart than the free, absolute, sovereign power, and grace of God. Who can rule all things well if He cannot? In whose hands can we leave all our times if not in His? A wonderful place God has given us in His purposes, and yet more wonderful the God who has given us such a place. But, as a fact, no deliverance has yet been wrought for the *earth*. Sin and Satan still rule, and what is of God is despised. The Lion of the tribe of Judah alone can take up the government, and, putting Satan and misery out of this scene, bring life and the Holy Ghost, peace and blessing into it. He is indeed "worthy." No one else can be found.

It is beautiful to observe the intelligence of the elders. John, as still in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ, may weep as he realises the impotence of all created beings to cope with the terrible power of evil. The elder at once speaks with assuring confidence—"Weep not," and gives to Christ the two-fold title, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"—the one able in power to fulfil all the promises to Israel and through Israel to the earth, and "the Root of David"—the source of all those promises. (Compare Micah v. 2).

As "a Lamb," the most expressive symbol of unresisting weakness, his experience at the hands of men was suffering, shame, and death. To "bear His yoke," *the open confession of whom we serve*, we must "learn of Him" what real obedience is, and what it costs in this world. This is kingdom truth, so neglected now. When

He comes to reign it will be as "the Lion," the symbol of resistless strength. Both find their perfect expression in Him.

If through occupation with our own things, not the things of Jesus Christ, if because of the ever-increasing demands of a luxurious age, if even through undue occupation with the church and its truth, we have lost sight of the kingdom (Acts xx. 25), how can we hope to "stand perfect and complete in *all the will of God*?"

"It is very likely to have happened," says one, "that, in the recovery of the truth of the church in the heavens, and its hope, that a truth, such as the truth of the kingdom, should have been passed by too rapidly, and the mind solely directed to the church, the peculiarity of its unity by the Holy Ghost, and the gift left with it."

This is a word in season. May it tell on conscience, and make us humble but earnest in the study of this book, the book of the coming kingdom. "No doubt that he whose bruising is made the subject of the first prophecy of Scripture, is anxious to cast a veil over this the last, and to throw stumbling blocks in the way of those who would read it," but the Lord will bless the study of it.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

VI.—*continued.*

3. *His glory (or tongue) did rejoice.*

DURING part of my university life I used, in my daily walks, to pass a powder magazine, at some distance from the town, and I never could help noticing the way in which the sentinel, who had to guard that dangerous

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spot, appeared to be fully alive to the responsibility of his post, guarding with the greatest care every approach to the explosive stores, being well aware that any neglect of duty might cause a catastrophe of which his own life would be the first sacrifice. Often have I thought of the lesson that daily witnessed scene impressed on my mind, though but too often practically forgotten. Alas! dear fellow believer, what neglectful sentinels have we been at this dangerous post, heedless of the solemn injunction to keep the heart with all diligence, and forgetting that "out of it are the issues of life."

What a great fire one little neglected spark often has kindled, and what a destructive explosion it has brought about! May we heed more the divine injunction given by our Saviour at the threshold of Gethsemane: "*Watch!*"

Next to the *heart* comes the *tongue*.* It is the quickest, the most moveable of all the members of the body. It is as susceptible of any impetus as a gold leaf, which is moved by the faintest breath. Therefore, he that is able to bridle that unruly little member, and "offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." What a boon even to this world is a wise tongue, and how does even the world appreciate its value! What successes has it achieved! The tongue of a wise woman has saved a city, and the tongue of the fool has dismembered a kingdom, because that foolish king had forgotten the injunction of his wise and royal father: "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes; and keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and

* Prov. iv. 23-27, see p. 135.

health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence," &c.

Eve had not kept the word of God "*in the midst of her heart*" (she misquoted it), and therefore she did not keep her heart with all diligence against the words of the seducer. What came next? Her *tongue* parleyed with the devil. What then? Her *eyes* ceased to "look right on," she *looked* at the forbidden tree and "*saw*" that the tree was—

(1) Good for food ; (2) pleasant to the eyes ; and (3) a tree desired to make one wise.

The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life had begun their pernicious work.

What came next? She did no longer ponder the path of her feet, but they, stepping towards the forbidden tree, turned off the path of obedience to the crooked path of disobedience. It was the same order as in the chapter just referred to.

Only in Gen. iii. as well as in the Proverbs we have *government*, not running a race. Adam and Eve were not placed in the Garden of Eden to run a believer's race, but as keepers of the Garden of the Lord. They kept neither His word nor their own hearts, and the issue was death, and they could not keep that "Garden of Eden" any longer, but were driven out of it.

It is different as to the Christian race. The order is different here, because the *point of view* is different. We *start* with peace through the death of Him, who is our life, after He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. It is not first the Word, then the heart, then the tongue, then the eye, &c., but first the eye, then the heart, then the tongue, &c. The reason is this, that the one who runs a race, is first of all characterised by having a distinct object and goal before his *eyes*. So it was with

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Jesus. "I *foresaw* the Lord always *before my face*." In Psalm xvi. 8, God is His object, in verse 11 He is His goal. So with Paul. In Phil. 1 Christ is his object, "For me to live is Christ," in Chap. iii. Christ is Paul's goal. So with us in Heb. xii. It is not the *feet* that come chiefly into consideration in the Christian race in Heb. xii., for "the race is not to the *swift*, nor the battle to the strong," but the *eyes*. "*Looking off unto Jesus*," &c. But about this further on.

Oh! what instruments of praise to our God and Saviour, and of blessing to our fellow-men and fellow-Christians, for time and eternity, this little member of ours, even the *tongue*—may be! On the other hand, what a disgrace it may bring on the blessed name of JESUS, our LORD, even the name of Him, Whose "tongue" was "health," and "*a tree of life*," and of Whom it is written: "God was exalted with my tongue," and, "my tongue shall speak righteousness." Alas! we have boasted great things with that little member of ours, and, *behold how great a wood a little fire has kindled!* Alas! the tongue has not been "the pen of a ready writer." Pens there have been, and are plenty, and ready writers to handle them, too; but the day of Christ only will declare how many *idle words* have been spoken and written by men's *tongues* and *pens*! The perfect Man of our Psalm, whose tongue was "health," said:

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

Let us remember, that the Spirit of truth and of wisdom has deemed it good to devote a whole chapter, in that important and intensely practical Epistle of

James, to His gracious and warning instructions as to the proper use of that little member of our bodies. In the first part of that instructive (but, alas! so little heeded) portion we find the *serpent character* of an evil unruly tongue, "full of deadly poison," and set on fire of hell; but at the end of the chapter we have the *dove-like qualities* of a truly *Christian tongue*, endowed with and guided by "the wisdom that is from above."

Let me quote another word uttered by Him whose tongue was His glory: "Be ye therefore *wise as serpents* and *harmless as doves*."

I fear we have observed the *first* part without the *latter*, and therefore we have done *neither*.

As a solemn illustration of verses 5 and 6 of the portion just referred to (James iii.) I close with a short account of an incident which occurred in this country some years ago, as given me by an aged Christian, showing how one little word, consisting of only *two* letters, uttered at an unguarded moment, destroyed a whole family's happiness for life.

A husband, and father of a family, who, with his wife and children, for many years had enjoyed family happiness and peace, had of late, from some reason or other, some unpleasant altercations with his helpmeet. One day a fresh contention arose, and words not being wanting on either side, the contest between them soon assumed a grave character, till at last the husband, exasperated at some unguarded expression on the part of his wife, threatened to leave her if she did not alter her behaviour. She, equally exasperated at his threat, retorted with, "*Go*." No sooner had the fatal little word escaped her lips, when he, stung to his inmost heart, in his manly pride committed himself to a most unmanly and barbarous action. He left the house immediately.

and she never saw him or heard of him again. The poor broken-hearted wife and mother inquired and advertised for him all over the United Kingdom and abroad, by many touching and heart-rending appeals for herself and her children, but without result. Whatever the cause of his non-appearance and silence—whether the silence of death, by suicide or accident, or the hardening effects of despair and a sinful course of life, we cannot tell. *One single little word*, consisting of but two letters, destroyed the happiness of a whole family for life! What would that poor, broken-hearted wife and mother have given, not to have uttered that little word? Would she not, like a certain heroic woman in history, have bitten off her tongue rather than utter that little word, if she could have foreseen the consequences? Alas! alas! Scenes more heartrending and more terrible in their consequences have taken place in that which is "*the house of the living God*." They did as it is written,

"Bend their bows, to shoot their arrows, even bitter words ;"
and they made,

"Their own tongue to fall upon themselves."

May He, who did set God always before His face, and whose heart was glad, and whose tongue did rejoice, be more constantly the only attractive object before our eyes ; then, indeed, our hearts will be glad, and kept under the control of His Word, and our tongues rejoice under the safe guidance of His Spirit, ministering grace to them that hear.

(*To be continued.*)

“JEHOVAH-NISSI.”

II.

HE who undertook to accomplish our redemption fought the fight *alone*. Peter, with all his boasted ardour of affection, could not follow his Lord in that dread hour (John xiii. 36, 37).

“ *Alone* He bare the Cross,
Alone its grief sustained ;
His was the shame and loss,
 And *He* the victory gained.”

None could be with Him, much less take part with Him in making atonement for sin. This truth was jealously guarded in the type (Lev. xvi. 17). If Peter had laid down his life, as he declared himself ready to do for his Master's sake, what would it have availed? By the precious blood of Christ alone could he, or any, be redeemed to God.

But beside this aspect of the Lord's blessed work, which was wholly God-ward, and was submission not conflict, He had also in it real conflict with Satan, in order to annul his power. He took the prey from the mighty, He delivered the lawful captive; and who could be with Him in this? As delivered, as redeemed from the hand of the enemy, as well as redeemed to God, we are called to continue the conflict. How vain the effort before! How vain the thought of fighting the Lord's battles in Egypt!

Considering the conflict which our Lord thus, in self-sacrificing love for us, endured, how little is required of those who are now called upon to “fight the good fight of faith.” “Unto you *it is given* on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His

sake ;" wrote Paul, being desirous that the saints at Philippi should count such sufferings a privilege, and not simply endure them as having no alternative but to submit to a painful necessity. (See also Acts v. 40, 41)

And what real and rich grace it is, to call any to thus fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." Paul rejoiced in the privilege, and surely others also in their measure. He who, expressly addressing the sons of Zebedee, uttered the memorable words—"Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized," was perfectly aware that the warfare which they would presently be called upon to wage, would bear no comparison with His. Nevertheless, for *their own sake*, He was pleased thus to associate James and John with Himself in conflict, and they shrank not. Paul, also, as we have seen, that he might please Him who had chosen him to be a soldier, nobly withstood in an evil day; "taking pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," the power of Christ resting upon him. Above all things, fervently desiring to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the *fellowship of His sufferings*, being made conformable unto his death."

Beloved, He who met "the strong man armed" and overcame him, now leads His people on to do battle with an already defeated foe. He that loveth us is graciously pleased even now to associate us with Himself in conflict. Why, then, do we hesitate to put on the whole armour of God? Why are we so timid in the presence of the foe? If we shrink from "enduring hardness," how can we prove ourselves to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ?

The banner, "Jehovah Nissi," over every believer in Christ Jesus, is proof against all the assaults of the enemy. Throughout the conflict He abides the confidence, and strength of the Christian warrior. Cold principles, however important, can never take the place of Himself, or give the purpose of heart which He so desires and approves; and while our eye is fixed on Jehovah-Jesus the enemy can gain no advantage over us. Fully aware of this he employs every artifice to attract the believer's gaze upon another. He is ever prepared to exalt some object before them which may prove successful as a counter attraction. Well might one say, "If Christ were apprehended we should cease to know what the world calls little or great. The pursuit of an empire or of a butterfly would be to us alike *little*."

But Satan would have us always pursuing something. The more laudable the object the more successful his wiles. Again and again he has ostensibly lauded and honoured those of the Lord's servants whose devotion to the Master's service has rendered them prominent among their brethren. For what purpose? Simply in the hope that thus he may draw them off the one great work of glorifying Jesus, to seek their own glory, and then he will yet further exalt them in their own eyes, that self insensibly may get the place only due to Christ. Surely this was the aim in Acts xiv. 11-13; xvi. 17, but how utterly unsuccessful. Even if he fail with the servant, he will seek to allure his brethren to fix their eyes upon him, that they may cease to gaze wholly upon Jehovah-Jesus (1 Cor. iii. 4, 5). Alas, in this he is often but too successful. Even the Apostle John needed to be cautioned not to worship a fellow-servant, though an angel (Rev. xxii. 8, 9). But the man

that was born blind, young believer as he was, faithfully fought and overcame every form of this temptation. (John ix.) True to the light he had, he swerved not from the boldest confession of the One who had given him sight, and of Him only; and though *cast out* for his steadfastness, as a heathen man and a publican from the privileges of the fold, in *this very thing* he had the honour of following the Shepherd of the sheep (x. 4), and of learning "the higher mysteries of His fame" in communion with Himself as "the Son of God" (verses 35-38, Isaiah xlv. 22, Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2). What encouragement to the youngest and weakest of us to-day! Christian warrior! "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore"—but ever remember that *obedience* is a soldier's most essential qualification. He fears, if a "good soldier," his commander's word more than he does the enemy's sword. He would far rather *face the latter* than *disobey the former*. So must it be with us. Christ must be obeyed as our *only* Commander, and His word our *only* rule. Suitable and wholesome, too, is the advice given by one fifty years ago—"Keep *close* to the simplicity of Christ; nothing will keep us from extravagancies but walking with Him. He always moved so seriously to the object He had in hand—the *fulfilment of His Father's will*."

To those beloved saints at Philippi who had "always obeyed" the Apostle wrote, still encouraging them in the conflict—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Paul might labour *for* them, but it was God alone who worked *in* them, and that was their power, whether Paul was present or absent, to work *out* their salvation—practical

deliverance from the whole power of evil—right on to the end. The conflict is seen thus to be real and serious, since God alone can sustain in it.

Jehovah-Jesus had gone before them (verses 5-11), and He was now their banner over them, "Jehovah-Nissi." In obedience to His word they must, as in the presence of the enemy, take unto them the whole armour of God, make good use of those weapons for offence and for defence which God has provided for the protection of every believer (Eph. vi. 13-18), and the final result would be victory. To what rich blessing obedience ever leads! May it be ours to fix the earnest gaze wholly on the Lord, the Captain of our salvation. May we "keep His word and not deny His name," who is able to give even to "little strength" to be more than conqueror, and God shall indeed be glorified in the conflict.

A. J.

(*To be continued.*)

If a person begins doing things for his own honour, professing it to be for God, it will be sure to end in casting off God altogether (save always, that for the true Christian, there is restoring grace). If he begins with God he will end with God. We have need to be jealous over ourselves, whether what we *hang outside* be according to the true expression inside. The spiritual energy of Paul was such, that what came outside was what was within; and nothing more came out than was within.

