

EDIFICATION

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MAGAZINE

“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying
of the Church” (1 COR. XIV. 12).

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

WE ask our readers to suffer a word of exhortation as we enter upon another year. The exhortation shall reach us from the pen of the Apostle James, who deals so trenchantly with matters pertaining to practical Christian life. We quote a short passage in full.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Lord standeth before the door" (Jas. v. 7-9).

The exhortation is that we be marked by patience and by establishment of heart on the one hand, and by the absence of that spirit which bears and maintains a grudge on the other.

Are we pursuing our pilgrim way with patience, prepared to suffer while we wait? The Lord IS coming, though according to our tiny measures of time His coming may seem to be long delayed. Many of those who have ministered to us the Word of

God, who lived in the hope of His coming and taught us to look for it, are departed; and still we wait for Him. We need patience, even the long patience which the husbandman has to display.

Are we stablishing our hearts in all that we have believed and received through grace? The oldest of us still has need of this. There is a vast field of truth to be explored and possessed. We have received the Holy Spirit, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. We are not only to know them but to "dig ourselves in," so to speak. Our hearts are to be rooted and established in these things, so that we are firm and unshakeable in all that we have really received from God.

Are we delivered from the "grudging" spirit? The world is full of grudges. Occasions rise incessantly which set men in furious antagonisms, which are maintained as grudges, sometimes right through life. Thus it is *not* to be amongst us as Christians.

But thus it is very easy to be. It is very easy to have differences of judgment—not only easy but practically inevitable if we are going to maintain healthy exercise of heart and conscience before God. If we surrender all individual exercise of conscience and content ourselves with simply accepting the dictates of some external

human authority, be it the Roman Pontiff or any other leader, we shall gain an outward uniformity. But we shall lose proper Christian growth, and fail to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts. He claims the right to dominate every individual soul.

Maintaining a conscience exercised towards God, differences will appear, inasmuch as we differ in our spiritual state and growth, in our understanding of the will of God as revealed in Scripture, and in our measure of devotedness. Nothing is easier than to develop these differences into grudges one against the other. Then everything that the other does looks dark and sinister because we view it through dark, tinted glasses. Nothing is right, and there is much mischief among brethren.

Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord, and stablish your hearts. Beware the spirit of grudging one against another. The Judge stands before the door. He is about to enter and take His seat when all will be adjudicated to perfection. Our grudges will not help on His interests but only hinder them. Moreover He definitely condemns grudging, and if we indulge in it we shall ourselves be condemned.

Let us have "long patience" as we wait for the precious fruit which shall be manifested at the coming of the Lord.

A NEW YEAR TALK.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians i. 21).

WE have been permitted to enter upon a New Year, and what it has in store for us we do not know. It may be to live; it may be to die; best of all, it may be to be translated to glory by the coming for us of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We wish to warn our readers against making New Year resolutions in a self-confident spirit, and saying:—"If the Lord spares me this year I shall be more devoted, more earnest, etc., etc., etc.," You have done that in previous years, have you not? and before the year was very old you had broken your resolution. The fact is, the Lord did not ask you to make it, and He did not expect you to keep it. To make resolutions therefore is to grieve His heart, and to bring disappointment into your own life.

We are of opinion that the first day of a New Year was just the same as any other day to the Apostle Paul. If we might venture to paraphrase our text he seemed to say, "*For to me to live is Christ all the day and every day; and for me to die is gain, whenever that happy moment*

may arrive." Is that possible for us? Surely! Paul learned it in the school of God, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, so may we. Subdued by grace, he acknowledged absolutely the authority of the Lord. Writing to the believers in Rome, he said:—

"None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans xiv. 7-8).

Not a few who started out on the year 1921 hale and hearty, have died. Our comfort is that they are the Lord's, and now their happy, emancipated spirits are at home with the Lord. If the Lord does not come in a few more days some of us may be called home also. Praise His Name, we are the Lord's.

It is, however, about our living that we are concerned. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord." Is that true of us? "Living unto the Lord, we are the Lord's." That *is* true if we have confessed Him as Lord (Romans x. 9). To realise that we are the Lord's means that we are unreservedly subject to His authority. This because we have been attracted to Him; His grace has led us

to bow to Him; we gladly own His claim; and submit to His beneficent rule. The result is that we shall be able to say, in measure, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

This will not make us unpractical. It was true of Paul when he was making tents as much as when he was going forth with the Gospel; when he was carrying a gift to the saints, and when he was unfolding the riches of God's grace; when he was pleading for a runaway slave, and when he was disclosing the great secret of eternity; when he was in prison, and when he was enjoying the hospitality of the saints: at all times he could say, "For to me to live is Christ." So as we step out into a New Year, let us not resolve that it shall be, but let us pray that it may be true of us: "For to me to live is Christ." That is the reason we have been left here.

It may be some are reading this, or having it read to them, who are on a bed of pain, and often they ask, "Why does the Lord not take me home?" The answer is, "For to me,"—to you, cut off from every one though you are—"to live is Christ." Perhaps an aged pilgrim is reading this; and you often ask, "Why am I left here? What can I do?" You can live, and God desires that for you to live may be Christ. Oh that while we are left here, writer and

reader, *CHRIST* may be written large across our life.

To live for Thee—be this my one desire;
To speak for Thee—do Thou my heart inspire;
With Thine own love set Thou my soul on fire
Until I sing Thy praise with Heaven's triumphant
choir.

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

LIFE AND THE INDWELLING SPIRIT.

(*Romans viii.* 1—11).

THREE are two things in the second verse of our chapter that I wish particularly to draw your attention to—the first is, "*life in Christ Jesus*," and the second, "*the Spirit*" in us as the power of that life. To impart life was the beginning of God's blessed ways with our souls. Till then we were dead—alive to every worldly object but dead to God. Now, in His sovereign grace the Spirit has laid hold of our hearts by some word of God or by the truth revealed in it, and there has been the communication to us of divine life. As we were born into natural life, so are we born absolutely anew. Except a man be born anew he cannot see or enter into the

kingdom of God (John iii.). Nothing can be more important than this. Therefore I say again that the very beginning of all God's ways of grace with us was the communication of divine life, with the nature which is inseparable from it.

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4). Precious truth! We see these two things, life and light, bound up together, and as surely as there is life so there is light in the soul. But now comes the evidence, in the same chapter, of our natural state. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. Such was our condition in sin that if the light had simply shone into the world we should never have known its presence (vv. 10, 11). But love has come in with it and been active to bring the rays of light into our souls. And so it is written, "As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were *born . . . of God*" (John i. 12). It is only as by His sovereign grace we are born of God that any of us ever receive Jesus.

Apart from life there is no real conviction of sin in the soul. But *life is not peace*, indeed it is generally the beginning of soul-trouble; and that is where the first part of the Epistle to the Romans comes in. It lays the foundation in righteousness of all

His ways of grace with the sinner, in setting forth His Son to be the propitiation, that every question of what troubled us (our sins) might be gone into and settled for His glory. Then there is God's acceptance of His finished work in raising Him from the dead (chap. iv. 24, 25)—the glorious proof given to the believer that our sins which He bore on the cross are gone for ever. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He never sat down there till He purged our sins away.

Then, as we may see from Romans v. 12 on to chapter viii., we find the deeper question raised, not of the sins, but of the root that produced them. Just as we needed the conviction of our sins to know *how* bad we were, so we needed the conviction of *what* in us utter evil and absence of strength, that we might be brought at last to give up the vain struggle to make anything of it, and to bow to the judgment of *who we are* as well as of what we have *done*, and to see that judgment executed when we are condemned sin in the flesh in the death of His Son (Rom. viii. 3). The moment I was brought to see that judgment executed in the death of Him who became my life, I am enabled to identify myself by faith with Him in His death, and to reckon myself to be dead to sin and alive to God in Him. Thus the ground is clear. Not only are my sins gone, but this flesh—this

self that I could make nothing of—is gone too from before God. Now the eye turns from self and rests on the Person of my Deliverer (chap. vii. 25), while chapter viii. brings out the position and condition of the delivered man, the normal one of Christians.