Those who are seen by no one, but are suffering God's will, may be doing much more than where there is much to attract with—"see here, or see there." The great thing is to walk in the same spirit as Christ walked, as He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." *Take God's will*, and suffer in it; that is the happy thing.

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

“The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”—2 Cor. iii. 6 and 17.

THE letter here is not Old Testament Scripture (or the law), in contrast with the New, but ALL Scripture, whether old or new.

It is the Holy Ghost alone that can make the written Word of God effectual, either for life and salvation to the sinner, or for instruction and edification to the believer; yet it is not the Holy Ghost that is here meant by the Spirit that “giveth life.” In verse 17 it is plainly stated, “Now, THE LORD is that Spirit;” and all that comes in between verses 6 and 17 is a parenthesis. The Lord Jesus Christ is the subject, the substance, and the life of every part of the Divine Word, as it is written, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” We may, therefore, safely affirm that, as the body without the spirit is dead, or faith without works (James ii. 26), so the Scriptures without Christ (that is, “the letter” only), are dead also, though in their source and nature they are “the living and abiding Word of God” (1 Peter i. 23). To be occupied, therefore, with them, *apart from the Holy Ghost’s ministration of Christ by them to the soul*, is to miss the object of God in giving them to us: it is to be occupied with the casket without the jewel, the shell without the kernel. Let us see to it, then, with all earnestness, that we discern the Lord Jesus Christ in “every word of God.” The diligent study of the letter of Scripture is an important privilege and duty. It is that which the Holy Ghost has Himself given to us, and which He uses for our instruction and edification in Christ. It is like the laying of a fire, which should be done as well as possible, especially in the case of our children, always remembering that, however abundant the paper and the wood and the coal may be, and however skilfully arranged, no warmth can result unless the torch is applied.

G. O.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS,
ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BY LUKE.
CHAPTER XI. 14-54.

THESE verses give us other scenes, still illustrating, according to the way of our Evangelist, matter of value to our souls.

The Lord here listens to two challenges from His enemies, for in this world of ours, reproach was ever breaking His heart. But in the holy power of a great Teacher, as He was, He returns both these challenges on the head, or rather on the conscience, of His accusers. One said that He was allied to Satan in what He was doing ; another, that at any rate He had not sufficiently proved that He was allied to God in it.—“ He casts out devils through Beelzebub,” said the one,—“ shew us a sign from heaven,” said the other. But the Lord exposes such thoughts, and then lays open to them their condition, that they might learn that it was not in Him, but in themselves this evil and this obscurity were to be found, for that He was “ the finger of God,” and “ the candle set on the candlestick.” In St. John’s Gospel, He takes the title of “ the light of the world ;” but in the other Evangelists, as here, that of the candle set in the candlestick—not at all so lofty a style as the other, and this is still according to the different Gospels. But from either of these titles we learn that the Lord Himself is now the light. The sun in the heavens lighted Adam in paradise, but darkness came in, and it is the Lord who now runs His course for us. “ O house of Israel, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

The Lord in His answer here to the second challenge, leads us to these thoughts about Him ; but in the progress of all this, we notice an interruption. What

he was saying bore with such force on the heart of one who was listening, that "as he spake," she lifted up her voice and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." This was a testimony to the power of the words of our divine Teacher, which is His glory in this Gospel. And a like testimony is given to Him in the next stage of this same scene, for again "as he spake, a Pharisee who was present besought him to dine with him." He had evidently been moved by the power of His words, but not perhaps with the same affection as the poor woman, and he invites Him to his house. And so again, when He enters the house, He continues to act as the great Teacher still, rebuking the religious pride and dark hypocrisy which He found there, until a Scribe who was present, feeling the righteous rebukes, interrupts Him in like manner, and says to Him, "Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also." But the light abides faithful to its work, and goes on still making manifest the darkness that was surrounding it, till the enmity of that darkness is fully raised, and Scribes and Pharisees together begin so to urge him, that he has to withdraw the light, the power of which had thus become intolerable. *

CHAPTER xii.

IT is, however, to pursue His way as a Teacher, though in other places, that the Lord thus retires from among the Scribes, the lawyers, and the Pharisees. He here enters the multitude, and at once resumes His teaching, taking for His subject what was suggested to Him in the house of the Pharisee—hypocrisy, and the persecution which a righteous remnant might count upon.

* I observe that the Lord does not in this chapter, as He does in Matthew, apply the "unclean spirit" to the state of Israel; and this difference is quite characteristic.

And here again, as in the previous chapter, we have a testimony to the power of His words, for "one of the company," judging, as it seems, from the current of the Lord's discourse, that He was set against oppression and the assumptions of the rich, seeks Him to entertain his charge against a wrongful and injurious brother of his. But the Lord has only to act still as the light that rebukes darkness wherever it finds it, and He now among the multitude addresses a word against covetousness, as just before among the rulers, he had been addressing another word against religious pride and hypocrisy. For the world was but the place of man's darkness, and the light of heaven was therefore in all places where it entered, a reproofing light (Eph. v. 13). The rich and the poor, the rulers and the multitudes, were alike exposed by it; as Jeremiah in his day visited "the poor," and found that they knew not the way of the Lord, and "the great ones," and found that they had altogether broken the bonds (Jer. v. 1-5).

Thus we have the light here, the great Teacher, as in the preceding chapter, doing His holy work. But I observe that though much of the matter of this chapter is found in St. Matthew, yet that it is given to us in a different manner. There it is simply as a discourse of the Lord, but here it comes forth in reply to others. But this distinction is still in the character of this Gospel; because in it, as I have already noticed, the Lord is dealing with man, and drawing forth his thoughts and conscience and affections into exercise, that they may be corrected and formed by the mind of Christ according to God. The Lord's teaching, therefore, is often here, as in this chapter, in the way of answer to the inquiries and thoughts of others.

(To be continued.)

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

VII.—*continued.*

4. *His soul was not left in Hades.*

WE have seen the blessed result in the earthly lifetime of Jesus, of His ever setting God before His face, and having Him at His right hand. But that life of perfect patience, unswerving obedience, unremitting love and entire dependence on God, that life of holiness, righteousness, grace and truth, and ceaseless fruit bearing for the glory of God, and the blessing of poor fallen mankind, was drawing to its close. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." They stared in His face, and said, "Who art thou?" "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." They, at least their leaders, knew Him. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him." They hated Him without a cause; nay, from the very cause of His perfect goodness. They could not bear perfect *light* and *love* coming so near them. "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Like the Gadarenes, they bade Him depart from their coast. They would put up with the presence of a legion of demons rather than lose their legion of swine.

The only perfect, and, therefore, the most isolated man on earth, who was not understood, even by His own disciples, and who was "like a pelican of the wilderness," "like an owl in the desert," and "as a sparrow alone on the house top," was now to be taken away in the midst of his days. Messiah was to be "cut off and have nothing." He was about to give up all His claims in death, to take them back in resurrection, not only as an earthly Christ or Messiah (John i. 41.), but as the Head of a heavenly people, Christ, the head of His church.

Col. iii.; Acts ii. 36, appear to express both, and Phil. ii. 10, 11, the crowning prospect of universal homage.

But the way to all this lay through *death*. Jesus was to "taste death for every man."

What was the bitterness of that cup of vinegar and gall, man's last beverage for Jesus, before He suffered and died for sinners, compared with the bitterness of death? What must *death* have been to the "Prince of Life?" He had to face and taste it fully. Death, "*the king of terrors*" to sinful men, was, for the saints of God, to be stripped of all those terrors. Death had to be deprived of its sting—which is sin—but Jesus had to feel that sting—when He, who never felt nor knew sin, was made sin for us; when He, the just, died for the unjust, and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. The woman's seed was to bruise the serpent's head, but His heel was to be bruised. Death had to be met in its very strong hold, to find itself abolished when brought into contact with Christ, and life and incorruptibility were to be brought to light. The terrible enemy, that wielded the power of death in this world, was to be deprived of it, beheaded with his own sword, when David's Son and Lord, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, to deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage." But to accomplish this, the Lord of Glory had to be crucified. Nay, more. The Good Shepherd who came to give His life for His sheep, had to be smitten by the sword of divine justice, that was about to be unsheathed to awake against the Man that was His fellow, and in His human life on earth had glorified Him as no man ever had, or could have done. Many sons were to be brought to glory, but the captain

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of their salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, to bring forth its abounding fruit.

His soul was to be exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. The heart which, during life had been glad, moving only towards His God and Father, and towards the "excellent of the earth," whom God had given Him, and in grace towards poor sinners and pity for the needy—was soon to lie motionless in death. The tongue which had rejoiced; glorifying God, and speaking words of life, power, healing, grace, truth, wisdom, and comfort to the people, was to be silent in the tomb. But did that prospect of death, so dismal and gloomy even to the godly Israelite of old, shake or even produce a ripple in that even river of peace in His soul? Could it even for a moment abate that calm and joyful confidence in His God, that entire repose in His faithfulness and love that were the natural results in the Godward heart of that perfect Man? No, He who is "the beginner and perfecter of faith," having run the whole race; and *what a race!*—from first to last, ever setting His God before His face, and having Him at His right hand—whilst fully anticipating what death, *even the death of the cross*, meant (as Gethsemane, where His soul was sorrowful unto death, tells us), yet His confidence in His God was not only *before*, but *in* death the same, as His last confiding words on the cross did testify: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

And not only His spirit did Jesus commit to His Father and God, but His whole human being, spirit, *soul* and *body*. The Spirit of Christ bears witness to it in our psalm: "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hades; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption."

I cannot refrain here from warning the Christian reader against some erroneous doctrinal notions, which are not only unsound in detracting from our Saviour's perfect work of redemption, but pave the way for other equally if not more dangerous doctrines. These pages being mainly intended for edification, I do not enter into details. But these false notions, especially the second of the two I am going to mention, have an insidious and mischievous effect upon the souls of inexperienced Christians, and have already begun to produce such serious fruits, that it becomes a bounden duty, even if only in a few brief remarks, to warn the unsuspecting sheep and lambs of our good Shepherd's flock against the enemy's devices.

The first of these erroneous notions is, that the departing spirits of Old Testament saints did not go to hades at all, but went immediately to heaven. I need only refer to 1 Sam. xxviii. 13-15, to show the fallacy of such teaching. The rich man and Abraham and Lazarus were all in the same place, only separated by a gulf fixed between them, as we learn from our Lord's own words. Besides, the notion is derogatory to the work of our Redeemer, as the deliverance of the departed spirits of Old Testament saints from hades, and their transfer to heaven could be the result only of the cross and victory of our Lord Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, who here, as in all things, must have the pre-eminence. It is the risen Lord, the living One, who was dead, and is alive for evermore, that holdeth the keys of death and hades (Rev. i. 18). *

The second still more mischievous erroneous notion now sought to be propagated by some, is that the

* The desire of the writer is to lead to a closer study of the Word in view of errors revived of late. The reader must "prove all things" (Ed.).

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departing spirits of Christians go to hades, where they have to remain until the beginning of the first resurrection, at the coming of Christ *for* His saints. The mischievous character of these two false doctrinal notions is at once obvious. The former delivers and transfers the departed spirits to heaven *before, i.e., without* (as to *fact*), the death and resurrection of Christ, whilst the latter keeps them *shut up* in hades, and *excluded* from heaven (till the Lord comes), *after, i.e., notwithstanding* His accomplished work and triumphant resurrection. I am sure one needs only to point out the natural consequences implied in such teaching, to make every right-minded Christian shrink from it, not to speak of its flat contradiction of Scripture.

The departing spirits of saints—Paul and the apostles among the rest—sent to hades, to be confined there till the Lord's coming! They would have far more reason than those souls under the altar (Rev. vi.), to exclaim: "How long, O Lord?" "I have a desire to depart," wrote the apostle, "and to be"—*in hades?*—no, "*with Christ*, which is far better." Was Christ in hades when the apostle wrote thus? The same apostle says: "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Does that mean going to hades? One needs only to quote such passages as these to show the absurdity of such teaching, and not only the absurdity, but, as I have said, the detraction contained in it to the glorious results of the cross and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour.

But, as the Lord's words to the thief on the Cross: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," appear to discountenance such teaching, it is now maintained by those teachers, that

paradise" (*i.e.*, "garden of delight," or "pleasure grounds"), means "*hades*." Now, from 2 Cor. xii. 3-5, we see, that paradise is identical with the "*third heaven*." Then, according to this teaching, the apostle's being "*caught up to the third heaven*," where he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," means that he was *taken down to hades*, from whence Samuel ascended when he said to Saul: "Why hast thou *brought me up*?" (1 Sam. xxviii. 13-15).

One of the fruits of this unsound doctrine I heard of the other day, in the case of a certain man going about in his parish and telling his parishioners, that departed spirits are being kept in paradise, from whence they may be advanced to a higher place of blessing by the "*prayers of the Church*." Here we have the stepping-stone to the "*purgatory*" of the Roman Church, only daubed with the more flattering name of "*paradise*."

I will not dwell here on the place and power, derogatory to that of Christ, ascribed here to the church, the very tendency of the enemy in these days,* but will

* In a monthly periodical I find in a recent number the unblushing assertion that there is no difference between an offence to the Church, and one done to the Head (*i.e.*, to the all-glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who," says the Apostle of the church, "is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"). And how does the writer try to justify his bold attempt of raising the church to the same platform of dignity with the person of its glorious Head? He quotes the Lord's words: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It is sad enough, when religious and irreligious writers of the day take advantage of our Lord's wondrous humiliation during His humanity on earth, to disparage or even deny His dignity as the Son of God. But what shall we say to a writer who does not shrink from turning the expression of tenderest sympathy of our glorified Head with His body, the church, in her sufferings for Him, into a means of claiming for her the same dignity as for the person of Christ! Those words from the glorified Head, turned a *Saul* into *Paul*. What effect have they had upon the writer of those almost blasphemous lines? Does his heart feel their gracious and loving appeal? If not, let him beware of their *power*!

close by quoting a few words from a lecture delivered in Scotland by a well-known, and for soundness of doctrine, reputed servant of Christ :

"I have no sympathy with the modern attempt to revise the old patristic notion that the believer in dying goes into some prison or safe keeping, where he is until the morning of the resurrection. You may ask, who teaches such nonsense as that? Very respectable persons indeed. Perhaps you are not so much used to it on the north side of the border ; but I hear a great deal too much of it in the south, and it is not confined to mere objections, but, I am sorry to say, even in some Christian societies this obnoxious denial of the fruit of redemption is taught."

I now gladly return from what may appear to some a deviation, but in fact is a warning word in season, to the happy and blessed subject of our Psalm, to offer a few remarks as to the next result of our Lord's unvarying dependence upon, and unbroken communion with God.

(To be continued.)

FRAGMENT.

"IN ignorance, as not knowing what he said, Peter, on the holy hill, proposed to give equal place to Moses Elias and Jesus. But the "excellent glory" could not be silent then. The honour of Christ is not to suffer at the hand of any one. It may be but ignorance, and not unadvisedness, as with Moses ; or infidel presumption as with Nadab—it may be neither scorn nor temper, but only from want of knowing better. Still, God's hand or God's voice will be ready to avenge the dishonour of his Christ."

J. G. B.

“THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.

MATTHEW XVIII.

It is well when the presence of Christ is the object really sought by saints in coming together. Where it is so, the simple and true-hearted will at least be sincere in the desire to exclude everything that would hinder His presence being, not only truly enjoyed, but reverently honoured. The promise in Matthew xviii. 20 is sure, and, if we are in the way marked out by the Lord in that chapter, we may indeed always count upon its fulfilment. We must not, however, close our eyes to the fact, that the most sectarian appropriate this verse, or forget that Satan tempted by misapplying Scripture, and that a promise (Matt. iv. 6). All this may well make us serious ; but the Lord has not been unmindful of our danger (1 John ii. 20, 27), and the weakest are secure if taught of God, while the mightiest are ensnared if not.

It is not without design, we may be sure, that the Lord in Matt. xvi. and xviii., blended His instructions as to “the church” with the doctrine of “the kingdom of the heavens.” Any attempt to dislocate what He has connected may well awaken alarm.

That the Gospel of Matthew is peculiarly rich in dispensation-all truth, is acknowledged by most. In none are the claims of Jesus, as Messiah in Israel, more clearly presented ; and in none are His rejection, and its consequences to that people, more solemnly disclosed. It was fitting, then, that such a subject as “the church,” in some sort, and for a time displacing Israel on earth, should not be concealed from them. Also when the *order* of God’s ways is reviewed, as in this Gospel, the church could not be omitted. It is not named in the other Gospels.

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It pleased God to speak much of "the kingdom" by the prophets in the Old Testament. Whatever thoughts the Jews had concerning it, the hope of it was generally held. It was soon, however, manifested that, though as descended from Abraham, they were "the sons of the kingdom," they would not receive their King; and Jesus warned them of their forfeiture of all title, and that others would be called in their place (Matt. viii. 12). That He pointed to the Gentiles, and to the fruit of the labours of such as Paul after His departure to heaven, who can question? But if so, we who believe, whatever further truth there may be as to the church, and fuller light in the Gospel, are *in the kingdom*.

This is far more than a question of external conduct. Satan, as the prince of this world, can use the externally religious and moral, as Saul of Tarsus, against Christ. The little heed given to the plainest instructions as to "the kingdom" (as in Matt. v. 38-42; vi. 19-23; vii. 3-5, &c.), compared with zeal for externals, even in the church, proves our readiness to escape from that which really costs something in this world. Separation in heart and purpose to the service of Christ, cost what it may, and looking alone to Him as Lord to direct that service, and as Rewarder to accept it, will soon put everything to the test; and this is kingdom truth.

To return to Matthew—It is evident, that if the naturally born "sons of the kingdom" were cast out, sons must be raised up in another way; and thus the Lord, having in chapter xii., revealed the end of the "wicked generation," introduces in xiii. the new procedure. He takes the title of "Son of Man," evidence of His rejection as Messiah; makes the world the field of His labour, not Israel, and sows the *Word* for the raising up of a seed to serve Him.

When the Word is the instrument of blessing, not only are Satan, the world, and the flesh opposed, but there is room for a counter-work of the enemy (verses 19-23, 25). The true servants of the Lord failed in keeping guard, and men crept

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in, and went forth as from the Lord, who were really instruments of the devil; false brethren, false teachers, false prophets, antichrists. These were not to be removed from *the world* by the true servants; Christ Himself would deal with them in due time. This gives a present character to the kingdom, wholly unlike what the Lord set up, and what it will be after "all that offend and them that do iniquity" are gathered out. It is its aspect from the time of the failure of the servants at the beginning, all through the present time, till the end or "completion of the age," and the beginning of the age to come, when "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The twelve parables that follow that of the sower, in xiii., xviii., xx., xxii., xxv., give the perfect delineation of the form the kingdom has thus taken. In chapter xv., the total corruption of the *heart* is laid bare, in xvi. the blindness of the *mind*. In spite of all their boasted knowledge none could know Jesus. Man—"flesh and blood"—is powerless to reveal; but the time had come for the Father to work in power. Truth as to the person of Jesus, connected with new results and new hopes, is revealed to Peter, who makes the fullest confession of what he had received.

The Lord immediately pronounced him "blessed"—and who can measure the extent of the blessing? A poor fisherman, in the midst of a mass of lifeless profession, entering into and confessing the truth of "THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD."

Upon this truth, so revealed by the Father to the soul and so confessed, Christ builds His church, no stone of which is not a "living stone," "risen with Christ" beyond "the gates of Hades" (xvi. 16, 18).

If here we have the *doctrinal*, in xviii. we have practical truth as to the church.

A special place of service in "the kingdom of the heavens" was then given to Peter. In what this service consisted may be a subject for inquiry; but this is certain:—He was of

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necessity in “the kingdom of the heavens,” whenever he fulfilled the duties of his office, as having the keys of it. He was also in the church, and, doubtless, bore as others, the name of Christian as a disciple of Christ (1 Peter iv. 16). Was he the only Christian in “the kingdom of the heavens?” If not, as the profession of discipleship may be either true or false, the application of the parables of “the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens” has, and is intended of the Lord to have a *present* bearing on the consciences of *all* who profess the name of Christ.

Peter had a deeply practical lesson to learn, as recorded at the close of Matt. xvii. His hasty, though well-meaning, “Yes,” dishonoured His Lord, and falsified his own relationship to God. How impossible a true confession apart from entire dependence on the wisdom and resources of Christ! It is at this point chapter xviii. opens. Desire for greatness is the natural spring of energy in men, and the disciples were evidently not free from such desires. Jesus meets their question by setting before them a little child, the least desirous, as the least expectant of being anything. Dependent by reason of its weakness, humble by reason of its insignificance, subject because of its age, and needing the constant guidance of superior wisdom because of its ignorance, a little child is the last we should expect men to emulate. It, indeed, needs a turning back from all that man is, “for the flesh profits nothing,” even in efforts after humility. It needs the “new man,” Christ formed in us in truth and power.

If a believer is thus a little child in spirit, will any dare to stumble him? Better for such to be buried in the sea. Equally solemn, in view of the future, is the need of jealous watchfulness over self. Verses 8 and 9 will either be displaced or attenuated where the eternal results of redemption are not known, or a defective conscience is the state of the believer. *Entrance* into the kingdom, as into life, looks on to the future, and in Mark ix. the expressions are equivalent (verses 43, 45, 47). The epistles are as full of warnings as these

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verses, but never to put in question the work of Christ for us. When, as in chapter xiii., the Word was the instrument for begetting souls, persecution tested the character of its reception, and the question became a practical one. Was there "a root?" When trouble for the Word came, and sacrifices had to be made, if there were "no root," the soul gave up. Where there was "a root" it only clung the closer to the Word, and let go hand, or foot, or eye, or everything. This testing is true all through. Passing over, for want of space, verses 10-14, so lovely and so comforting as all must confess, we hasten on to the second mention of "the church." In matters of trespass the world has its provisions. Has a brother liberty to use those provisions against a brother? In 1 Cor. vi. the Holy Spirit is peremptory in forbidding such a course; while in this chapter, we have rather the spirit and the object to be sought by the injured brother—the spirit, grace—the object to *gain* his brother, the very opposite to the desire so common even among saints, of getting *at once* to the judgment-seat. But the important point established in both passages is, the competency of the assembly to judge between brother and brother. In 1 Cor. v. the saints are not only competent, but bound to judge. In the case then before Corinth, the Apostle says, "It was not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that had suffered wrong" (not the trespass only), but that his care for *them* in the sight of God might appear. They had to prove *themselves* clear in the matter. No apostles could do this for them. Of course, submission to the Word was at all times imperative, but submission to official persons is not found either in the Epistle to the Corinthians, or in the chapter before us. "Disciples," "brothers," not official persons, are in view all through, and these as weak as little children, and, corporately, as few as two or three. Hence the grace and wisdom of the Lord in enforcing the competency of such to bind or lose by the solemn "Verily." He knew that the church would go on long after all official persons had ceased; for, to maintain

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“orders,” one must leave Scripture for tradition. There is thus perfect continuity of truth in this chapter. The moral loveliness of a true disciple, exhibiting under all circumstances a child-like simplicity and trust—putting no stumbling-block before the world—allowing nothing in himself contrary to the spirit of his Master, who, in and by the world was mocked and buffeted, was spit upon and crucified—loving and caring for the weak and the helpless from the highest motive—seeking to the utmost to *gain a brother* (not a cause or suit), and only turning to the judgment-seat as the last resource, even then in no case to the world, but to those who really and truly have the presence of the Lord in their midst—all this surely forms a chain of truth, to remove one link of which is to mar the whole.

In verse 19 we see weakness, but in the secret of strength. Like Solomon, the need of wisdom is felt and confessed (1 Kings iii. 7). If weak they are “agreed,” real fellowship. Now the *ground* of Christian fellowship is given in 1 John i. 7. The *power* in Eph. ii. 18. This is deeply important, and prepares for the truth of verse 20. The two or three that can truly plead the promise there must be gathered together on as large a basis as that which is laid for the *whole church* in chap. xvi., the Name of Jesus revealed of the Father, and confessed by His saints.

The assembly can do nothing without Christ, any more than the individual saint. Is it worship (Eph. iii. 21)? Christ is in the midst to lead the praise (Heb. ii. 12). Is it judgment? Christ is in the midst the *power* of the judgment (1 Cor. v. 4).

Simple, sure, solemn test of all that is done in the assembly. In worship, hymns, if not according to Scripture, should not be received. Equally so as to a judgment. Neither hymns nor judgments are inspired, but they must alike be tested by the Word which is inspired (John xvii. 17). The church keeps *His* word, not enforces *her own*. The former is perfect humility; the latter intolerable pride.

“JEHOVAH-NISSI.”

III.

CHRISTIAN conflict may be viewed from two stand-points. Its aspect God-ward is, as we have already shown, to glorify Him. Its aspect man-ward is not destruction, but deliverance. I am called upon to wrestle for my own *personal* deliverance from the world, with all its allurements, vanities, scoffs, scorn, &c.—from the flesh, with all its unholy thoughts, desires, &c.—and from the devil, with all his subtle wiles, snares fiery darts, &c. Experience teaches us that it is no light matter to withstand these three confederate foes, yet all enjoyment of our portion in Christ depends on doing so. He alone has made good our *title*, but our practical possession of our heavenly place and blessing is inseparably connected with overcoming these enemies in the victorious power of God.

The world attacks the believer from *without*, and often in a religious way. When Christ was in it, it hated and crucified Him, and the most religious were the most vehement in the cry, “Crucify him, crucify him.” To gain victory, then, over the world, we must never lose sight of the cross. Satan deceives souls by adapting Christianity to the world, and the world to the Christian; but what is the love of the world in the presence of the cross? What is all that is in the world compared with God’s purposes in the cross? Well might Paul say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Thus the cross of Christ is more to the believer than peace to the conscience, precious as that is. It is *death to the world*, and he who, in spirit, lives in the world, minding earthly things, is an enemy of the cross, whose end is destruction, not victory (Phil. iii. 18).

The flesh is a foe that attacks us from *within*, by giving importance to all in ourselves in which man has confidence, as well as by its lusts warring against the soul (Phil. iii. 4, 6; 1 Peter ii. 2).

The power of the Holy Spirit alone can enable us to hold the flesh in its true place of death, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Paul, when standing in the flesh, (for thus he presents himself in Rom. vii.), experiences the impossibility of getting victory over sin. So long as it was I, I, I (verses 19, 21, 22, 23), he was "wretched." But when he cried for *deliverance*, he could say at once, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (verse 25). Immense is the discovery to the soul that the flesh is no longer, "I myself," that "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*." Yet, alas! how little is this known, and how uncertain the warfare in consequence. As for our greatest adversary—the devil—he spares no effort to turn us aside from following the Lord. Christ, he knows, would lead us to victory, and there would be no shrinking, no drawing back, if under His leading. "Resist the devil," then, Christian warrior, "and he will flee from you." He is utterly powerless to separate the weakest of God's elect from His love in Christ, or to lay an iota to his charge. His rage is impotent (Rom. viii. 35, 36). "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

But, it may be asked, are we not compassed with infirmity? Do we not oftentimes fail in watchfulness, and

suffer the adversary to attack us? Is it all victory, and are there no falls? Who would say so? In mercy, there is provision for failure. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 1, 2). Satan does come upon us when our eyes are off the Lord, when we are unwatchful, prayerless; but the Lord's eyes are not off us, nor off our enemy either, and He can, and will, restore the soul, though it be by rebukes and chastening. He will never suffer us to lose our *position* before the Father, though we may forfeit for a time all the comfort and joy of it. He is "Jehovah-Rophi," the Lord the Healer (Ex. xv. 26), as well as "Jehova-Nissi."

There is a further principle in Christian conflict. It is given to us to fight for others. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." No one can truly love Christ and not love those that are Christ's. A brother may "fall," yet the Lord has mercifully promised that "he shall not be utterly cast down." Though the enemy has obtained a momentary advantage, the humiliated believer may, even at such a moment, look off unto Jesus, and cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise." He will find the same pure grace to restore at last as to save at first, for the Lord changes not.

Is it possible, then, that one who knows the Lord, can be found heartlessly exposing the humiliation of a brother or a sister in Christ, or acting in the spirit of those terrible words, "Aha! aha! our eyes have seen it?" This is not "to love as brethren," this is not "to love as He loved." Did not Edom offend thus, and fall under the withering rebuke and vehement denunciation of the prophet of God? (Obadiah 10-15). If we sin thus against

our brethren, even our erring brethren, we sin against Christ. This is not combating for them, but against them; not acting with the Advocate, but with the accuser. Our Lord promptly stretched forth His hand that Peter might not sink beneath the waters, surely we ought to do all we can to rescue a brother in peril. Before Peter, in his rash self-confidence, entered into temptation, Jesus prayed the Father for him (Luke xxii 31, 32), and when we see a brother hotly beset by the enemy, buffeted, tempted, tried, and apparently on the point of being overcome in the conflict, it becomes our bounden duty to pray for him (James v. 16; Eph. vi. 18). In a moment of peril "the hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep," but a faithful under-shepherd abides, he will not cease to "tend the flock," and that because it is the "*flock of God*."

It was but a lamb that the lion took out of Jesse's flock, but that lamb was so precious in the eyes of David that, young as he was, he hesitated not to pursue after and to attack the formidable foe, and he delivered the lamb out of the lion's mouth. The Good Shepherd has a flock, every lamb and every sheep of which He has purchased with His own blood. Ought not these to be even more precious in our eyes than ever that lamb was to David? Shall we abandon them at the appearance of the wolf—the would-be scatterer of the sheep, and leave them to their fate? Why so selfish? Why so fearful? Will not He who delivered David "out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear," deliver those who are ready to *prove* their love for the flock for the Shepherd's sake? "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," is the divine standard, and shall we desire to lower it?