We began by receiving His life, but then we needed to know His work for forgiveness and liberty, that we might enter into and realize our immense privileges. Here we find the wonderful elements that go to make up our position in Christ: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Condemnation must first reach Him before it can reach us. We have not merely come to an end of self in the judgment of the cross, but there is what God has introduced in the place of what He had to condemn. I am in Christ risen from the dead, passed beyond every question of sins and sin, the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. If I have lost my place as a man in the flesh in the judgment of God I have my new place in Christ and in all that He is as man before God, and in the Spirit as the power of that new place. *That is the position of every delivered child of God.* What a range of truth opens out to us in it! For it is not all, that I am in Christ, but inseparably connected with it as the power of this position, the Holy Ghost dwells in me.

The two parts of His work come before

us in the testimony borne to His glory in John i. 29: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and then verse 32: "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him . . . The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Now, in the room of that which had to be taken away in judgment, He was to send the Holy Ghost to bring us in power into the whole of His position as the Risen Man.

Let us now go to John vii. 39. There we read that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This shows us how entirely distinct a thing the gift of the Spirit is now in Christianity. He was not given while Jesus was here, or ever before. Jesus is glorified now, and the Holy Ghost is given as He never was before; so you cannot look back to the Old Testament for it. In chapter xiv. 16 it is said: "He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you *for ever*." Come from that glory where Jesus is, the Holy Spirit can never be taken from the believer now. This is entirely distinct from being *born* of the Spirit. The unbeliever has to be born of the Spirit, but it is only in the believer that He can dwell.

Then again in chapter xvi. 7 the Lord says: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter

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will not come unto you." So great and inestimable is the blessing that it is *better* for us that He is gone, that He is glorified, for He has sent His Spirit to dwell in us always and never to leave us. And then we see what He does (v. 13): "He will guide you into all truth . . . He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."

In Acts the great fact is, God the Holy Ghost has come. Ever since, His dwelling-place has been here upon earth and in the believer. Now you may ask: When does the believer receive the Holy Ghost? Turn to Acts x., where Peter was sent to Cornelius. This man had been born again, as had been evidenced in his producing many precious fruits of the divine life, and Peter was now to tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved. Now read verse 43: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." So we see that the Holy Ghost taking His place in us is connected with the remission of sins. The moment you received the remission of your sins, that moment the Holy Ghost took up His dwelling in you. "In whom also after that ye believed [that is, the "gospel of your salvation"], ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). The ray that convicted me of my sins revealed to me the Person of my Saviour, and became life in my soul.

And when the testimony to His finished *work* is believed, the Holy Ghost dwells in me—come from the glory to be the power of Christ's life in me, as well as a divine Person dwelling in me.

Thus we have the first great fact of our deliverance; the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free (v. 2). We carry the flesh in us still; it has undergone no change; the two natures remain within us, each having its own character, as the last verse of Romans vii., coming after the deliverance is reached, states. But now I am entitled to reckon myself dead to the old, and am no longer in the flesh, but in Christ, and in the Spirit given to dwell in me and to be the power of the believer's walk; and through the Spirit I am enabled to keep the evil nature within me in the place of death. Secondly, we are free by the new range of objects presented to us (Rom. viii. 5). The flesh finds its objects in the world that God has judged, and it is a sphere perfectly suited to it. But blessed be God, there is a sphere of things suited to the new nature, "the things of the Spirit," or else we should be like fish out of water. The Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. He is not merely the power of the life we have received in Christ Jesus, but He also communicates to us the things of that life—of its Home and hopes, new relationships, new joys, new objects where Christ is. We look

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at unseen things. We have our mind on things above, our citizenship is there. Therein we find the immense practical power of our deliverance; I am as a delivered person, free to enjoy the things that the Spirit thus ministers to me. And thus we prove the immense formative power of an Object, adequate to fill and absorb the heart. We see the power of the same principle in poor earthly things. He who seeks money is avaricious, he who seeks fame is ambitious. How much more so when the object is divine!

Using the ark as an illustration of these things: there were two principles at work, as shown in the raven and the dove. The raven, the moment it was given its liberty, found its food in the masses of corruption floating on the waters of judgment; the dove found no rest for its foot in such a scene and returned again unto Noah and the ark. The raven is a figure of the flesh; but we have learnt its character. If you have a robber in the house whose character you know, you will keep him under lock and key. If by faith we reckon ourselves to have died with Christ, and having the Holy Ghost, we have power now to refuse the flesh its liberty, having proved its character, and to keep it in the place of death. The dove—the new life in the power of the Holy Ghost—finds no rest here. When Christ was here the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove,

and now that same blessed Spirit directs our hearts to where He is, to the One that will fill them for eternity! Is He not an adequate Object? Can He not satisfy now? He delights to do it if you will only let Him. Are you allowing the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and form your hearts by the Son of God as your object, like Noah with his one window up above; or are you trying to break a hole in the side to be interested and to find your objects in a judged world? The Holy Spirit will never depart from us, but we may grieve Him, and then all communion and joy and power cease. I believe there is no heart more miserable than one who has tasted of what Christ is as an Object, and turns away to be occupied with the things of the world.

One thing more belongs to this wonderful position. We now wait for the moment when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven; we know not the moment, but "the Lord is at hand." Then we shall have resurrection bodies, changed in the twinkling of an eye into His image, or raised in glory (v. 11). The first two parts of the deliverance by the Spirit as the power of life, and by the objects of that new life, are ours now. But we wait for the deliverance of the body, and then all will be completed. What a deliverance and what a Deliverer is ours!

WHERE DOES THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER LIE?

WHEN the battleship, *Hotspur*, at Portland, fired her big guns on the *Glatton* to test the strength of its armour, the shots struck the turret with frightful force, but did no harm to the three weak, little creatures inside; a goat, a fowl, a rabbit. They were alarmed, but not harmed. They were safe inside the mighty armoured sides of the battleship. They had not strength in themselves to withstand the violence of the guns. Had they been harmed it would have shown, not their weakness, but the weakness of the armour behind which they were sheltered.

So it is with believers in Christ. They are safe indeed. As we often sing:—

“Safe in Christ the weakest child
Stands in all God’s favour;
All in Christ are reconciled
Through that only Saviour.”

The believer is not safe in himself, but *in* CHRIST. Just as the guns of the *Hotspur* were aimed at the *Glatton*, so all the judgment of God against sin in all its terror fell on the blessed Saviour on the cross, and He exhausted the wrath of God, which should have fallen on the sinner, but which fell on Christ, in order that God might save the believing sinner righteously.

The three defenceless creatures were doubtless very much alarmed. They were put there not to frighten them, but to be a test of the battleship's ability to withstand a broadside in battle, but, however much they were frightened, their feelings did not lessen their security.

So many a trembling believer is troubled by doubts and fears, but if he realised that his security lies in Christ, and in what He has done, and not in himself, his doubts would vanish. We cannot doubt Christ nor the sufficiency of His work.

If the three defenceless creatures in the battleship had the intelligence to understand the strength of the armour that was protecting them, they need have had no fear. Should not believers on Christ, with the Word of God in their hands, be free from doubts and fears as to their ultimate salvation?

Is not the Word of the Lord Himself sufficient, when He says of every believer in Him, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. [My Father, which gave them Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand]"? (John x. 28, 29).

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *John* i. 1—10).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE most cursory reading of the first Epistle of John is enough to show us that it bears a very strong likeness to the Gospel of John. The same themes are prominent in both. In the Gospel they are set forth, mainly but not exclusively, in the Lord's own words, and as illustrated in His life. In the Epistle they are still enforced, but the main point now is that they are to be demonstrated in the lives of the children of God. The Gospel shows us things that are *true in Him*. But the Epistle speaks of "a new commandment . . . which thing is true in Him *and in you*" (ii. 8). This brief sentence furnishes us with a key to the whole epistle.

This epistle was amongst the last to be written. There were already "antichrists" about, as the second chapter states. These men laid claim to superior knowledge. They claimed that their teachings were a moving forward, an improvement on what had gone before. But under pretence of moving *forward* they moved clean *away* from the foundation which had been laid in Christ, and from the life which from the beginning had been manifested in Him, when He came amongst us in flesh. Hence the first thing needful was to make very plain that there

had been a real, true, objective manifestation of the eternal life in Christ.

We must not confound "from the beginning" with the words, "In the beginning," with which the Gospel opens. There, the eternal existence and deity of the Word is stated, and we travel back to the beginning, and even beyond the beginning, of all things that can be said to have had a beginning. Here, we are concerned with the fact that all Christian truth begins with the revelation which reached us in Christ incarnate. *That* was the beginning of the true manifestation of God and of life eternal. *That* was the basis of all apostolic teaching. The antichrists pushed their seductive teachings which merely originated from their own foolish minds. The apostles declared that which was from the beginning, and not something which had been introduced since.

In verses 1 and 2 the Lord Jesus is not mentioned personally, for the point is rather that which was presented to us in Him. He was "the Word of life." In John i., He is "the Word," and being such He creates, so that creation may express something at least of God. Also He becomes flesh and dwells amongst us that He may express God fully to us. Here the thought is similar, but more limited. Life is the point: He was "that eternal life which was with the Father" and in Him it has been manifested

unto us. We are to have the life in having Him; but the first thing is to see the full character of the life as it came out in Him.

The life was eternal life, but it also was "with the Father." This statement, we are told, gives the *character* of the life; so that it is not merely a statement of the fact that it *was* with the Father, but rather that it was *such a life as that*. It was with the Father inasmuch as He, who is the Fountain Head of that life, was with the Father, and in Him it has been manifested unto us. He became flesh that it might be manifested.

By the fact of His becoming flesh He placed Himself within the reach of three out of the five senses or faculties with which man is endowed. He could be heard, seen and felt. Hearing comes first, for in our fallen condition it is to that faculty that God specially addresses Himself. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). And so in the first place the apostles *heard* the Word of life, and thus were able to apprehend Him.

But then they also *saw* Him with their eyes, and even "looked upon," or "*contemplated*" Him. There had been in earlier days fleeting manifestations of this great Person as "the Angel of the Lord," only then it was impossible to contemplate Him for He was seen but for a moment. Now,

come in flesh, all was different. The apostles spent years with Him, and could scrutinize Him with attention. They gazed at Him long and earnestly, even though they did not properly understand all that they observed until they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Also they came into physical contact with Him. Their hands actually *handled* Him. This guaranteed that He was no mere Spirit manifestation. He was amongst them in a real human body of flesh and blood. After His resurrection He sojourned among them in His risen body of flesh and bones, and we may remember how He specifically enjoined them to handle Him and see He was not a Spirit after His resurrection.

All this establishes then beyond a doubt that there had been this real manifestation of eternal life before them. John i. shows that in Him the Father was *declared* (ver. 18); Colossians i., that God was perfectly *represented* in Him as His Image (ver. 15); Hebrews i., that as the Son He is the Word, and that He is the *expression* and outshining of God's Being and glory (vers. 2, 3). Here we find that He furnished the only true, objective *manifestation* of eternal life. It is remarkable that, just as we have four Gospels setting forth His life from differing aspects so we have these four passages which set forth from differing aspects all that which came into revelation in Him.

The reason why John laboured this point in his opening verses was that the anti-christian teachers belittled it, or even denied it altogether. They were called, "Gnostics," because they claimed to be "the knowing ones." They preferred their own subjective impressions and philosophic speculations to the objective facts established in Christ. Now everything for the apostles and for us begins with well established facts. The faith once delivered to the saints is rooted and established on facts. We cannot be too clear and emphatic as to this. That which is (as we shall see) subjectively produced in the saints is strictly in keeping with that which has been objectively manifested in Him.

The manifestation was made in the first place to the apostles. They were the "we." But then, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." The "you" were the saints generally. The manifestation made before the apostles brought them into "fellowship . . . with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." They have made known to us that which was manifested, that we might be brought into the same wonderful fellowship. The Father and the Son are made known to us. The eternal life connected with the Father and the Son has been manifested to us through them. The things of the Father and the Son have been revealed. Nothing could be more wonderful than this: nothing more absorbing,

if once by the Holy Spirit we begin to lay hold of it. Nothing more calculated to fill our hearts with abiding gladness. No wonder the Apostle adds, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

Verse 4 makes it quite clear that the communication of these things to us by the apostles is through the Scriptures. "These things *write* we . . ." The apostles heard, saw and handled. We must *read*. Thank God for the Holy Writings which bring the knowledge of these things to us for our joy.

In verse 5 John begins his message. Where does he start? With this great fact that "God is light" and not, as we might have expected, with the fact that God is love. All the emphasis would no doubt have been on His love had the manifestation been made in regions of unsullied purity and light. As however the manifestation has been made in this world, so filthy with sin and full of darkness, the first emphasis must be laid on light.

As to light—who can define it? Men have formulated theories to account for the light of creation, but they cannot really explain it. Who then shall explain the uncreated Light? We know that light is necessary if life is to exist in any but its lowest forms. We know that it is healthful, that it illuminates and exposes all things,

and that if it enters darkness flees. In God there is no darkness at all, for darkness stands for that which is removed from the action of light, that which is hidden and sinful.

Not only is God Himself light but, as verse 7 tells us, He is "in the light." Once the Lord had said, "that He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Chron. vi. 1); and the fact that Solomon built Him an house did not alter it, for His presence was still found in the Holy of Holies, where all was dark. This was altered by the coming of the Lord Jesus, for God stepped into the light in Him. The God who *is* light is now *in the light*.

This fact is used as a test in verse 6. We have in this verse the first of many tests which are propounded. The presence of many false teachers with their varied and boastful claims made these tests necessary; and we shall notice that none of them are based upon elaborate or far-fetched considerations. They are all of the simplest sort and based upon the fundamental nature of things. Here, for instance, the fact that God is light, and that He is in the light, tests any claim that is made of being in fellowship with Him. Such an one cannot possibly be walking in darkness, for as we read elsewhere, "What communion hath light with darkness?" There is no communion (or fellowship) at all between the two. They are diametrically opposed.

The point here is not whether we always walk *according to* the light that we have received. We are all found offenders as to this at some time or other, as we know to our sorrow. To "walk *in* darkness" is to walk in ignorance of the light that has shone in Christ. A reference to Isaiah i. 10, 11, at this point may be helpful. The one who "walks in darkness and has no light" is to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." However, even in Isaiah's day there were those who preferred to "kindle a fire" and walk in the light of the fire and the sparks that they kindled. It was just like this in John's day, and still is so in our own. There are all too many false teachers who prefer the sparks of their own kindling to the light of God's revelation. Consequently they and their followers are in darkness in spite of all their pretensions, and they have no fellowship with Him.

The true believer walks in the light of God fully revealed. The light has searched him of course. It could not be otherwise. But he walks happily in the light because he has learned in that light that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Every spot of defilement exposed by the light is removed by the Blood.

The word is "cleanseth"—the present tense. From this some have deduced that the blood is to be continually applied. But

the present tense is also used to denote the nature or character of anything; just as we say, "Cork floats." "Fire burns." "Soap washes." Such are their respective natures. Those properties belong to them. So it is the nature of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin. That blessed property is inherent in it. The idea that the Blood has to be continually or repeatedly applied contravenes the teaching of Hebrews ix. 23—x. 14. We are "ONCE PURGED" by the "one offering," so as to have "no more conscience of sins."

Not only were men found who professed to have fellowship with God while yet walking in darkness, but there also were found some who went so far as to say, "We have no sin." No test is propounded in regard to this wicked pretension. None was needed since they must of necessity soon be found out. They were deceiving themselves, and John tells them so plainly. They would hardly deceive anyone else; and if for a moment they did, the deception would soon be dispelled by sin being manifested in them all too plainly. If any indulge in such high and unfounded claims they do not show that *sin is not in them*. They only make it very manifest that *the truth is not in them*.