Paul would that the Colossians knew what great conflict he had for them, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. Such was his devotion to the flock of God that he ever sympathised with the weak, and felt for the wronged. "Who is weak ; and I am not weak ? Who is offended, and I burn not ?" So far as they affected only himself, he could truly say of bonds and afflictions, "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself," &c. ; yet his Epistles testify of deep exercise of spirit, and of pressing daily anxiety for all the Churches (2 Cor. xi. 28, R.V.) ; while they abundantly prove how zealously he wrought for the deliverance of the saints of God, be the danger what it might. The contentions amongst the saints at Corinth cost him "much affliction, and anguish of heart ;" and with "many tears" he wrought, "lest Satan should get an advantage." Though the manifestation of his abundant love for the brethren, made the littleness of their love for him only the more apparent, he gladly "spent out" himself for their souls and prayed for their perfecting. How many profess Paul's doctrine that show little of his manner of life (2 Tim. iii. 10). Such will surely suffer loss in that day.

When the Church of God is attacked by false brethren — "certain men crept in unawares" — the Apostle Jude exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," not only for personal deliverance (verses 20, 21), but also to *save* others (22, 23), and that in the confidence of the security, there is in Christ (24, 25). And Timothy is encouraged to care for the safety of his hearers even as for his own — "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine : continue in

them ; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and *them that hear thee.*"

Beloved, we are called to war a good warfare, and our weapons must be of divine temper. (" For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Mere religious zeal is common enough, and the deceived heart may for a time mistake it for faithfulness ; but the *love of Christ* to His Church is wanting, and where there is little or no fellowship of Christ's love to His saints, friends are wounded more than foes. Such warfare is not "good," neither are such soldiers "good soldiers." In this, as in all else, may we seek more and more of the love of Christ as our moving spring, and feed on, as well as minister, "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness;" and as we constantly need the grace of the Lord Jesus to be exercised towards us, let us see to it that *we also exercise it towards others.* A. J.

(*To be continued.*)

FRAGMENT.

"MOSES at Meribah spake unadvisably with his lips. He trespassed against the Rock which followed Israel, and that Rock was Christ; and that is enough. He and Aaron are judged for this sin. They are told that they shall not bring the people into the land—a judgment which is never repented of. God is not to be moved from avenging the wrongs of Christ upon His choicest servants, be they who they may, even a Moses and an Aaron." J. G. B.

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A CHIME.

“To me to live is Christ,
And to die is gain.”
Be this my song and boast
Spite of ev’ry pain.

As brook of life on earth
Till it reach its sea,
As source, and stream, and end,
Christ alone for me.

’Tis worth a while to bear
Din and battle strife ;
Service and toil to seek,
Christ alone for life.

If body die, ’twere well,
Blessed Lord, for me ;
Ended toil I’d come
With Thyself to be.

I know not which to choose,
Jesus, Lord ! nor see ;
Then, let the Father do
What is best *for Thee*.

Since I am wholly Thine,
One spirit, Lord, with Thee,
Whate’er for Thee is best
Must be best for me.

Lines written to, and for a servant of the Lord, suffering at the time from a fatal disease, and now in the Master’s rest.

By G. V. W.—1872.

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER V. 6-14.

IT is rest, and even more than rest, to a Christian's spirit, to turn from earth to heaven. Heaven is opened to him and he belongs to it. But, to rightly take in and enjoy the scene presented in these verses, we may with profit recall, for a moment, the past.

Adam, while obedient to His will who created him was blessed in Eden. He was made in the image of God as representing Him in the earth, and was set over the works of His hands, a divinely appointed centre where all was good. His overthrow by Satan involved the most momentous consequences, feebly realised, even when deep groans out of the vast depths of suffering all around reach our unwilling ears. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until *now*." Who can say who will suffer next?

But if Satan, by subjugating the first man brought in this misery, he himself shall be finally and eternally overthrown by the second Man, and not only earth, but all things shall come under His dominion whose right it is; right inherent, yet also according to purpose, to gift, and to redemption.

It is this truth that binds the whole of Scripture together, creation, redemption, glory. The divine exposition of Psalm viii. blends the simplest gospel testimony with the widest range of truth. Let the reader trace its bearing on the kingdom (Dan. vii. 13, and 1 Cor. xv. 21-27), on the heavenly calling (Heb. ii 6-9), on the Church (Eph. i. 22, 23), on the deep mystery of the person of Christ (Matt. xi. 27), on the Father's love (John iii. 35), and on other truths, and he

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will feel, in measure at least, as Paul felt in Rom. xi. 33-36.

The immediate effect of Adam's fall was seen in his own family. Family unity was the first and simplest, but Cain departed from God, and the murder of his brother followed.

The effort to establish unity by human wisdom ended in confusion and dispersion, and "the plain of Shinar," where it was attempted (Gen. xi. 1-9), has furnished a divine illustration of "wickedness" for all time. "This is their resemblance through all the earth" (Zech. v. 5-11), a principle of deepest moment.

The story of Israel's unity was but as a streak of light that passed away almost as soon as it shone (compare 1 Kings iv. 25 with xi. 9-13, and xii. 16-20). Henceforth all was sorrow and strife in the land. Then Ephraim vexed Judah, and Judah Ephraim, till they were both carried into captivity.

The church was, after Israel, set in the midst of the conflicting races of men as a bright and blessed testimony of unity. Baptized by the Holy Ghost into *one body*, the responsibility of Christians was to manifest their union by one Spirit, in unfeigned dependence on the Head. Man and the world have taken the place that belongs to Christ, and all is confusion.

What will be the terrible mockery of unity which Satan will inaugurate in the latter day, is seen in Rev. xiii. and xvii. Every sinful element in fallen man He will energize, to produce a kingship and a kingdom that all the world will wonder after. Its misery and its doom are both recorded (xvi. 10 ; xix. 20, 21).

Such has been, is, and will be the scene on earth. But John sees "THE LAMB" in heaven, and all is union around Him—the living ones, the heavenly re-

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deemed company, the angelic host, and finally (by anticipation), the whole creation brought into redemption blessing.

God will allow no other gatherer than He of the peoples of the coming day (Gen. xlix. 10), and "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," until He shall come whose right it is. Rejectors of Christ dream of bringing all nations into amity, and the confession of brotherhood! Men have seized Christ's inheritance, and naturally want to make it look as fair as they can under their management. The Revelation gives the *sequel* of these efforts, in which, alas! even Christians have been seduced to join. The Lord preserve them from all deception, by blessing, as He has promised, the reading of this book.

Israel, too, refusing to be gathered by Him, have been dispersed to the four winds of heaven, and have forfeited all their promises. Their restoration hangs upon their not abiding in unbelief (Rom. xi. 23-27, after Matt. xxiii. 37-39), and their sequel is found in this prophecy, too (vii., xiv. and xi., xii. xiii.).

And are Christians *one*? Alas! as we have seen, to them Christ is not "*all*," and until He is, union is impossible. Only hearts kept fixed on His beauty can beat together.

What an appeal, then, is made in the verses we are considering to Christians, for whom, in the first instance, this Revelation was written. What God has given and saints have received, is CHRIST, and the confession of Christ and His glory is what God looks for, whether in the individual believer or in the church. Even a truth may be deprived of its place and turned to man's self-exaltation.

When Christians clothe themselves with some self-

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chosen truth, as of exclusive importance, they naturally attach themselves to the teachers of it. This was so even in the days of the Apostles, but to what anguish of heart to such as Paul ! (1 Cor. i., iii., xi., and 2 Cor. ii., vii.). Truth may be divided, but Christ is not divided, and it is base to turn from Him who was *crucified for us* to follow some gifted, but ambitious teacher. What can compare with "the Lamb slain ?"

Christ is "all" in heaven. He is in the midst of *the throne*, not on one of the twenty-four thrones ; and "in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." "He hath prevailed"—He is entitled to hold the destinies of all. "He hath seven horns"—all might, "and seven eyes"—all counsel. He is not only worshipped in heaven, but His might and His counsel shall yet be known in "all the earth" (verse 6). Blest contrast to the force and craft of Satan ! (xii. 3).

Our interest, then, in the opening of this sealed book ought to be intense. What a proof of care as well as of love in Him to unveil the future to her who is to wear the crown with Him ; for, if He is displayed in the midst of all power and glory as the Lamb, the church, though here in sorrow and in suffering, is none other than the bride, the Lamb's wife. And what duty can be more imperative to a bride, than to shun every principle or course that could possibly ripen into revolt against the coming kingdom of her bridegroom. If the enemy is about to push every advantage he can now gain over souls to the full end of his fatal purpose, if he is counting much on the principles of popery for those who love ecclesiastical authority, of the desire for power for those who favour politics, of the strivings and pretensions of the human mind for those who lean to infidelity and atheism, what mercy to discover the in-

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evitable result of these things in bringing men to judgment.

The contrast to all this working is seen in heaven. The elders as worshippers have "each one a harp." Harps for praise, but praise of a joyous as well as a reverential character. They *sing a new song*. In the fourth chapter their worship is profound, reverential adoration ; they cast their crowns before the throne, but they do not *sing*. In this chapter redemption is the theme, and the Lamb is the Redeemer. Thoughts of the costly ransom He has paid to take the prey from the mighty, to deliver the lawful captive, fill the hearts of the worshippers, as they rehearse His sufferings, and anticipate the full result in the countless multitudes that shall yet, in due time, be brought out of the enemy's power, to swell the unceasing song—

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Spiritual discernment as well as critical research would leave out "*us*" in verses 9, 10. It is the mighty work of redemption which the Lamb has accomplished, that the elders celebrate, and its vast and blessed results extend far beyond themselves.

But they have also "golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints." If all is joy in heaven, and therefore worship, the prayers of the persecuted saints on earth are not without sweetness and value there.

But who are these saints, and of what character are their prayers? The answer is—When the time of 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17 is fulfilled, the earth cannot be left without witnesses for Jesus. When the heavenly company is complete and caught up, a special band of witnesses will be raised up, proclaiming the rights of Christ Jesus

to supreme dominion over the earth (Ps. lxxii. 11 ; ii. 10, 12). Satan's answer to these claims will be to set up a rival king and people, and with momentary success (Dan. vii. ; Rev. xiii. 7). "He will wear out the saints of the most High." Many Psalms give the character of their prayers, earnest cries for vengeance, unsuited for Christians in this day of grace.

The issue of the last struggle of these saints with the determined enemies of Christ is certain, for He Himself takes up their prayers and gives efficacy to them (Rev. viii. 3-5). This the elders cannot do, but their interest in their sorrows is seen in their having these golden bowls, and surely is told to us for our profit. Love never fails, and selfishness is not found in heaven. We may even now profit by this lesson. The harps of praise to the Lord are surely first, but sympathy for the testimony and loving concern for those who render it should never be wanting. We shall have both, in glory.

(To be continued.)

THE CHRISTIAN RACE, AND THE WAY TO RUN IT.

VII.—*continued.*

5. *God shewed Him the path of life up into His presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.*

AND what, dear Christian reader, must necessarily be the path for Jesus on the other side of His grave, after His earthly path of perfect obedience in life and death? It could be nothing but that of life in resurrection. That path of life beyond the grave, was but natural and

due to Jesus, after His path of life on this side of His grave. It was due to Him, according to His merits as the *Son of Man*, the Holy One of God, the righteous and obedient Man on earth, who had perfectly glorified God on earth, as no man ever had done, nor could have done, that God should raise Him from the dead (Acts ii. 24). It was due also to Christ's character as David's Son (Acts ii. 30), according to God's promise, given to David. And thirdly, and above all, it was only natural as well as due to Him as the Son of God, that He who had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again, should *rise* from the dead, and by His resurrection be declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. i. 3). It was further due to Him in all these three characters, that He should take His seat, and be seated at the right hand of God, according to His dignity and merits (33-36).

But was it only the path of life? What would even that have been to that lowly and obedient Son of man, without the presence of His God, whom, during His earthly path, He had always set before His face, and up to whose blessed presence that path of life in resurrection has led Him? It was not the crown of glory and honour, wherewith He was to be adorned at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where the eye of faith thus beholds Him now, neither was it the prospect of victory over His enemies, when He will come again with ten thousands of His saints, on the white horse of victory, as Lord of lords, and King of kings, His head adorned with many crowns, when His enemies will be made His footstool. It was not all that honour, power, glory and victory—wondrous as they are and will be—that made Him say, "In thy presence is fulness of joy."

It was the full enjoyment of the immediate presence of His Father and God, the joy to behold His face, after all the sorrows and sufferings of this sad world—to sit down at His right hand, as the One who could say: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the

work which thou gavest me to do." To behold for ever the countenance of that blessed God and Father, Whom no man hath seen at any time, but Whom He had declared to poor fallen men in His perfect life on earth : to behold without ceasing the face of that blessed Father and God, who is the eternal source of everything that is blessed and good, and whose daily delight that Son had been, before He, who is wisdom, laid the foundations of that earth, where He, its Creator, as the humble lowly Jesus, was to glorify God, setting Him always before His face : this was, and is, the "fulness of the joy" of Jesus, there above in glory.

"In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," or as given in Acts ii. 28 (where we have, by the Spirit of glory, the fulfilment of the words of the Spirit of prophecy (Ps. xvi.) as to resurrection.

"Thou *hast made known* to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy *with thy countenance*."

Here we see what that joy set before Him, that made Jesus *endure the cross*, and run that whole race that terminated on the cross, really was. It was the unspeakable joy, unceasingly to behold the divine countenance of His Father and God, Who is light and love, and of whom Jesus in His life on earth, had been the express image.

He then had set Him before His face, and this had been His comfort, joy and encouragement during a race which no Saint of God ever had run, nor could run, "*save Jesus only*." But now, in due reward "Jesus crowned with glory and honour," is seated at the right hand of God. And what is the joy of the Father's countenance and heart ? Whither does He look ? At "the face of His anointed," with perfect divine complacency, even the supreme delight of a God and Father. And what is the joy of the countenance of that glorious Man there above, at the right hand of God ?

Is it not this ? "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance ? *When on earth*, He had His God at

His right hand, and thus could never be moved. In heavenly glory, His is the corresponding place at the right hand of God. And who will move Him thence? None but Himself, when He shall rise once more at His Father's bidding, to meet in the air, and to lead into the Father's glorious house with the many mansions, all the many sons of glory, whom He by His cross has fitted for it. Now *men in Christ*, there above perfect in Christ before God, may *Christ in the man* be more manifest in us during our earthly race, knowing that *as He is, so are we in this world*. The same love that rests upon Him the Beloved, in whom we are accepted, rests upon us.

Jesus, at the right hand of God now enjoys pleasures for evermore.