It is very difficult to imagine true believers deceiving themselves in this way, save for a very brief time. The only true

and honest attitude for us is that of confessing our sins, and doing so at once. It is true of course that the only honest thing for the unbeliever, when conviction reaches him, is to confess his sins; then forgiveness, full and eternal will be his. The believer is in question here however. It is, "If *we* confess . . ." The sin of a believer does not compromise or upset the eternal forgiveness which reached him, when as a sinner he turned to God in repentance. It does nevertheless compromise his communion with God, of which we have just been reading. That communion will be suspended until he confesses the sin that has broken in upon it.

When we confess, God is faithful and just to all that Christ is and has done, and the eternal forgiveness so that fellowship may be restored. Let us what we may call *paternal forgiveness*, to distinguish it from the *eternal forgiveness* which reached us as sinners.

Not only does He forgive, but He also cleanses from all unrighteousness. The latest confession of sin by the saint not only ensures forgiveness but it also has a cleansing effect. Confession of sin means the judgment in our own hearts and minds of what we confess. And that means cleansing from its influence and deliverance from its power.

A third pretension comes before us in verse 10. Some may be so far deluded as to say that they "have not sinned." A test is propounded in regard to this; namely, the Word of God. To make such a preposterous statement is to place ourselves in opposition to the Word of God and to make Him a liar. He plainly states that we have sinned, which ends the matter. We cannot contradict His Word, and yet have His Word abiding in us.

As surely as we are in the light, shall we know that we have sinned and that sin is still in us. Yet we shall also know the value of the blood of Christ and its cleansing power, as also the restoration that reaches us upon honest confession. Thus communion in the light with the Father and His Son is established for us, and also maintained. We are enabled to know and rejoice in the life which has been manifested, and in all that from the beginning has been set forth in the blessed Son of God.

Our joy being full in such things as these, we shall not feel inclined to run after the men who would entice us with their professed improvements and enlargements of "that which was from the beginning." The sparks they display before us may be quite pretty, but they are only of their own kindling, and they die out into darkness.

F. B. HOLE.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10).

SO then one thing is certain—if we are to take the words of the Apostle in their plain and obvious meaning—we shall all be manifested, every one of us, before the judgment seat of Christ. That is not a fact to be treated with levity.

We distinguish at the outset between the judgment seat of Christ, before which the saints shall be manifested, and the great white Throne of Revelation xx. that shall summon the dead, both small and great, to stand before it. Nor should we confound either of these with the judgment of the nations—the sheep and the goats of Matthew xxv. They are different scenes, belonging to different times, as every intelligent Bible student knows.

In case any should not have noticed it we may observe that the judgment of Revelation xx. deals only with "the *dead*, both small and great." On the other hand, the judgment of Matthew xxv. does not concern the dead—it treats only of the *living* nations and the brethren of the King.

To some of our readers the thought of standing before the judgment seat of Christ

may seem to disagree with our Lord's words in John v. 24. There we are told that the believer "does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (N.Trans.). And that, of course, is true. The forgiveness of his sins, his acceptance with God, and the certainty of his present and ultimate salvation are not matters of doubt reserved for the day of judgment to decide. The believer, if we may so speak, has already pleaded "guilty" at the bar of God. And guilty indeed he was. But he knows that the One who could have condemned—holy and just is He—is the One by whom he has been justified. Who then shall now condemn? Who lay anything to his charge? (Rom. viii. 33—34). If justified *from* his sins he cannot be judged *for* them afterwards. The two things are mutually contradictory. Into judgment, in that sense, no believer ever comes.

The judgment seat of Christ, then implies no uncertainty as to the believer's everlasting happiness. Saved by grace and kept by the power of God through faith, he waits in patience for the coming of the Lord and the day of glory.

Here let me remark that believers stand toward God in the twofold relationship of sons and servants. And each suggests a different train of thought. For instance, here is a friend of mine who is head of a

commercial house. As his boys grow up he drafts them into his business and gives to each a place according to ability and age. These sons are now his servants also, and subject to promotion or discharge. As sons he is their father; as servants he is their master. There are differences, too, between the sons themselves. One may hold a higher position than another and receive a larger salary. But when they sit by the fireside and at the family table there is no difference. All alike, from the eldest to the youngest, are children in the house of their father. Distinctions, rightly recognized in business, have no place in the family circle. Here it is not master and servants, but father and sons, and all the boys are brothers.

And we are in *our* Father's house, the house of His children who are loved by Him even *one* of them even as our Saviour Himself is loved (John xvii. 23). In this communion there is no difference. All are equally, before Him, "holy and without blame." And He will rejoice to have them around Himself, not as angels, but as sons—each one supremely happy, and all of them conformed to the image of His Son—the firstborn among many brethren (Eph. i. 4-5; Rom. viii. 29).

Where does the judgment seat of Christ come in, in all this? Nowhere. It does not connect itself with salvation and the

Father's house, but with service and discipleship and our manner of life. Both the parable of the talents in Matthew xxv. 14—30, and that of the pounds in Luke xix. 12—27, show this. The former tells of a day of reckoning, the latter of an examination of the servants to see how much each had gained by trading. Here our responsibility as servants necessarily has its place.

But let us look at some passages that treat of the subject with more or less directness.

I.

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by [or against] myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. iv. 3-5).

The Apostle Paul thought it a very small thing that the Corinthian assembly should summon him to stand at their bar and to submit to be examined at their hands. A greater Judgment Seat made theirs look very small indeed. Nor did he claim to be competent to judge and pass an award on his own actions. For if his conscience had nothing to accuse him of, yet that was not in itself enough to prove him blameless. "He that examines me," said he, "is the Lord." Things may have escaped the

Apostle's eye which the Lord saw. Even the judgment of the best of men is not infallible. The Lord's judgment is. Therefore he counsels them to judge nothing before the time. The Lord is coming, and at His tribunal the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light and the counsels of the heart made manifest, and then every man shall have his praise from God. Solemn considerations indeed, which we shall do well to remember. Happy ones, too, by which our souls shall be strengthened if we walk uprightly.

II.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which **temple** ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 10-17).

The bearing of this passage is not upon the life of all saints in general, but upon those who are in a special sense the servants of the Lord. Of all saints it may be said,

"*Ye serve the Lord Christ*," but there are gifted men who labour in word and doctrine—they are called to such service in a way that ordinary folks are not. And there are others who take the place of servants and are held responsible for the place they take, though, in fact, they are but unconverted men—teachers of religion, but themselves unsaved. It is of *workmen* that Paul here speaks, and he mentions three sorts. He himself had laid the foundation, but others built upon it, and their labours are likened to gold, silver, precious stones, and also to wood, grass, straw—some worthless, some good. The first is a true workman, his work abides, it stands the test and he shall receive his reward. The second builds with perishable material and his work is burned up. Yet he himself shall be saved, even as Lot was saved, though his possessions perished in the fire that consumed the cities of the plain. The third is one who defiles or corrupts the temple of God. He builds not merely with worthless material but with that which is corrupting. His end shall be destruction, for he is an evil servant and an unsaved man. Of such Paul speaks in Acts xx. 29, and the Apostle Peter in the second chapter of his second epistle.

It is well that we should see that men are dealt with according to their profession. If any one calls himself a servant of the Lord he is bound to accept the responsibili-

ties attaching to that position, even though he be but a Christian in name. Or we might easily take the wicked and slothful servant of Matthew xxv. 26 to be a saved man after all. And there are those who have fallen into that mistake and would fain have us believe that the unprofitable servant, cast into outer darkness, will emerge out of it when his character is perfected. But there is the clearest evidence to the contrary. Is it possible that any one who knows his Lord and Master could describe Him as hard and unjust, reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed? This is proof enough that he knew nothing of the One whose servant he professed to be.

III.

~~Whether we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10).~~

The remembrance of his having to be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ was one of the great factors that influenced the Apostle's life. For human opinion he cared nothing, but if he could win the approbation of Him whose bond slave he loved to style himself, that would be indeed a prize worth possessing. For this he earnestly strove. Oh, that it were so with

us! For *we*, too, must be manifested there, and the days of our life, buried in the grave of the forgotten past, shall live again and tell their tale before the judgment seat of Christ. Deeds done in the body shall have their answer there, be they good or bad. What shall be said in that great day about our strifes, our contentions, our divisions, to which, alas! we have attached His sacred Name? What shall *we* say about them as we look into His eyes who bade us love one another as He had loved us? One gentle word of reproof from His lips might well break our hearts! What shall we say about our worldliness when He reminds us that He gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world? What shall we say about our lack of devotedness, for the want of which we took so little interest in His saints so dear to His heart, and cared next to nothing for dying men and women hastening, by the broad road, to their grave and the doom beyond? The very thought of it now might move us to bitter tears, such as sinful Peter shed when the Lord looked upon him in His unutterable love! But there is another side to which it is a relief to turn. What disclosures there will be of His unfailing grace—how He succoured us in hours of danger, guarded us when unseen evils threatened our way, folded us in His bosom and carried us as a shepherd carries his lambs over rough and rugged roads. Oh, what sights

will then appear that shall fill these poor hearts of ours with adoring praise.

"There with what joy reviewing
Past conflicts, dangers, fears,
His hand our foes subduing,
And drying all our tears,—
Our hearts with rapture burning,
The path we shall retrace,
Where now our souls are learning
The riches of His grace."

But if the judgment seat of Christ was a mighty factor in the life of the Apostle Paul, there was a still mightier one, of which he speaks in the same chapter (2 Cor. v. 14). Here are his words: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which ~~live should not henceforth~~ live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." *The love of Christ*—this ~~was the~~ mighty moral force that energized ~~his whole life and led him to live, not unto himself, but unto Him who died for him and rose again.~~ And where this is wanting there may be abundant labour and blamelessness of walk without one shred of *devotedness to Christ*. Service then becomes legality and the life a constant striving for a reward and high place in the Kingdom of God by and by. And this is the fatal blot in much of the current teaching on the judgment seat of Christ. While not denying the *final* salvation of every true

believing soul, it goads the conscience on, it places upon the shoulders a burden far from light, and frightens us, in case of failure, with threats of many stripes and of our having no place with Christ in His throne and kingdom. This is law, not grace, the drudgery of a slave and not the joyous service of a heart under the all-powerful sway of the love of Christ.

Rewards there will be and places of distinction in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But these are set before us as encouragements, *never as motives*. And as for those who sit at His right hand and at His left in His kingdom—places which the mother of Zebedee's children coveted for her two sons (Matt. xx. 21)—what shall their functions be? For seats of honour will not be idle seats even in that bright day. Now the Lord Himself has told His watching servants that He will make them sit down to meat while *He* comes forth and serves them (Luke xii. 37). Never will He lay aside His servant character, but even in those scenes of unfading glory He will minister to their chiefest joys. And it may be that those who have served Him best on earth in serving His saints, shall still serve Him there in ministering in endless ways to the happiness of His own. Those who are the highest in the kingdom may be likeliest to Him in that respect.

To the overcomer in Pergamos it is promised that he shall have "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 17). Of all the gifts and rewards which the gracious Lord shall give this seems to us the one that will be most deeply prized.

"Called by that secret name
Of undisclosed delight,
(Blest answer to reproach and shame)
Graved on the stone of white."

Thrones, crowns, public recognitions—these will be valued as the gifts of His hand, but this exceeds them all—some secret link between the soul and Christ, some hidden spring of joy which no one else will know.

Now we close. How many things have been left unsaid! But our pages will allow no more. May it be ours to receive the "white stone" of our Lord and Master's approbation. Should He say to us in that day, "Well done, good and faithful servant," what more *as His servants* will there be to seek, though He may give us more? Other joys connected with the family of God and with the Assembly as the Bride of the Lamb there will be, no doubt, for divine grace is so rich in its giving that it will place in our hands a full and an overflowing cup that shall call forth our endless praise.

THE PATIENCE OF JOB.

"Behold we count them happy which endure, Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James v. 11).

YES, we have heard of the patience of Job, and how he held on to his God through a series of unparalleled calamities. Satan, the adversary, had observed him for a long time and had been most evidently annoyed at his God-fearing and upright life. If he could have destroyed him he would have done it, but he had to confess that God had put a hedge about him which he could not break down or surmount.

It did not please the devil, the great accuser, that in the world that he desired to dominate there should be a man who wholly served God; and being only evil he could not understand a pure and disinterested motive; consequently he put down Job's fidelity to God to the good thing he was making out of it. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" he asks. "Hast not Thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, *and he will curse Thee to Thy face.*"

It was a two-handed attack. It was a blow aimed at God, for it meant, "You have created man for your pleasure and you can only gain his service by paying him well": and it was a blow aimed at Job, for as "the accuser of the brethren," Satan moved God against him. But was the accusation false or true? That had to be proved for the sakes of all concerned and for ours also. The question was, should God or Satan triumph in the experience of Job.

The hedge that surrounded this man of God was removed and Satan was allowed to do with him as he pleased within the limits of God's will. How thoroughly he did his malignant work! There was no pity, no mercy in his heart; catastrophe followed catastrophe; the Sabeans, the fire from heaven, the Chaldeans and the great wind from the wilderness conspired together against the object of his malice, until not a vestige of his great possessions remained; every one of his servants was slain, and last and worst of all, he was robbed of his ten children. Job was beggared and bereaved of all that he valued, in one day. He was surely a man to be wondered at as with garments rent and head shaved he fell down upon the ground. How eagerly Satan must have watched him and listened to hear the words that would come out of his mouth, and how baffled

and beaten he must have been when Job exclaimed, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; *blessed be the Name of the Lord.*" In the first round of that great contest the honours were certainly with God.

It was clear that God was more to Job than the blessings He had given him. He was not like the man of the world who thinks that whatever he possesses he has gained by his own skill or industry. His was true piety; he received all from God and gave thanks even when all he possessed was taken from him. He gave to God His rightful place in regard to all He had given him, and when he lost all he looked at no second cause. God was above all, behind all and in everything to Job.

But Satan though astonished was unabashed; he would try again. Job had still a healthy body and his life, and incidentally, his wife. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and *he will curse Thee to Thy face.*" So said the great adversary to God, repeating his accusation against Job and casting his taunt at God. "You have made this man, and though You are more to him than his possessions, You are not more to him than himself; he loves himself better than he loves You." And

the Lord said to Satan, "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life." So Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. No part of him was spared and "he took a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down amongst the ashes."

What must have been his perplexity, his bewilderment as he sat in his misery? His was a living death! And he knew not the cause of it, and was silent, until his wife came to him, and through her Satan made his last and most subtle attack upon him. Said she, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." It was a foul blow, and just like the devil, but it opened Job's mouth and made him give a triumphant answer, even if he did not understand its full meaning. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Curse God! That would have meant giving up his God. Could he do that? Never. He could lose everything, but not his God. Many things may have seemed indispensable to him in former days, but he had come to this point in his experience now; he could do without everything but God. God alone was indispensable to Job, so that he cried out later in his agony yet earnestness of soul, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

Thus did Job endure, in this was his patience seen and Satan is heard of no more

in the story, he had nothing more to say, he was silenced by Job's faith in God, and he left him to God in whom he trusted, and He "is very pitiful and of tender mercy." He will surely give a full compensation for all suffering that has been suffered according to His will and in the learning of His ways for our final good. Job was compensated here for "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning," and his former wealth was doubled, and his children were restored to him, and his daughters were fairer than any women in the land and their names meant peace and fragrance and beauty. And moreover he prayed for his friends, and his brethren and sisters who had forsaken him in his calamity returned to him, and he went down at last to an honoured grave, being old and full of years.

"The end of the Lord" is not reached for us in this life. The New Testament has revealed to us a life beyond this, and as we realize this we shall be patient and endure. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which

are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4. 16--18).