Dear fellow-Christian—*what* and *where* are *our pleasures*? How far do *we* know "the *power* of His resurrection? Do we, as those who are risen with Christ, seek things which are above? And what are those things? Such as are pictured in books like "*The Gates ajar?*" or "*Heaven our home?*" They would be poor and dangerous objects, too, for a risen Christian! Nay! there is but one object to the eye of faith:—"Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Are our "pleasures for evermore" *at the right hand* of God, even in Christ, rejoicing always in the Lord, whose joy is our strength? Are we *setting* our affections on earth or on things in heaven? "For where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

His "fulness of joy" was, to behold the countenance of His Father; our fulness of joy will be to "see His (Jesus) face."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

(*To be continued.*)

SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS.—Luke xxiv.

THERE are certain great principles of life—of life from the dead—of life in Christ—in which the saints of God are led out to walk to the glory of God. One of these is, “*We walk by faith, not by sight.*” In this we are at once brought to the sacred scriptures, and to Christ of whom they testify, also having the Holy Ghost by whom the holy men of God were moved of old, by whom testimony is given to Christ, and who dwells in us for ever.

It does not say, We walk by faith, *and* by sight ; but, We walk by faith, *not* by sight.

The journey of the two disciples going to Emmaus has been given to teach us something of this. All God’s children are taught it—it is one of their simple actings in the life with which they are quickened.

When the rich man in hell entreated that one might be sent from the dead to his five brethren, that they might be kept from coming to that place of torment, he was refused his request, and was told, “they have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them,” and “if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke xvi. 27-31). The *sight* of one rising from the dead would do them no good if they would not *hear* Moses and the prophets, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. x. 17).

While Christ walked with His disciples in the flesh, they had much of the sight of Christ, and so had the people of the world too : but the disciples were blessed by the word of Christ ; and those who were not blessed by His word, were not blessed at all.

In this we see the ignorance of Christ’s disciples drawing out much of His compassion to them : they were much disposed to walk by sight, but He could not

suffer them so to do : they were very slow to walk by faith, but He could not conduct them in any other course.

Why did the women carry spices with them to the sepulchre on the first day of the week—the third day after Christ was crucified? Was it what He said that made them do so? or was it what they saw, together with their own thoughts upon it, but without any reference to a word on the matter that came out of His mouth? This it was! They *beheld* the sepulchre and how His body was laid, and then they went to prepare the spices and ointments, but they did not *remember His words*. If they had remembered His words, they would on this third day have gone to see the empty sepulchre, and to look for their risen Lord; and the very sight of the stone rolled away would have been a joyous sight, and not to have found the body of the Lord Jesus would have been a sight more joyous still. But the very acts by which the purposes of God are accomplished, will perplex those who have not communion with the mind of God, in those acts. They who saw His works for forty years, but did not learn His ways, could not enter into His rest; and therefore the word of warning is, “To-day if ye will *hear his voice*, harden not your hearts” (Heb. iii.).

But God was merciful to those poor ignorant women, who though ignorant yet were full of love to Jesus, and He sent the two men in shining garments to say to them, “Why seek ye him that liveth, among the dead? he is not here, but is risen; remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words.”

There are then the two disciples going to Emmaus, “And behold, two of them went *that same day*”—the day on which they should have known that Christ was risen from the dead—to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had

happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them." The subject of their conversation was, "*the things that had happened.*" The nature of the conversation was, that they "*reasoned*" together. They told what one person did, and what another person said, and then they puzzled themselves to know why all this was so. Oh! poor disciples! Did you speak one word of what God had said in all this matter, and what God had done, and of all the glory that was now awaiting you? Oh no! And now if walking by sight has got them into their trouble, God will show them and through them show us, that it is not by sight that He will get them out of it. Objects of sight may draw out one's own thoughts; but it is by the word of God that He communicates His. As these two disciples communed together and reasoned, "Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But *their eyes were holden that they should not know him,*" and yet they were about to learn more of Him. But first Christ had to cast down their imaginations; and so he said unto them: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" Jesus was indeed only a stranger in Jerusalem, and He would make those disciples to know themselves strangers with Him there. His Father had given Him a cup, and He drank it. He laid down His life for the sheep: and His Father loved Him because He did so: and with regard to what the people in Jerusalem had done against Him, it was only that He that sitteth in the heavens might laugh, and the Lord might have them in derision.

But Jesus drew out those two disciples by asking them, "What things?" "And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel : and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre : and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive, And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said : but him they saw not." Such was their account of the things that had happened in Jerusalem, and their own thoughts about them. Jesus heard them and said, "*O fools !*" They saw what the chief priests had done, but they did not see what God had done—they were not walking by faith—they were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. It was there they were to learn Christ and the purposes of God about Him ; and so "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." The things concerning Christ can only be learned in the Scriptures, not in the things happening in any place ; for we walk by faith, not by sight. You may truly see an important act in the workings of God, and yet be quite ignorant of the purpose of God in that act, or what further result will follow. All these must be learned of God ; and He has set them, so far as He sees we need to know them, in His Scriptures, and given His Spirit to show Christ and the connection of the things with the glory of Christ, and this without the aid of the things of sight. "*Their eyes were holden that they should not know him,*" because their walk was to be, NOT *by sight*—there is the exclusion of sight in our walk of faith. I dare not allow a picture of Christ, or any kind of image of Christ, that I might learn Him the better, or even look for a sight of Christ Himself after the flesh : it is in the Scriptures that the things concerning Him

are to be learned ; and “ *the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.*” See Rom. x.

We who know the truth can have the same communion with the Father and the Son as they who saw with their eyes and handled with their hands what they have declared unto us of the word of life. “ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life ; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) ; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” I John i.

After Christ had reproved and corrected and instructed those two disciples, he then tested their affection for Him and their desire to have Him with them ; for when they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further. And as the faithful of old, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, might have had opportunity to have returned : so those two disciples, if they had been mindful of their own sad state as they reasoned together, had now an opportunity to go back to it again, for Jesus made as though he would have gone further : but it was not so : they loved His presence, they wished Him to stay with them, and so “ they constrained him, saying, Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

“ And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and break and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight.” In this there was further witness of, “ *not by sight ;* ” for when their eyes were opened, and that they knew Him, instead of His adding something to what He had already taught them, He vanished out

of their sight, and left them in happy meditation on the words He had spoken, instead of sadness in reasoning on the things that had happened. “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

May we thus have communion with Christ, according to that which is written, and according to the power of His Spirit.

May you be kept from the sadness of your own reasoning on the things that happen, that you may not be as fools but as wise: for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

“JEHOVAH-NISSI.”

IV.

HE that would “war a good warfare,” must at all times carefully distinguish between *friends* and *foes*; lest he should, to his shame, be found attacking and wounding those whom he should succour, or coalescing with those whom he should resist. That no “soldier of Jesus Christ” might err in a matter of such very grave importance, both sides are clearly defined in the Word of God.

Whom, then, are we to count friends, and whom to esteem enemies?

The Captain of our salvation has already given the word, “Follow me!” “For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should *follow his steps*,” “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered,

he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

As in the Gospels we trace His footsteps, we find Him, during one period of His sojourn "among us," in favour with God *and man* (Luke ii. 52); again, after He had successfully withstood our great adversary, in the wilderness, we find Him returning "in the power of the Spirit into Galilee;" teaching in their synagogues, "being glorified of *all*." Alas! how soon the enmity of man was aroused against Him! He came to Nazareth; its people at first "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth;" but as He proceeded in His discourse, they were presently "filled with wrath." Why? Simply because His "gracious words" were also *words of truth*, addressed to those who said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He had just declared that the *fulfilment* of all their promises was in Him. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME; he hath anointed ME, &c." The poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind and the bruised, were to find in Him unmingled blessing, but they saw no beauty in Him, He was to them only a man, "Joseph's son." And when He faithfully reminded them, that in the days of the Prophets, believing Gentiles had received blessings in which unbelieving Israel did not share, all their hatred of sovereign grace burst forth, and they would have cast the Lord headlong from the brow of the hill.

Thus the presence of the "true light" made manifest the state of the heart; and what a heart! Their murderous intent proved them deadly enemies of the Truth.

He by whom "grace and truth" came, did not resist these sinful men (Matt. v. 39, R.V.), but, "leaving Nazareth" (words of deeply solemn import), He came and dwelt

at Capernaum, where we presently find Him "in the house, and many gathered together." As he proclaims that word which "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," all listen ; but while some, believing, receive of His grace, others reason in their hearts, and cavil at His words (Mark ii. 1-12). Waxing worse and worse, these unbelieving reasoners, like the men of Nazareth, also manifest their hatred of the Light, and joining hands with other sinners plot His destruction (Mark iii. 6).

Nevertheless, whether men would hear, or forbear, He, whom God had given "for a witness . . . a leader and a commander to the people," ceased not to bear witness to the *truth*. Another has said, "As the *Word* He was God expressing Himself," His every word and action bore testimony to the faithfulness, loving-kindness, and tender mercies of Jehovah, as He published salvation, preached "righteousness and peace," exposed hypocrisy, and denounced every form of transgression ; proving alike to small and great that "God is light," and surely, also, that "God is love."

"Never man spake like this Man," who with "bands of love" would draw the children of men. Because He was "the Christ," and had "the words of eternal life," those that received His testimony became more and more attached to His person (John vi. 68) ; because He told the truth, and testified of the world that the works thereof are evil (John vii. 7), those that believed not, hated Him without a cause ; their hatred becoming daily more and more apparent and murderous in its aim (John viii. 40, 45, 59).

His *friends* are those who do *whatsoever He commands* (John xv. 14), for obedience is love in exercise, and these joyfully confess, "We love Him because He first loved us." Because they love Him, they are *beloved of the Father* (John xvi. 27); because they are not of the world, they are *hated* by the world, by those of whom, He that wept over Jerusalem (by the mouth of the Psalmist), said,

"They compassed me about with words of hatred ;
And fought against me without a cause.
For my love they are my adversaries :
But I give myself unto prayer.
And they have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love" (Ps. cix.).

The more closely, then, we follow Him, obeying his word, the less difficulty we shall have in distinguishing between friends and foes.

How sweet and refreshing to His spirit were those hours which Jesus spent "alone" with the Father. Yet He never for one moment lost sight of the specific purpose for which He came into the world (John xviii. 37). He did not hide Himself from the multitude, nor withdraw into the solitude of the garden of Gethsemane, even when His enemies were urging Him vehemently, and provoking Him to speak of many things ; laying wait to catch some words, that they might accuse Him (Luke xi. 53, 54). Even so when it pleases Him to call us (His "friends") apart, unto Himself (Mark vi. 31), it becomes our privilege to sit at His feet, and enjoy the *repose* of communion (Luke x. 39) ; Ps. xxiii). But whenever He sends us forth (Mark xvi. 15 ; John xx. 21), though it be as sheep in the midst of wolves, we are, each one, responsible to do "whatsoever He commands," and thus to display the *activities* flowing from communion (John v. 17 ; xvii. 4 ; Acts xiii. 2-4).

Christian warrior ! suffer a word in application. It may be that men of the world were quite content to

leave thee unmolested, whilst thou didst enjoy the repose of communion, but if thou hast indeed taken "the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit," and art prepared to "stand in the evil day," and to display the activities flowing from communion, take courage, yea, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Thou speakest the truth in love, but whilst thou provest that thou art "not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord," let it not surprise thee if thou findest thyself quickly deserted by the pleasure-loving multitude (John vi. 66 ; 2 Tim. iv. 10, 11, 16), and hotly beset by enemies (Ps. xlii). Yet faint not, Christian warrior, for He that has called thee to the fight, even thy Leader and thy Commander, will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Therefore, taking courage, "boldly say, the Lord is my helper and I will not be afraid ; what will man do unto me ?"

Remember the conflict which He endured, when against Him were arrayed Satan, and the confederate powers of darkness. When great and mighty enemies beset Him round, if He had shrunk from facing the foe, there had been no deliverance for us. Yet in the hour of His sorrow, His own forsook Him, and fled, and left Him *alone*. Are those around thee like them ?

Art thou also left *alone* ? and is the contest most severe ? He that directs thy advance will stand with thee, and strengthen thee (2 Tim. iv. 17) ; even He that fought and overcame (Rev. iii. 21). Fix thine earnest gaze wholly upon Him who goeth before thee, and hast promised to guide thee with His eye (Ps. xxxii. 8). Let Him be thy confidence who "upholdeth all things by the word of his power." His banner over thee is love ; yea, He Himself is thy banner—"Jehovah-Nissi."

Enemies have only *limited* power ! The utmost they can do is to kill the body ! Both the power and the grace of Jehovah are infinite ! "Be not afraid of *them* *Fear him* FEAR HIM," said Jesus, addressing His "friends," in the audience of those who "compassed Him about like bees" (Luke xi. 53, 54 ; xii. 1-7) ; for

He feared not what *man* could do unto Him (Ps. lvi. ii.) ; and this is to follow Him, for the fear of man bringeth a snare."

Soldier of Jesus Christ ! thou hast entered His service, thou hast professed thy willingness to obey Him, and thine eye must not only be open, but single. Not only must thou carefully *distinguish* between friends and foes ; it is none the less essential that thou shouldest at all times *stand with Him*, and *never with those that hate Him*. A Christian ought never to be found on any other than "the Lord's side." Alas ! how many dear saints of God have been found standing with the enemy, to the great dishonour of Him, who "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." Such must suffer loss. They do it to their cost.

When David stood as the champion of the "armies of the living God," he triumphed over Goliath ; but was not his subsequent great distress (after Ziklag had been burnt) one sorrowful result of his having gone over to the enemy ? (comp. 1 Sam. xxvii. i, 2, 6 ; xxx. 1-6). Because Jehoshaphat "helped the ungodly, and loved those that hated the Lord," there was wrath upon Him from before the Lord. Would Peter have been tempted *thrice* to deny his Lord if he had not "stood with them" that sought his Master's life ? (John xviii. 18, 25, 27).

The record of David's "great distress," of the "wrath" that overtook Jehoshaphat, and of Peter's bitter tears, should prove sufficient warning to each and all of us never to stand elsewhere than with Him who is *a companion of all that fear Him*, and of them that *keep His precepts* (Ps. cxix. 63). Very solemn are His words, "He that is not *with me* is against me ; and he that gathereth not *with me* scattereth abroad."

We have yet to consider how He would have us to treat His friends, and to behave ourselves towards enemies.

A. J.

(*To be continued.*)

SHORT PAPERS ON THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER VI. 1-8.

THE strictly prophetic part of the book begins with this chapter, and can we put the events recorded behind us, as matters of history? If the storm has passed, men may read the story of it with comparative indifference; if to come, it surely deserves the most serious consideration. Let it be observed that it is the Lord Jesus Christ as the slain One, "the Lamb," who, from the very centre of power and majesty, reveals to us these events by opening the sealed book; while, as to earth, the cry of slain ones, slain for their testimony, calls for vengeance on "them that dwell on the earth." Such an introduction must certainly point to more than the past strivings of men one with the other for territorial aggrandisement. "They that dwell upon the earth," are the moral descendants and representatives of those who killed the Lord Jesus, and seized on His inheritance, and are repeatedly before us in this book, as enemies of Christ and opposed to His claims, not to sit on the throne of God, but to His manifested dominion over the whole earth (Ps. ii.).