J. T. MAWSON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *John ii.* 1—13).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE closing verses of chapter i. have shown us that we cannot say that we have no sin, nor that we have not sinned. The opening words of chapter ii. act as a counter-balance, lest we should rush to the conclusion that we can excuse ourselves for sinning by assuming that we can hardly help it, that it is practically inevitable. It is nothing of the kind. John wrote these things that we might not sin. Other scriptures speak of special provision made to keep us from falling: the point here is that, if we enter into the holy fellowship of which verse 3 of chapter i. speaks, we shall be preserved. The enjoyment of that fellowship excludes sin; just as sin excludes from the enjoyment of that fellowship, until it is confessed.

There is ample provision made for us that we may not sin, even though sin is

still in us. We ought not to sin. There is no excuse for us if we do sin; but there is, thank God! "an Advocate with the Father" for us in that case. The word translated, Advocate, here is the same as is translated, Comforter, in John xiv.—a word meaning literally, "One called alongside to help." The risen One, Jesus Christ the righteous, has been called *alongside the Father* in glory for the help of His saints, if and when they sin. The Holy Spirit has been called *along to our side* here below for our help.

It is "the Father," you notice. That is because the Advocate appears for those who are already the children of God. The first words of the chapter are, "My children" (N. Trans.)—the word used is not the one meaning "babes," but one for "children" in a more general way. In this loving way the aged Apostle embraced as his own all the true children of God. We have been introduced into this blessed relationship by the Saviour, as John i. 12 tells us. Being in the relationship, we need the services of the Advocate when we sin.

The righteousness of our Advocate is stressed. We might have expected that His kindness and mercy would be: yet we find elsewhere that emphasis is laid on righteousness when sin is in question, and so it is here. The One who takes up our case in the Father's presence when we sin,

will see to it that righteousness shall prevail. The *Father's glory* shall not be tarnished by our sin, on the one hand. And, on the other hand. He will deal with *us* righteously, so that we may come to a proper and righteous judgment of our sin, be brought to confession, and be forgiven and cleansed.

He who is our Advocate on high is also "the propitiation for our sins." This fact brings us back to the rock foundation upon which all rests. By His propitiatory sacrifice every claim of God against us has been met, and He takes up His advocacy with the Father upon that righteous basis. His propitiation has settled for us *as sinners* the eternal questions which our sins have raised. His advocacy now settles the paternal questions which are raised, when *as children of God* we sin.

Propitiation is what we may call the Godward side of the death of Christ. It is concerned with the most fundamental matter of all; the meeting of the Divine claims against sin. The meeting of the sinner's need must be secondary to that. Hence when we have the Gospel unfolded by Paul in the epistle to the Romans, we find that the first mention of the death of Christ is "a propitiation through faith in His blood" (iii. 25). We do not get substitution clearly stated until reaching chapter iv. 25, we read of Him as "delivered for

our offences."

Being the Godward aspect of His death the widest possible circle is in view—"the whole world." When the substitutionary side is stated believers only are in view: it is "our offences," or, "the sins of many." But though only believers stand in the realized benefits of the death of Christ, God needs to be propitiated in regard to every sin that ever has been committed by men, in regard to the whole great outrage which sin has wrought. He has been thus propitiated in the death of Christ, and because of this He can freely offer forgiveness to men without compromising in the smallest degree one feature of His nature and character.

Propitiation is a word which often rouses to much wrath and scornfulness many opponents of the Gospel. They assume that it means what it does among the heathen—the pacifying by much blood-shedding of some angry, antagonistic and blood-thirsty power. But in the Scriptures the word is lifted on to an altogether higher plane. It still carries the general sense of appeasing or rendering favourable by sacrifice, but there is no ground for regarding God as antagonistic or blood-thirsty. He is infinitely holy. He is righteous in all His ways. He is of eternal majesty. His very nature, all His attributes must receive their due, and be magnified in the exaction of

the appropriate penalty: yet He is not against man but for him, for what righteousness has demanded love has supplied. As we read presently in our epistle, "He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (iv. 10). God Himself provided the propitiation. His own Son, who was God, became it. Propitiation, rightly understood, is not a degrading idea but uplifting and ennobling. The only thing degrading is the idea of the matter falsely entertained by those who oppose. They attempt to foist their degraded idea into the Gospel, but the Word of God refutes their idea.

We now pass to the consideration of another claim that was being made falsely on occasions—"I know Him." It is indeed possible for the believer to say with great gladness that he knows God, inasmuch as "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" is granted to us, and there can be no fellowship without knowledge. Still, again a test is needed lest such a claim be mere pretension. The test is that of obedience to the commandments which He has given to us. The knowledge *of* Him is inseparably connected with obedience *to* Him.

In keeping His commandments we know that we have come to know Him. Apart from this obedience there cannot be this knowledge, and the claim, if made, would

only reveal that the truth is not in the claimant. Compare verse 4 with verse 8 of chapter i. The truth is not in the one who claims *to have no sin*, any more than it is in the one who claims *to have the knowledge of God*, and yet is not obedient to His commandments.

Let us clearly grasp the fact that there are commandments in Christianity, though they are not of a legal order: and by that we mean, not given to us in order that we may thereby either establish or maintain our footing before God. Every definite expression of God's will has the force of a command, and we shall find this epistle has a great deal to say to us about His commandments, and they "are not grievous" (v. 3). The law of Christ is a law of liberty, inasmuch as we are brought into His life and nature.

From keeping His commandments we pass, in verse 5, to keeping His word. This is a further thing. His word covers all that He has revealed to us of His mind and will, including of course His commandments, but going beyond them. A man might give his sons many definite instructions—his commandments. But beyond these his sons have gleaned an intimate knowledge of his mind from the daily communications and intercourse of years, and with filial devotion they carefully observe his word even when they have no definite instructions. So it

should be with the children of God. And, when it is so, the love of God is "perfected" in such, for it has produced in them its proper effect and answer.

Moreover, by such obedience we know "that we are in Him." Our being "in Him" involves our participation in His life and nature. There is of course a very intimate connection between knowing "that we know Him," (ver. 3) and knowing "that we are in Him," (ver. 5). The second introduces us to a deeper thing. Angels know Him, and obey His commands. We are to know Him, as those who are in Him, and hence the slightest intimation of His thought or desire should be understood by us, and incite us to glad obedience.

Being in Him, we are to "abide in Him;" which means, as we understand it, abide in the consciousness and power of being in Him. Now it is easy for any of us to say, "I abide in Him," but if so we must produce that which proves the claim to be real. Such an one "ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." If we are in His life, and also in the power and enjoyment of it, that life is bound to express itself in our ways and activities just as it did in Him. The grace and power of our walk, compared with His, will be poor and feeble; yet it will be walk of the same order. The difference will not be in kind but only in degree.

What extraordinary elevation then is to characterize our walk! How far beyond the standard that was accepted in Old Testament times! When John wrote these words a good many may have felt inclined to protest that he was setting too high a standard and introducing what was entirely new. Hence in verse 7 he assures them that what he was saying was not new—in the way that the teachings of the antichrists were new—but rather an old commandment. At the same time it was in another sense a new commandment. There is no contradiction here, though there is a paradox. It was an old commandment, for it had been from the beginning set forth in Christ, as being God's holy will and pleasure for man: and so there was nothing about it which resembled the new notions of the Gnostics. Still it was a new commandment, for now it was to be set forth in those that were Christ's, and hence came as a new thing for them. The thing, said John, "is true in Him and in you." The life which was manifested in Christ, and which at the first was exclusively in Him, is now to be found in believers, who are in Him. As they abide in Him the life will express itself in them in the same way, and bring forth similar fruits.

And so we read, "the true light now shineth." There is the closest possible connection between life and light. If the true life was

manifested in Christ, the true light equally shone in Him. If we have part in that true life, the true light will also shine in us. "The darkness is passing," is what the Apostle wrote, and not, "is past." We must wait for the world to come to say it is past: yet clearly it is passing away, for the true light has begun to shine in Christ and in those that are His. When God acts in judgment and the false life and light of this world are put out, then the darkness will be past indeed. At present we can rejoice in the assurance that it is passing, and that the true light is shining. The more we walk as He walked, the more effectively the light will shine through us.