The "end of the age" is not much before the mind of Christians; the enemy, alluring them by schemes of present reformation and improvement, keeps them unconscious of the shadow that is really, if stealthily, creeping over the world, awaiting only the rapture of the saints of God to become the long predicted "darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the peoples." The first Christians were better instructed as to this

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than modern ones. They knew that the mystery of iniquity was working, and that, although there was a restraint put upon it (2 Thess. ii.), the outbreak would come. It was kept back, in the mercy of God, in order that the gospel might go out and souls be saved. When that restraint should be removed, "the WICKED" would be revealed, and the open abandonment of all that God has given in His Word for man's salvation, would afford abundant room for the dissemination of fatal error. Satan's energy would be at its height, and he would imitate, by the LAWLESS ONE, even the miracles of Jesus to deceive souls. Alas! this would not be all. God, in judgment, would "send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned (judged) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Let the reader weigh solemnly what will be the end of the present course of things, when the Church, the habitation of God in the Spirit, will be gone. The earth will not be left without a testimony, but its main feature will be the coming judgment. "The gospel of the kingdom" will be proclaimed, the coming of Jesus to overturn all earthly dominion, making His enemies as stubble before the wind. On the other hand, all that hinders a widespread apostacy will be taken away. Satan will be cast down, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time, and the Lord will bring woe upon woe on the inhabitants of the earth and the sea. The professing, but really unbelieving Church, will become Babylon. The dwellers on earth will, for the moment, triumph, and the remnant who fear God and give glory to Him, will be in distress. Satan will originate and sustain dominion. God will be blasphemed, and man worshipped.

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Such is the revealed future of many, and, indeed, "coming events are casting their shadows before."

The Christian that realises the "dark place" through which he is passing, will gratefully accept the lamp of prophecy (2 Pet. i. 19), and here the Lord Himself causes it to shine the brighter as the end draws near. Not an agent appears on earth without His permission, for the sovereign controlling power is seen to be entirely in His hands ; but he who would be in the happy enjoyment of this revelation must, in spirit, be like John, *near Him in heaven*, desiring nothing of the world, but rejoicing in the prospect of its being delivered out of the enemy's hand, and given, even to its "uttermost parts," to Jesus.

It may be that we can now know nothing of the actors, or apprehend fully their actings, but there is blessing to the soul from communion with the Lord about the things which He is pleased to bring before us. It is "the testimony of Jesus" (xix. 10), and He treats us as His *friends* in giving it to us (John xv. 15 ; xvi. 13). In the vision of the glory of God given to Ezekiel, there was the closest connection revealed to the prophet between the *throne*—the seat of power, the *Cherubim*—the attributes of God in government, and the *wheels*—the course of events on the earth. At such a terrible crisis in Israel's history this revelation was all important, seeing the abominable idolatries practised by the people. While every form of creeping things was receiving the worship of the ancients of the house of Israel, while the priests were bowing down to the sun, and the women weeping for Tammuz, the remnant who sighed and cried for all this wickedness, were comforted to know, that every attribute of God was exercised immediately on their behalf, and they were not at the mere mercy of

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the apostates of their own nation, or the caprice of the terrible Chaldeans. Each wheel was by its appointed cherub (x. 9), and not a turn could take place without the cherub's action. All was real unity of purpose and fact, the spirit was in the living creatures, and the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels (x. 17), "and whither the head looked they followed it." One has but to read the story of this eventful time in the Kings the Chronicles and Jeremiah, to realise the comfort of the truth thus made known. However Nebuchadnezzar seemed to fill the scene, there was a power far above Nebuchadnezzar, ordering everything; and though to sight it was as "a wheel within a wheel," very complex, yet all, even to the minutest detail, was in accordance with a perfect, unbroken plan. The Lord above the firmament controlled everything. In His all-wise administrative government nothing escaped Him.

In the Revelation there are no wheels, for the wheels had special reference to the *then* relationship of Jerusalem to the Lord. His throne was still there (1 Chron. xxix. 23), not yet cast down to the ground. The last kings of the house of David were becoming more and more hopelessly wicked, and God was about to set them aside and give the power into the hands of the Gentiles. When this took place the cherubim mounted up from the earth, and the link between the earthly events and the controlling power above was no longer seen. The wheels went out with the cherubim (x. 19). Faith then had to count on the Lord, who, *though not acting in direct government* on the earth, yet cared for His people, and held all things in perfect wisdom and power (2 Chron. xvi. 9). This is ever true, so that He can and does make all things work together for good to them who love Him. As Ezra said, when the throne of the

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earth was taken from his people and given to the Gentiles, and so far as outward government, Israel was kingless, and all hung upon faith—"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." This was his stay and guarantee, and so is it to this day, therefore "blessed is he that believeth" (Ezra viii. 21, 23).

The first providential judgments, preparatory to re-establishing the direct government of God on the earth, are symbolised by horses and their riders, active power rapidly accomplishing its purpose (Zech. vi. and Rev. xix.). As each seal is opened a definitely marked change in the affairs of men ensues, but everything waits on the pleasure of the Lamb. As we have remarked, there are no wheels seen on earth, but the most intimate connection is maintained between the Lamb's action in opening the seal, the call of the living creatures, and the appearance on the earth of the several agents of the Lord's pleasure. Nothing can happen without the knowledge and permission of the Lamb, and all in fore-known order.

When the first seal is opened the then existing governments will be threatened by one going forth conquering and to conquer. A new and powerful force will be called into action, the results of which will be widespread. The colour of the horse betokens a prosperous career, the bow speaks of strength (1 Sam. ii. 4; Gen. xlix. 24), and of hostile power (Ps. xi. 2), while the chaplet or wreath given to the rider tells of triumph. The opening of the second seal reveals a resisting power—the fierce passions of men so stirred that peace is taken from the earth. The whole current of feeling is madly turned on mutual destruction, and the warlike energy of the rider is seen both in the colour of the

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horse and in the "great sword" put in his hands. The scourge increases in the third judgment. Black betokens sorrow and mourning, while "the balance," and the voice heard by the prophet indicate great scarcity. The necessities of life, wheat and barley, are at exorbitant prices, embittering the condition of the poor, while the wine and oil, the luxuries of the rich, are as abundant as before. Nothing in the past has so hastened on revolutions as this, but even deeper sorrows must first intervene.

The hour "to judge the world in righteousness by that man whom God hath ordained," has drawn near, and the preparatory sorrows that were predicted by the Lord have thus begun (Matt. xxiv. 6-8). The instruments of the divine judgments are not revealed, and in the third and fourth horses it is impossible to conceive of mere human agents. They manifest plainly the Lord's hand uplifted over the earth, though, in the last He, in mercy, limits the area of the punishment. "The four sore judgments" fall upon the fourth part of the earth, as once upon guilty Jerusalem (Ezek. xiv. 21) and "sore" indeed they will prove to those "despisers who will wonder and perish." The whole present system is thus seen to be changed. It is no longer the long-suffering of God, and the proclamation of the richest grace in the full forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, but the first of many strokes of judgment, increasing in severity, till the last excess of evil brings the Lord Himself in flaming fire. This solemn change approaches, and all the influences at work in the world are surely hasting it on. "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness."

“GOD, THAT COMFORTETH THOSE THAT ARE CAST DOWN.”

THE dear babe is laid out in my study. Rose this morning at five, and repaired to my dearest Julia. After I had kissed her sweet forehead, and her clay-cold purple lips, I took her dear hands in mine, and my soul at this moment received unspeakable comfort. For, I thought, this hand will never be lifted up against God, this heart will never indulge a thought contrary to His holy will, this silent tongue will never utter a word of rebellion, nor shall the little feet ever be found in the broad road that leads to death. I cannot describe how happy I felt at the thought of this, while the tears rolled down my cheeks with all the tender emotions of a father. I thanked God, and took courage, and hastening to my wife related how the Lord had comforted me. She, also, was greatly consoled, and we prayed together for the Lord to help us through the day. Ah! it was a day never to be forgotten. We committed the dear little body to the dust in full assurance that it shall rise again all triumphant and glorious. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Still, tears have since been our meat day and night, sometimes tears of tenderness—sometimes of sorrow—sometimes of gratitude. Oh! what a precious Gospel is our Gospel! What life and immortality are brought to light by it! Without it we should not know what would become of our little ones, or, indeed of ourselves. But, blessed be God, “if all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, the *word of the Lord endureth for ever.*”

R. KNILL, 1825.

"THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."

Matthew xviii.

II.

"FOR Christ our passover is sacrificed for us ; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth " (1 Cor. v. 8).

The true and full enjoyment of good, as distinct and separate from evil, marked the people of God from the outset. In type, the Israelites were feeding on the Paschal Lamb in peace, as sheltered by the sprinkled blood, while judgment was on all outside. They were also morally, and in intent, out of Egypt, their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand. At the same time they put away all leaven ; this was strictly enjoined. The Apostle has made divine use of this type to guard Christians, as redeemed by Christ the true Lamb, from everything unsuitable to their holy calling. There is "old leaven," that is, the principles and ways of the world. Israel took their dough before it was leavened, none of the leaven of Egypt was mixed with it. So the Christian is not to be conformed to this world, not to love it, or the things in it. There is also "the leaven of malice and wickedness ;" that is, the flesh in its workings. These, too, must be judged and laid aside (1 Pet. ii. 1). The soul is to delight in good, to be fed and refreshed by it. Its food is to be the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth—the infinite goodness and worth of Jesus. The blessedness of the possession of Christ forbids all leaven in the individual Christian, and in the church.

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Corrupted Christianity accepts as children of God all who are subject to its ordinances. That Christ should be the object of the heart, and manifestly so, is by no means essential; hence discipline is either abandoned, or it gives greater occasion of difference as to church government than anything else. But no rite can impart new life and *soul* delight in Christ, that it should judge all worldliness, and all the workings of the flesh. The Word by the Spirit can, "Ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26.); "Of his own will begat he us with the *word of truth*" (Jas. i. 18); "Being born again by the *word of God*" (1 Pet. i. 23); so John i. 12, 13, and many other Scriptures. Such, and such only, are children of God, and such, and such only, Christ died to gather into one (John xi. 52). A mere professor may hold fast to forms of godliness, but "sincerity and truth" are not his delight. How can he "keep the feast," know the joy of sin put away by the work of Christ, if his sins are not put away?

But God's children are redeemed from all iniquity, and bound by the very profession they make to be separate from it (Tit. ii. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rom. vi. 1-5). "Ye that love the Lord hate evil," and there can be no true unity without it. If God is our Father we "love Christ, for he came forth from God" (John viii. 42), and there can be no cleaving to the Lord Jesus with full purpose of heart without separation, for the One to whom we cleave is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Government is not the bright side, but it must have its place where Christ is in the midst. Paul insists on it, and that to excommunication, as *obedience to the Lord*—"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write

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unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Of apostles, he says, "Not that we have dominion (lordship) over your faith." He, therefore, ever dealt with evil by the *conscience*. Thus he withstood Peter, not by means of the judgment given by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 22-29 ; xxi. 25), which would have been an easy, and in Peter's case a pre-eminently righteous way of dealing with him, as he took part in it ; but by doctrine, and by proving to him what fatal consequences were involved in his conduct (Gal. ii. 11-18).^{*} So with the Corinthians, as to things sacrificed to idols. He might have made short work of it by saying, the question has been decided by those at Jerusalem ; the judgment has been given that "the Gentiles that believed should keep themselves from things offered to idols ;" and the assembly at Antioch has accepted it. Instead of this, however, yet in perfect harmony with it, he devotes three whole chapters to exercising their *consciences* as to the sin of it, quoting or alluding to no less than sixteen passages of Scripture that bore upon it (1 Cor. viii. ix. x.). Now, God's standard of right and wrong is given and fixed, and the assembly is bound by that standard, the sacred canon of the Holy Scriptures. Paul, in no way allowed the thought that the Word of God came out from the assembly (1 Cor. xiv. 36), so as to give any sanction to "the *see-saw* of right and wrong" found in church canons, whether ancient or modern.

None knew the sorrows attendant on discipline more experimentally than Paul. As he said, "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you, with many tears," and opposed as the Corinthians were to

^{*} The reader will see in Gal. ii. 14, that Peter was seeking to compel the Gentiles to Judaize.

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exercise it, yet, when obedient to the Word, however deep the grief, what blessing accompanied their obedience! "What carefulness it wrought in them, what clearing of themselves" (2 Cor. vii. 11). What knitting together, too, of God-fearing hearts! "The inward affection of Titus was more abundant toward them, whilst he remembered the obedience of them all;" and Paul could add, "I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things." The estimates of the conscience must be according to the *presence* of Christ and God-fearing hearts must rejoice when He is obeyed,

And was the blessing confined to the Corinthians, and to the godly who, in the true unity of the Spirit, were with them. ("If absent in body yet present in Spirit"). Indeed, no. The one who had caused grief, the one subjected to discipline was brought to repentance, to a deeper and truer hatred of sin, to more real self-judgment and self-loathing, perhaps, than he had ever known before.

It is worthy of remark that, in the first epistle, Paul speaks of the "*power*" of Christ (1 Cor. v. 4) as to removing or putting away this guilty one from them, and John shows, in his third epistle, the wretched result of man usurping that power. But in the second epistle Paul speaks of the "*person*" or "*presence*" of Christ (ii. 10). All that Christ is is concerned in forgiveness. "God also *in Christ* forgave you." To delay to forgive and restore on true repentance is not to manifest Christ, but to call for judgment on the unforgiving (James ii. 13).

And with this agree the last fourteen verses of our chapter, the moral force of which cannot be turned aside, even though the parable may have a dispensational bearing.

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Surely, then, government has its divine place in every divinely gathered company of saints. Else why have we the question, "Do not ye judge them that are within?" Or why say, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also." And if there be the administration of punishment and of forgiveness, is either of value apart from the power and person of Christ? "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." This is alike true of individual or corporate service. It is the same Christ that sits at the right hand of the throne of God, who is in the midst of those gathered to His name. While simply and only carrying out His revealed will there will be, in government as in worship, harmony between earth and heaven.

Upon the first mention of the church the Lord made provision for the overcoming of all corruption in it. In the epistles we find the actual working of the principles here laid down, and an humble and prayerful study of these principles will result in blessing.

There is a struggle before the children of God, and it may come home to every family. Millions of works are in circulation, the object of which is to subject souls to another authority than Christ.* 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7 is being fulfilled. But the church must be subject first (Eph. v. 24) before it can judge. Perhaps the most solemn word to any who seek to use power will be found in John v. 30, remembering *Who* it is that said it, and what precedes it (19, 29).

* A memorable instance of how far spiritual servitude may be pressed, and that with an unhallowed use of the name of Jesus, is seen in this—Ignatius Loyola, on his death bed, enjoined on every member of the "Society of Jesus" to be in the hands of his Superior, "*perinde ac cadaver*"—"just like a carcase."

(To be continued.)

SIMPLE TESTIMONY

ON "HIM THAT IS WEAK IN THE FAITH;" AND ON THINGS OF "DOUBTFUL DISPUTATION."—Romans xiv.

"HIM that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

There are many things said in this chapter in reference to him that is weak in the faith, in which the mind of Christ as to the saints is much set forth.

We learn in it that there is no thought at all of any person having Christ as a Saviour, that saves him from his sins, without also having Him as his Lord, whom he is to serve. For he that is weak in the faith is a person of a very tender conscience before the Lord, even to the very thing he eats.

They who do what they like, and refuse to walk in subjection to the Lord, are not reckoned among the weak in the faith, but among those who have crept in unawares; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness (Jude 4).

They who go to the works of the law, to be justified by them, are not weak in the faith; they have got off Christ entirely, are fallen away from grace, and Christ is become of no effect unto them (Gal. v. 4).

They who profess to know God, but in works deny Him, are not called weak in the faith, but abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Tit. i. 16).

We should not stop at our being saved from judgment to come, as the end of Christ's work for us; "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (ver. 9); and this now gets its first answer in the obedience of the saints.

But in all this obedience there is a happy cheerfulness, for it is the love of Christ constraining us ; and so, in the four statements, as to keeping the day or not keeping it, as to eating or not eating, it is said of the servant of the Lord in each case, that "*he giveth God thanks.*" There is no murmuring, no self-will, but happy and willing subjection. The very nature of the kingdom of God ensures happiness in the obedience rendered to God in it, for it is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (ver. 17).

The unregenerate man cannot enjoy the things in the kingdom of God, because he does not know them ; they do not minister to his lusts ; but the saints in their new natures have their enjoyment in Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost.

He who eats all things, and who minds not a day, does not so from carelessness or from self-will, but because he is taught that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He who does not eat all things, or who keeps the day, does so because he does not see the liberty into which God has called him ; and his brethren wait until he gets more strength, and do not despise him, because he does it unto the Lord.

There is nothing said here as to the weak in the faith being weak in his estimate of Christ as a Saviour, or of his own free and full salvation in Christ ; neither as to his estimate of Christ as his Lord, whom he is now to serve ; but his weakness is in thinking that there are certain things he ought or ought not to do ; and his brethren must suffer him to act conscientiously, and not despise him, though they themselves see their liberty in these things.

It is important to see that in the things of doubtful

disputation there is nothing of the lusts of the flesh or of corrupt moral evil ; all the saints in Christ are supposed to be quite of one mind in these things, and to have their communion in the judgment of God upon them.

In the things of doubtful disputation, there is much more blessing in having all the brethren acting on this great principle, "that they do what they do unto the Lord," than on any fleshly restraint as to outward observances.

No person could act in blessing in the church in acting as a master on his own authority, and not as a servant on Christ's authority. No obedience could be obedience with blessing that was not rendered in subjection to Christ.

May we own Him as our Lord in all things, and be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

It is important to see that, while the strong are in danger of despising the weak, that it is the weak that are in danger of judging the strong for not coming under the bondage of their own weakness (verses 3, 10, 13).

But the blessing of the strong is to have such love to the weak, and to be so abundantly satisfied in the things of the kingdom as to be able to give up his liberty in such things as meats and drinks, because in them he is giving up nothing of the kingdom of God, for "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

DEMERARA.

SHORT NOTES ON CONSCIENCE.

AS the exercises of conscience are so intimately connected with the subject of the foregoing paper, a few short notes as to conscience may supplement it with profit to some.

The supreme authority of God, and care for the eternal well-being of men, can alone be secured in obedience to the truth, which is according to godliness. "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In this the sovereign rights of God are maintained. "Give none offence" (no occasion for stumbling), "neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." In this the well-being of men is respected.

An unpurged conscience cannot stand in the presence of God. The effect on the conscience of receiving God's testimony as to the work of Christ is that it is purged. However great God's claims, however distressed the conscience, as it reviews the whole course and issues of life, both the judgment of God on sin and the requirements of conscience as in His presence, are met by the sacrifice of Christ. The Spirit of God brings the perfect answer of God to the distressed conscience. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Thus the Gospel, when received in faith, perfectly sets the conscience at rest in the immediate presence of God. This is a divinely "*purged conscience*" (Heb. i. ix., x.).

The conscience of a saved sinner flows from his *new relationship* to God as His child, and as walking in the light as God is in the light. It holds its court, not in the darkness of nature, and subject to the influences

of external circumstances, but in the sight of God and subject to His will. "Hast thou faith" (that is as to things allowed) "have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth." This is a "*good conscience*," and ever to be maintained. "Holding faith and a good conscience" (Rom. xiv. 22 ; 1 Tim. i. 19).

The Gentile had been long accustomed to consider idols as gods, and it was difficult to get rid entirely of early ideas. "Some with conscience of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled." So, as to days and meats with the Jew. By both, God was owned, while the conscience was not fully enlightened. Such an imperfectly enlightened conscience is the "*weak conscience*" (1 Cor. viii. 7 ; Rom. xiv. 20).

"A *pure conscience*" is when light is acted up to, the whole conduct subjected to the decisions of the conscience as in the light of God, and kept there in purity, not tampered with by any one or any thing (1 Tim. iii. 9).

"A *defiled conscience*" is the reverse of this, the accompaniment of light not acted up to (1 Cor. viii. 7).

"A *seared conscience*" is one that has been reduced to silence through hypocrisy ; as the surface of the body is sensitive to heat or cold, but may be rendered insensible to feeling by cauterizing, so may the conscience of a man be made insensible to everything by hypocrisy (1 Tim. iv. 2).

God, who according to His own goodness has provided for us, sinners, a way, in His own Son, for being in his presence with a perfect, even a purged conscience ; has, with it, given us a conscience *full of life*. May nothing deaden it.

BRINGING CHRIST INTO EVERYTHING.

IT is interesting to remark in the Epistles, the way in which the Spirit of God enters into every minute thing that concerns us. Not like the prophets of old, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, &c., who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, with a "Thus saith the Lord;" and they had to learn and inquire about the thing of which they spake. In the prophets, the Spirit of God is communicating a certain message, and this is occasionally seen in the Epistles, as in 2 Thess. ii. for example; but generally it is not so much a message delivered, but the Spirit down here, entering into everything. Paul tells out all his thoughts, his affections, his consolations, and all that he feels. The Holy Ghost leads into the high and deep counsels of God, and also into all the minute details of the saint's walk down here. Christ that "descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." The Son of God having passed sinlessly through all the circumstances down here, the Holy Ghost enters into them also, that He may show them unto us in every difficulty through which we may be called to pass. Were it not so, *as human beings down here*, we should be without Christ. But thus the Spirit consecrates the whole heart, thoughts and ways of a man to God in Christ. It is in virtue of this connection with Christ that every direction is given as to long hair, and the head-dress of women, in connexion with Headship. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God."

So also as to servants not purloining, it is in connection with "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," and the coming of the Lord. Again, when the mind of the

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Lord is given as to a woman teaching, or usurping authority over a man, the mind and thoughts of God about Adam and Eve are brought out. If we look into the word of God, we shall be astonished at the way in which the Spirit of God takes the soul up to Christ, and uses Him in all these things (in the every day walk of the saints) that are brought out in the New Testament. *(Extracted.)*

SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

DAVID AND THE INHABITANTS OF KEILAH.

1 Sam. xxiii.

IT is our blessing as knowing God, to have a constant reference to Him in all things, not only in the commencement of what we do, but also throughout all its progress.

We do what we do because it is pleasing in God's sight ; and we receive blessing from Him in doing it : if we depart from this there is disquietude and disappointment ; but if we are looking up to God, He will not disappoint ; and if we have not high expectations from things here, we shall be the less disappointed in the hour of their failure. The Lord could say, "Ye shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John xvi. 32).

This is brought out for our instruction in the case of David and the men of Keilah. From the beginning to the end of his dealings with them, he had a simple reference to the Lord ; and in this was his blessing and deliverance.

When David heard that the Philistines fought against Keilah, and that they robbed the threshing floors, he then enquired of the Lord.

He had communion with the Lord in righteous

sympathy with the inhabitants of Keilah against the oppression of the uncircumcised Philistines, and he asked, "Shall I go and smite the Philistines?" And the Lord said unto David, "Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. In contrast to this there is the weakness of David's men, comparing the alarming circumstances in Judah with the more alarming circumstances of Keilah; and therefore afraid to leave a place of fear to go into one of still greater: but David does not mind this comparison of Judah and Keilah, but he enquires of the Lord about Keilah. "Then David enquired of the Lord yet again, and the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand." The result of this may be easily known; David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

But now there is another trial of faith; has David made lasting friends for himself of the men of Keilah, on whom he can depend for protection from the hands of Saul? David did not make the attempt. He had done a kindness to the men of Keilah, but it was in service to the Lord he did it; and he continues to look up to the Lord, and puts no dependence on them. He does not ask the men of Keilah if they will protect him from the hands of Saul, but he asks the Lord, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hands of Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will deliver thee up:" and thus with little disquietude, disappointment, or loss, he received the return of evil for good, because his expectation was from God: and the Lord, who had a little before delivered the Philistines into his hands, to save the men of Keilah, now delivers him from the men of Keilah, and thus saves David himself; and he can go on his way, saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

May it be so with us, O Lord.

DEMERARA.

“JEHOVAH-NISSI.”

V. .

IN natural warfare, every able and experienced commander will, if he has allies in the field, fail not to strictly guard against anything that might possibly bring about a rupture between the allied forces; being apprehensive that the enemy will reap an advantage if these are unhappily divided against themselves.

In spiritual warfare the believer is privileged to call his fellow-servants and fellow-soldiers by a name better than that of “Allies”—by a name expressive of relationship and abiding affection—“One is your Master, even Christ; and *all ye are* BRETHREN;” yea, more, *HIS brethren*. He has, moreover, not a few *positive commands* as to how he shall behave himself towards these “brethren;” that unity, peace, and concord might be promoted—not destroyed—among those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

If the soldiers of men carefully observe and obey the words of their fallible commanders, soldiers of Jesus Christ surely ought to give more earnest heed to all *His* commands. We ought not to say, “The will of the Lord be done,” unless we are content to *do* His will. It is worse than vain to sing,

“We leave it to Himself
To choose and to command,”

if we are not fully prepared to surrender our will to His.

“If any man will do His will he shall know of the

doctrine"—Oh that we may be wise, "understanding what the will of the Lord is."

He, the Captain of our salvation, said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love: This is my commandment, that ye *love one another as I have loved you.*"

Behold how He loved His own which were in the world! His words to them were *loving* words, His reproof was always a *loving* reproof, His rebuke, even if severe, a *loving* rebuke, and His exhortations were *loving* exhortations. Every manifestation of weakness on their part furnished Him with an opportunity of proving that He loved with the love that "suffereth long, and is kind." He patiently bore with their oft-repeated failures; in short, His every word to them, and action affecting them, were characterised by love, pure, holy, and Divine.

Beloved, we are *commanded* to love one another as He has loved us. How shall we prove that we are obedient to this command, unless we "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us?" Without *love*, "gifts" prove profitless. Though "the best gifts" may be present, these can never compensate for *love*, if it be absent (1 Cor. xiii.). "All the law is fulfilled in one word—Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Do these words apply simply to the law which was given by Moses? Do they not embody also that which James calls the law of liberty? (James ii. 12, 13). "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. . . He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love . . . And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Our Lord pronounced a woe upon those who tithed mint and rue,

and all manner of herbs, and passed over judgment and the love of God; "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

If any, then, pass over judgment and the love of God, however zealous in other things, they come under this woe. "Holding the tradition of the elders" is not "holding faith and a good conscience." The eye is on the elders, not on Christ, the Captain.

When in his address to the Church in Philadelphia, the Lord commended those who had "kept his word, and not denied his name," He, nevertheless, exhorted them "to *hold fast*, that no man take their crown." He saw the danger they were in from those who pressed ordinances and human authority (Rev. iii. 9). There is the same danger now. It is still the time of Christ's *patience*; and when reproached, reviled, and their names cast out as evil, they who seek to obey God rather than men, are not to become impatient, as if He regarded them not, but to "keep the word of His patience." If of "little strength," the Lord has put a sword into their hands—the sword of the Spirit; which is the word of God," for which no other sword can ever be a substitute.

It is purely of grace that any are privileged to take the sword of the Spirit; but he that takes it, and would wield it to the honour and glory of God, must never assay to use it save as He wills, who has been pleased to furnish him with this "quick and powerful" weapon. And since we are entirely dependent upon the Spirit for power to take this sword (which is not *our* sword, but "the sword of the Spirit"), who can possibly wield such a sword whose course or whose acts grieve the Spirit?

Such an one needs it for himself, to lay bare the secret springs of his own conduct, to pierce through all that

conceals from himself the evil lurking in his own heart, in order that he may rightly estimate the priestly grace and restoring love of Christ (Heb. iv.). Then, "having obtained mercy," he will know the need of grace to wield it aright, "not handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God " (2 Cor. iv. 2).

No earthly king would suffer one in his service to employ his sovereign's weapon for the purpose of attacking friends. May none of us dare to use the sword of the Spirit against our brethren for the purpose of attack. "*Sanctify* them by thy truth, thy word is truth." To have this prayer of the Lord verified in His people, should be the burning desire of every soldier of Christ fighting under His banner ; for "His banner over them is love." "Jehovah-Nissi."

There is another sword, quite the reverse of the sword of the Spirit, which the believer needs to be warned against using. "Their tongue, a sharp sword." We need not be surprised that men of the world thrust at believers with this sword ; but, after the very plain teaching of the Apostle James as to its origin, its motive power, and also, as to what it defiles, the soldier of Christ is left without excuse that presumes to employ it against any, much less against a fellow-believer (James iii.).

There is one circle in which the soldier invariably unbuckles his sword-belt. He should display his courage upon the battlefield ; but he will manifest his love within his own family circle. From the enemy his sword should not turn back ; but he will not, he cannot, uplift it to smite one member of his household ! At home, if he must needs display authority, he will correct

or reprove ; and only when gentler means have failed will he resort—not to the sword, but to the rod.

Does the Word of God authorise saints of God to act as if the church of God was a battlefield? Within the family circle of the household of faith, we are exhorted to be at peace (1 Thess. v. 13) ; to follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Rom. xiv. 19) ; "for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace ; as in all the churches of the saints (1 Cor. xiv. 33, R.V.). Those that watch for souls, as they that must give account, may sometimes have occasion to exercise authority within the church of God ; but this should be for the edification of all, not for the destruction of any. And there is the widest conceivable difference between the ruthless thrust of the warrior's sword, and the devoted, tender shepherd's loving, judicious, and faithful exercise of the rod.