But further, if the light is now going to shine in and through us, we ourselves must be in the light. Do we claim to be in the light? Well, there is a simple test by which it may be known if that claim is a genuine one. If any one says he is in the light and yet he hates his brother his claim is false, and he is in darkness; that is, he does not really know God—he is not in the light of God revealed in Christ. No one can be in the light of God who is not in the life of God, which is love. Hence a little later in the epistle we read, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (iii. 14). So now we discover that life, light and love all go together; and in the very nature of things they act as tests, the

one upon the other. The one who loves his brother manifests *the life*, according to chapter iii. Here the point is that he abides in *the light*.

John adds the remark, "there is none occasion of stumbling in him." This is in contrast to what follows in verse 11, where the one who hates his brother is described as being in darkness, walking in darkness, and not knowing where he is going. We have no light in ourselves, just as the moon only has light when it is in the light of the sun. So the one who hates his brother, being in darkness, is all dark himself, and consequently becomes an occasion of stumbling to others. He stumbles himself and acts as a stumbling-block. Such were the antichrists and their followers. The one who loves, as the fruit of having the divine life, walks in the light, and neither stumbles nor is a stumbling-block.

The loving of one's brother is of course the loving of each and all who equally with ourselves are begotten of God. It is the love of the divine nature, extended to each who has entered the divine family,—loving children of God as children of God, apart from all human likes or dislikes.

A fresh paragraph begins with verse 12. In verse 4 of chapter i. John indicated the *themes* as to which he wrote. Now we have the *basis* on which he wrote. All those

whom he addressed stood in the wonderful grace of sins forgiven, and all were in the children's place. The word translated "little children" is the one for children rather than babes. It includes all the children of God without distinction. The forgiveness which is ours has reached us solely for His Name's sake. The virtue, the merit is wholly His. As forgiven, and brought into divinely formed relationship, we are addressed.

On the other hand, there *are* distinctions in the family of God, and they are brought before us in verse 13. There are "fathers," "young men," and "little children," or "babes." In this way John indicated the differing stages of spiritual growth. We all must of necessity begin as babes in the divine life. Normally we should develop into young men, and finally become fathers. Each of the three classes is characterized by certain things.

Verse 13, then, states *the characteristic features* of those to whom he writes, not the themes concerning which he writes, nor the basis on which he writes. The fathers are characterized by the knowledge of Him that is from the beginning; that is, they were matured in the knowledge of Christ, that "Word of life," in whom the eternal life had been manifested. They really knew the One in whom had been revealed all that is to be known of God. All other

knowledge shrinks into insignificance compared with this knowledge. The fathers had it.

The young men were characterized by having overcome the wicked one. Later verses in the chapter show more exactly the force of this. They had overcome the subtle snares of the devil through antichristian teachings, by having been built up in the Word of God. In our earlier years as believers, before we have had time to be well grounded in the teachings of the Word, we are much more likely to be led away by subtle teachings contrary to the Word, and thus overcome by the wicked one.

This is the danger to which the babes are exposed, as we shall see. Yet they have a beautiful feature characterizing them—they know the Father. The human babe soon manifests the instinct which enables it to recognize its parents; and so it is with the children of God. They have His nature, so they know Him. There are many things for them still to learn about the Father, yet they know the Father. As the children of God let us be exercised that we do not remain babes. There we must begin, but let us aim at that acquaintance with the Word of God which will develop our spiritual growth, and lead us to become young men and even fathers in due season.

THE SNARES OF A YOUNG CONVERT.

SOME time ago I was asked to call and see a young man who was very ill with heart disease. He was a corporal in the dragoons, and had been seventy days in the hospital. On the occasion of my visit he was rather better, and able to be out a little. So I walked with him up and down the barrack square. I soon found that he was in a very wretched state of mind. He had been about five years in the Army, and had, like many young men of his class, pursued a wild and reckless career.

I was not surprised at the tale he had to tell me—a tale of wildness and folly. I was quite prepared for it all, and only too thankful to find the arrow of conviction had entered the young man's soul—that the ploughshare was doing its needed work and making furrows in the conscience to receive the incorruptible seed of the gospel. I believe it often happens that those who reach the haven of peace through the fiercest

storms of conscience prove the steadiest Christians afterwards. We must not lay down an iron rule—but we may be allowed to express our deep sense of the value of a thorough, genuine work of the Spirit of God in the conscience.

Such a work, I felt sure, was going on in the soul of the young soldier—and, inasmuch as the only balm for a wounded spirit is the precious blood of Jesus, I at once proceeded to point him to that divine and all-sufficient remedy. I endeavoured especially to press upon him a truth which had given my own soul peace, years ago, namely, that it is the work wrought *for* you, and not the work wrought *in* you that saves. It was perfectly plain there was a real work of God's Spirit in the young man's soul, and the effect was to make him feel the burden of his guilt. The Spirit of God raises the question of sin in the conscience, and this question can only be divinely settled by the application of the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ. It will not do to cry "peace, peace," when there is no peace. It must be a real work of the Holy Ghost, bringing home to the anxious soul the value of the atoning work which has for ever put away sin and revealed God's righteousness in the pardon and justification of every soul that simply believes in Jesus.

Now I found that my young friend was making the mistake of looking at anything

and everything but this perfect work of the Son of God. He was trying to get comfort and rest in his pious efforts, such as reading and prayer—things very right and valuable in their place, but which, as a foundation for a guilty sinner's peace, were altogether worthless. I sought to show him that it was impossible that he should be happy, or ever find peace, while he was looking right away from the object at which God was looking. "God is looking at Christ," said I to him, "and you are looking at your own works. God says, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you'—God is satisfied with what He has done for you—you want to find satisfaction in what you are trying to do for Him. What a vast difference! God has under His eye continually a finished work—you have under your eye an unfinished work. Hence your misery. If there is a work which must be done, and I am trying to do it, but cannot succeed, I must be wretched. But if I find that this work has been done by another, even by Christ, for me, I am made happy."

This is the substance of what I earnestly endeavoured to press upon my young friend as we paced the barrack square together. He seemed to grasp it and get comfort from it. He went with me to the gate, and as he shook me by the hand he thanked me fervently for coming to see him, and promised to attend a gospel meeting the next evening, which he did.

Shortly after this I left home for some weeks—and on my return, almost the first thing I heard was that my poor friend was very ill again, and as miserable as ever. I felt truly sorry for this, and lost no time in making my way to the military hospital. The moment I sat down beside him, I saw at a glance that he was very ill and unhappy. I said, “What has gone wrong with you? I thought you seemed quite happy six weeks ago, when we parted at the barrack gate. Whatever has happened to you?” “Oh, sir,” he replied, “I am afraid I have not the right kind of faith. I fear I am not converted at all. I am very unhappy.”

I saw at once his spiritual whereabouts, and said to him, “Now, look at this. Six weeks ago I find you occupied with your works, and, as a consequence, miserable. To-day I find you occupied with your faith, and as a consequence, miserable. The effect is the same in each case. And why? Simply because in looking at your faith you take your eye off Christ just as much as when looking at your works. Faith never looks at itself to see whether it is the right kind, but ever looks at Christ, assured that He is the right Object. And, futhermore, let me ask you to bear in mind that the ground of my peace is not that I was converted so many years ago, but that Jesus bore my sins on the cross, long ago, and is up in

heaven without them. If all the angels in heaven were to express themselves satisfied as to my conversion, that would not form the foundation of my peace. What gives me peace is not the truth that God has been satisfied as to my conversion, that would not form the foundation of my peace. What gives me peace is the truth that God has been satisfied about my sins—by the finished work of Christ. You cannot be too simple in your apprehension of the true ground of peace. It is not your being truly converted, or your having the right sort of faith or the right sort of feelings, but simply that Jesus died and rose again. True, the work of the Spirit must never be separated from the work of the Son in atonement; but neither must they be confounded. Thousands do confound them, and thus, like you, get into darkness and misery."