Since we have referred to the rod, we would add just this, that the chief Shepherd's rod is a comfort to His sheep ; whenever circumstances demand its exercise, that of the under-shepherd should prove to be the very same.

Beloved fellow-soldier, it is meet that we should display courage upon the battlefield ; but towards every one of our dear brethren in the Lord, may our love abound more and more. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." And let him that desires to prove his love for his Master, remember the exhortation, "Feed my lambs—Shepherd my sheep. "Feed my sheep."

A. J.

THE CHURCH IN WINNOWING TIMES.

GLASCOW, *Sept. 28th*, 1651.

MADAM,

Grace, mercy and peace be to you. We are fallen in winnowing and trying times. I am glad that your breath serveth you to run to the end, in the same condition and way wherein you have walked these twenty years past. It is either the way of peace, or we are yet in our sins, and have missed the way.

The Lord, it is true, hath stained the pride of all our glory, and now, last of all, the sun hath gone down on many of our prophets. But stumble not. Men are men, and God appeareth more to be God, and Christ is still Christ.

Madam, a stronger than I had almost stumbled me, and cast me down. But oh ! what mercy is it, to discern betwixt what is Christ's and what is man's ; and what way the true colour, and lustre of gifts, dazzle and deceive our eyes.

Oh ! to be dead to all things that are below Christ were it even a created heaven, and created glory or grace.

Holiness is not Christ ; nor are the blossoms and flowers of the tree of life, the tree itself.

Men and creatures may wind themselves between us and Christ ; and therefore the Lord hath done much to take out of the way all betwixt Him and us. There are not in our way now kings or nobles, or judicatories, or

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strongholds, or watchmen, or godly professors. The fairest things and most eminent are stained, and have lost their lustre, and only Christ keeps His greenness and beauty, and remaineth what He was.

Oh ! if He were more excellent to our apprehensions than ever He was, whose excellency is above all apprehensions ; and still more and more sweet to our taste. I care for nothing, if so be I were nearer to Him, and yet He flieth not from me. Yea, I flee from Him, yet He pursueth.

Letter of S. Rutherford to my Lady Kenmure.

 THE PRODIGAL.

THE prodigal had, probably, many a fear and doubt between the first step he took, and the last by which he accomplished his journey. "I said I would go to my father ; but what if, when I am come to him he should ask me where I have been all this while ? What shall I say then ? Also, if he ask me, what is become of the portion of goods that he gave me ; What shall I say then ? If he ask me, who have been my companions ; what shall I say then ? If he also should ask me, what hath been my preferment in all the time of my absence from him, what shall I say then ? yea, and if he ask me why I came home no sooner, what shall I say then ?

Conscious that he could give but a bad answer to any of these questions, no wonder if he stood in need, first of all, of a kiss from his father's lips. BUNYAN.

“THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.”

III.

IF the impossibility of any holy and divine unity between believers and unbelievers were seen and confessed, according to Scripture (2 Cor. vi. 14, 18), no true Christian could put any confidence in the massing together of all sorts and conditions of men by ordinances or ecclesiastical organisation. Alas! he that is born after the Spirit may draw towards him that, is born after the flesh, because the flesh is still in him, and will act if not kept down by the Spirit (Gal. v. 16-26). But this can result in no true unity, for the *natures* are contrary. The new man is imbued with love, and desires after holiness—“*Christ* is our life.” The old man, with enmity and sinful lusts. “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.” Thus, according to the outgoings of life, there should be a distinct line of separation between the Church and the world; not a line of mere ordinances, but the distinction between spiritual life and death. There was care as to the reception of even Paul (Acts ix. 26, 27); and this care can be traced in other Scriptures (Acts xi. 22, 23; xviii. 27; 2 Cor. iii. 1, &c.). There were those “within” and those “without.” Can there be a reasonable doubt that the Spirit is commenting on Matt. xvi. 18 in 1 Pet. ii. 4-8, describing the state, blessedness, security, and worship of those who *believe*, and the contrast, in the most absolute way, of those who *disbelieve* (see verse 7)? It is on this account Paul could say, “Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth.” Where is

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that line of separation now? Who are “within” and who are “without?”

Yet, that there is authority and responsibility in the assembly, if Christ is in the midst, and leaven gets in, is clear from 1 Cor. v. To deny it is to make Christ indifferent to disobedience to His own commands, and to sin. Many years ago, the writer was greatly exercised on this subject, and he would lay before the reader, before going further, an answer to his difficulties, sent by one who has been a help to many.

“If we hold all Christians to be members of the body, and gifts to be in the whole, as is clear from 1 Cor. xii., and even Eph. iv., I am bound by my principle to recognise not only every Christian (subject to discipline and the exercise of spiritual intelligence), but the exercise of every gift. This may, in its resulting effect, be marred by its place of exercise, but I am to own it. So there may be, and I believe is, great loss by a wrong position (as in sects), but clearly Christ cannot abandon those that are His. I do not recognise them as competent to act *corporately*, but I am bound to deal with all saints as members of the body, and to profit them by my gift as far as I can, and can consistently.”

“All the gifts of 1 Cor. xii. are not now in the assembly (*i.e.*, the whole assembly), but the gifts for edification of Eph. iv. are still in the whole church—(apostles and prophets as *foundations*, Eph. ii. 20, having ceased)—because these gifts for edification of the body, and perfecting of the saints, depend on Christ’s care of His body, and will be continued, ‘till 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’” (Eph. iv.).

If we have not all the gifts *now*, as tongues, &c., the

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directions, 1 Cor. xiv., do not apply, but the Word has not lost its authority, only its application."

"As to them that are within, and them that are without (1 Cor. v.). No doubt the Church at first was definitely, as a whole, the within, and those not of it the without. But the moment I have the two or three gathered together in Christ's name, He being in their midst, I must recognise every Christian as belonging to it,* of right, but he is not in a position fully to enjoy it, or to be subject to its *formal* exercise, till there. In the case of just discipline, the person is dealt with as within, and his putting away (though judged as one within), puts him, not to be of those without, but not partaking of the present security and blessing of those who constitute those within."

"I should act on it in principle; as, for instance, if a person being a Christian, was in sin, such as would call for exclusion, he should not be suffered to break bread (1 Cor. v. 11). Here it is *in principle*, because he is not *formally* among the gathered saints."

"But a person who is rightly put away from the gathered assembly, is formally excluded from the *κοινωνία* (joint-share or fellowship), of the privileges of the assembly. I am not sure that "without" is rightly applied to him. It is used in 1 Cor. v. for non-Christians. He is not among the saints, no doubt, for a time, and so far outside, or without *de facto*; but he does not belong to those without whom God only judges, for he is judged by the assembly as one within, though (it is to be hoped temporarily), excluded from communion. I dare say I may have used the words—'he is put out'—but he is not of the category of those

* The gathered company.

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without of 1 Cor. v. He loses his place, but does not become a heathen, though as a heathen man and a publican in a certain sense. The effect of judgment is his salvation, and he is judged. So that the difficulty of the practical effacing of the limits of 'within' and 'without' in Christendom would not arise.

"The assembly is not Christendom, and the 'without' does not strictly apply to the exclusion from communion. Thus his being, when excluded, received elsewhere is simply disorder, and if rightly excluded will in no way restore his soul. He will suffer, and they who receive him prove they are not on the ground of the Church of God. The 'within' and 'without' forms no difficulty so long as we can meet two or three, and believe Christ is in our midst. The presence or absence of power or gift may *facilitate*, but has nothing to do with the *duty* of obedience, where the word commands. If there be no gift, none can be exercised; but that does not affect the duty of the assembly where God has spoken (1 Cor. xiv. 37).

"Gifts are set in *the* assembly, not *an* assembly. The Corinthians in point of fact came behind in none. It is a striking fact that submission is never commanded to official persons. It is insisted on when they had no official title, and only *moral claim*, as in 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17."

A WARNING AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT.

THERE seems to be an increasing danger among the hard-working class of God's children to lose sight of God's precious promises and *present* actings on their behalf, to encourage them to stand faithful, and not be dismayed in the midst of their many difficulties. In this day of increasing competition, perplexities in business, vexations, disappointments, added to family cares, go far to make up the every-day life of many Christians; and it is to be feared that these things get round them, like the walls of a besieged city, shutting out, to a great degree, spiritual supplies. The infidel plainly says that man has no word of God to live by. A believer knows there is, confesses that there is bread enough and to spare, yet practically, because of his circumstances, may get but little. Alas! if one gives way to-day, there will be less strength against this state of things to-morrow. Christ and His claims must have the first place. If not, all else will minister, one way or another, to the flesh. Hence the Lord had but one answer to the very natural petition of a truly called one—"Suffer me *first* to go and bury my father." "Suffer," He said, "the dead to bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." What is of all importance to a dead, that is an unconverted, unsaved man, ceases to be so to a converted one. "The love of Christ" (that deep, unfathomable, inward affection of His heart which passeth knowledge) "constraineth us, because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead (their state was thus proved); and that

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He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

Confessedly there is much misery in the whole scene. The fact that men now are giving the rein, as far as they can, to their own wills, and are seeking their own aggrandizement, whoever may be trodden down to secure it: that by combinations, energies, formerly latent in the world, are now in full exercise, developing more and more the natural selfishness of the human heart—all this ought to speak loudly to the Christian. He is not of the world. Christ has chosen him out of it. He has a nature, a life, a path, a strength, resources and an end, of which the world knows nothing. The desires of a true believer are not the desires of the worldling. He cannot be heartless about grace, clouded as his soul may become. He loves, and can but love, the name of Jesus. How came he to have such desires? He knows that the carnal mind is enmity against God. He is conscious that in his flesh dwells no good; nay more, that it is not only negative in the absence of good, but positive in the possession of evil—"sin dwells in him." Then whence is the source of this heart for grace? whence came a nature so entirely the contrast of his own? If he can say, God, and God alone can be the Workman of such workmanship; can he stop short, and say, He that begun is not able to finish? or that having begun in the Spirit, the end is to be in the flesh? Did God, in His grace, allow *difficulties* to stand in His way, when He sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him? or when He met us in all our natural enmity, and of *His own will* begat us by the word of truth? Does His work cease after imparting this new nature, with its holy desires? He that

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worketh in us to *will*, can He not also give the *power* to *do*? Can there be *difficulties* to Him?

No doubt there is a great difference between the want of a sinner and the necessities of a saint.

The *conscience* of the awakened sinner needs, and can only be satisfied, by a perfect, changeless, subsisting righteousness, and this it will find in Christ, and Christ alone. The Spirit of God, or the fruits of the Spirit, must never take the place of Christ for this. It was Christ alone who took on Himself, as the propitiation for our sins, all that could shut a sinner *out* of heaven, and *in* the lake of fire; and hence a sinner is never justified by feelings, experiences, or anything wrought *in* him, but only by faith in Jesus Christ, and in His work wrought *for* him. The soul, however, that believes in Jesus receives, not only peace, but *life*, and life must have feelings and experiences, or it would not be life. These, of course, while on earth, change; Christ, our righteousness, in heaven, never changes.

The same Word by which we are quickened is the necessary *food* of the life given by it, because it is the Word that presents the living Christ to the heart of the believer, even as it presented Him crucified and risen as relief to the conscience of the sinner. Therefore, to shut out the Word and the ministry of it from the saint is as truly the effort of Satan as to shut it out from the sinner. To sinners he will, if he can, forbid Christ to be preached; or, if he cannot, he will present a *different* gospel to that which the apostles preached (Gal. i. 6, 7); so that, as to their soul's salvation, all they hear, and all they are brought to, avail them nothing. To the saint, he will stop up every channel of communion with God by pressure of the difficulties of daily details, and thus, by depriving him of the knowledge of the *present* working of God for him (Rom. viii. 28), and in him (Phil. ii. 13), draw him into the spirit and course of the world to withstand or extricate

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himself from these difficulties. Practically, God is more and more lost sight of, and the flesh, no longer kept in check by the sense of His presence, finds opportunities to get the upper hand, and "the new man" is starved of its true portion—Christ; of the truth as to heaven, heavenly things, the coming of the Lord, and all that would strengthen it in God.

This is a terrible state, but one can hardly go in and out among Christians and not find it: and to cover it up will not mend it. There is, too, at the present time, a manifest loss of outward power.

It is not that things in the world only are getting more and more difficult, it is but little better in the Church. Still, the evident breaking up of all things on earth in no way touches the resources of mercy and compassion in God. Every difficulty, every trial, every care, every worry, every disappointment, every sorrow should make the soul turn at once to Him. The shortest prayers are often the fullest, and the cry, "Abba, Father," is the first the Spirit would utter in the heart of a believer. It is just this that Satan so labours to hinder—the child of God knowing his place with the Father. He tells the toiling, suffering Christian that it is impossible for him, in his condition and circumstances, to be in communion with his Father. He must be away from his toil, he must go out into the field, like Isaac, to meditate; or up into the mountain, like Moses, to be in communion. But how could this be with Christian slaves, and such there were. "Art thou called being a slave care not for it . . . For he that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's freedman." Think of Onesimus, the runaway slave. However strong his attachment to Paul, as God's instrument for his soul's salvation; however great the desire in Paul to keep him, that he might minister to him in the bonds of the gospel; however valuable such spiritual help as Paul could give would prove for his soul's growth; yet the plain path of duty was to go back to his master, and Paul sent

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him. His letter to Philemon is the very perfection of pleading. Nothing ever written can surpass it for delicacy, for persuasiveness, for affection, for fervour, and for painstaking care. Thus has God shown His interest in a poor slave, returning in the path of obedience, to servitude. It is not Paul so much as the Spirit. It is an *inspired epistle*. In the midst of writings treating on the profoundest subjects—the eternal counsels of God, the revelation of His will as to the Church, the vast range of the truth which other apostles did not reach—it is most beautiful to see what love—real, tender, active love—there is to a slave. Let no poor, toiling Christian doubt it. He or she cannot be lower in the social scale than a runaway slave in the time of Paul. The social distance between the slave and the freeman was then very great; yet Paul loved Onesimus as his child, as a brother beloved. "Receive him," he said, "that is mine own bowels." Think, then, what must be the Father's love, what the love of Christ, what the love of the Spirit! And Onesimus was willing to go back to slavery. He will trust in God, while putting himself entirely at the mercy of Philemon. He will serve him, not as a master only, but as a brother. This is encouraging truth. It was by the sovereign arrangement of God that Onesimus was a slave, and he bowed to it. Whatever it involved, there was a secret comfort, a secret happiness in the midst of his slavery. Faith begat in him joy, where formerly all was sorrow. He had now meat to eat which once he knew not of.

Hard-worked, perhaps over-worked, fellow-Christian—think of what was shining in the heart of Onesimus; how, as a slave, he could find joy in working for Philemon, and can you have none in your toil? It was not a flowery path, such as nature would choose, neither is yours; but it was Christ's—OBEDIENCE. And what is beyond? The reward of the inheritance (Col. iii. 23, 24).

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