I had provided myself with a few oranges to refresh the poor invalid, so I used one of them to illustrate the point I wished to press. Taking it up in my hand, I said to him, "Do you see this orange? Now when I hand you this orange, and you take it, which is it, your hand or the orange, that will remove your thirst?" "The orange, of course," said he. "Just so," I replied. "It is not the hand, but the orange that does you good. It is not the mode in which you take it, but the thing you take. Now thus it is precisely in reference to your faith and the object on which your faith lays

hold. Your faith may be weak or strong; but whether weak or strong, it is not your faith but the object of it—Christ—that meets the need.”

“I see it, sir,” said the young soldier, with energy and warmth, “I see it now, clearly. I have been looking away from Christ, and in this way have got into darkness. May I be enabled to keep my eye fixed on Him alone.” “Yes,” I said. “If you want to be wretched, look in; if you want to be distracted, look around; if you want to be happy, look up.”

After some further conversation, I again took leave of him, and in a few days, as I was going to preach in his neighbourhood, who should accost me but my young friend dressed in coloured clothes and looking so happy. His countenance was radiant, and he did not look like the same man. He had been pronounced by the medical authorities to be unfit for further military duties, and was waiting for his discharge. On my expressing my joy at seeing him, and my hope that he was now quite clear, “Oh yes, sir,” said he, “I am quite happy, and I am now determined to carry the blood-stained banner through the length and breadth of the land.”

All this was spoken with much ardour and enthusiasm. I did not in the least

doubt his sincerity; but I feared he was in danger of falling into another snare of the enemy. I therefore said to him, "You must take care. About two months ago, I saw you for the first time and you were looking at your *works*, and you were miserable. I saw you six weeks after, and you were occupied with your *faith* and were miserable. To-day I find you occupied with your *service*, and I greatly fear it will take your eye off Christ just as effectually as if you were occupied with your faith or your works. It is not that I value faith or service less, but I value Christ more. I have met many young converts who have fallen into the snare of getting more occupied with service than with Christ. They have allowed their work to get between their hearts and the Master, and in this way have fallen into darkness and depression. Keep your eye on the Master—cling to Christ—abide in Him, and then you will be found in service of the right kind. It is only as we abide in the vine that we bring forth fruit. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto *Me*.' For what? Is it to *draw* for others? Nay, but to *drink* for himself. And what then? 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' This is the true principle—this is service in its right place—testimony flowing out of communion. If you make service your object, you will break down; but if you make Christ your object, your service will be of the right stamp."

I am induced to put this little story on paper for the benefit of others, by the consideration that the snares and difficulties which beset the path of one young convert may beset the path of thousands; and I do most earnestly desire to be helpful in any way to such. May the Lord, in His exceeding goodness, be pleased to use what I have written for the establishment of souls in His own eternal truth.

ANON.

“I AM THE WAY.”

(*John xiv. 6*).

WE arrived at Delhi, India, by an all-night train, early in the morning. The station was an animated scene, passengers arriving and departing, coolies rushing about with luggage, officials checking tickets, etc.

We were strangers in India and to Delhi. We did not know the language, and we scarcely knew what to do for the best to reach our temporary destination. All at once our difficulties vanished. No need to ask a single question. Knowing the language, or not knowing it, made no difference. We had spied a friend, who had come to meet us, who knew all our arrangements. What a relief it was to see her!

We said to her, "You are an illustration of our Lord's words, 'I am the way.' All we have to do is to *follow*. We shall make no mistakes, if we *follow*. We need ask no questions. We need to have no care as to whether we are going in the right direction. We need to have no concern as to reaching our destination. All we have to do is to *follow* you."

Our Lord had been telling His disciples of His Father's house, and how He was going to prepare a place for them, and would come again and receive them to Himself—truths blessed beyond telling. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," He declared.

Thomas—Thomas the doubter—replied, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

What an answer He gave! How it solved every difficulty. How it settled every doubt, did His disciples but know the meaning of His words,

"I AM THE WAY."

Our friend meeting us at Delhi station, is at best but a poor illustration. She was one of a hundred, who might have done us the service she did. But our Lord said, "I am THE way," and clinched that by

adding, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

Satan is very busy in India as elsewhere. He is doing His best to get it believed that all religions are practically one and the same, as long as their followers are sincere seekers after God. We are assured that sincere seekers after God will find Him, but it can only be through Christ. He is *the* Way. There are not several ways—the Hindu way, the Sikh way, the Mohammedan way, the Buddhist way, the Christian way—*there is only ONE way*. Christ says, I am THE Way "there is no other.

Believing Satan's lie, idolaters are soothed to contentment and to believe that they are on the right road, if only they are sincere.

And even in Christian lands we find the same lie varied to suit the circumstances. Do your best. Be religious. Attend the sacraments. Be sincere. All will be well in the end. So Satan promises, but did he ever keep his word?

After all, this falls into line with gross and idolatrous religions. For in what vital way does every religion in the world differ from the Gospel? Every false religion makes man his own Saviour by his own life and efforts. The Gospel offers a wonderful Saviour and uses the words "grace" and "gift" in connection with the word salvation—words used by no other religion.

Giving a lecture on "Comparative Religions," the late Joseph Parker paused to say most impressively, "Remember, Christianity is not one of them." Christianity is not a comparative religion, but a contrasting religion.

A lady brought out the contrast clearly. She said to a gentleman, who was relying on his own efforts for his salvation, "The difference between your religion and mine consists of two letters. Your religion is summed up by the word *Do*; mine, by the word, *Done*. You are relying upon what you can *do*; I am relying upon what was *done* by my Saviour on the cross, when He atoned for my sins and bore the judgment of them, crying, as the veil was rent and the rocks rent, 'IT IS FINISHED'" (John xix. 30).

Yes, Christ is *the* way, for He alone could pay the price of sin. No Ram or Buddha or Confucius or Mohammed could do that. We are shut up to the Son of God for salvation. None other was great enough to pay the price of sin. Yes, He is *the* way.

But once we trust Him for salvation He becomes the Way for every step of our pathway. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that *followeth* Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John

xii. 46). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow* Me: and I give unto them eternal life" (John x. 27, 28).

Cried the Psalmist David triumphantly, "He leadeth Me"—the Good Shepherd. "He leadeth me beside the still waters . . . He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake" (Psalm xxiii. 2, 3). The Good Shepherd *leads*—the sheep *follow*.

If the Lord says, "I am the Way," we are well provided for every step of our pilgrim journey, but the secret of getting the blessing of this is to *follow*. Are we true followers of our Lord? We owe every revelation of God to Him. He is the only Saviour. He lives on high our great High Priest, to guide, succour, and sustain. He is coming for us. We cannot do without Him at any point of our need as sinners or our need as saints. He says, "*I am THE way*"—not a formula, not a creed, not an organization, but a blessed Person, the Son of God, our Saviour, our Shepherd, our Lord and our God.

Thomas, doubting Thomas, doubting no more, assured that the Lord was indeed the risen Saviour, exclaimed,

"My Lord, and my God"
(John xx. 28).

A. J. POLLOCK.

AN APPEAL.

WE have it at heart to suggest that fervent prayer be made to God, both privately and publicly, for a *revival* of His work among us. We do not now refer to the conversion of souls through the preaching of the gospel, blessed as that is and much to be desired. What is before our mind is a revival among those who are already converted—Christians, not in name only, but in reality. It is among these that we ardently desire to see a revival of the work of God—a movement bearing the unmistakeable marks of the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. Such a movement God alone can bring about, but if many are led to prayer—we were going to say, *to agonize in prayer* for it, might we not humbly expect some gracious answer?

Back in the earlier years of the last century—just over a century ago—there was such a revival as we long to see again. It broke forth almost simultaneously in various parts of England and Ireland. Great light was thrown upon the Word of God, and many mighty truths, long hid from the eyes of Christian men, were found in its blessed pages and ministered in very much spiritual power by tongue and pen. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth—the return of the Lord Jesus for His saints—the heavenly calling—the nature and unity of the Church of God—her calling, hopes and destiny, as

distinguished from the calling and hopes of Israel—ministry, its source and power—the Christian standing in Christ, risen and in glory—these were among the truths ministered, and that lived and burned in the souls of very many. And along with this, the gospel was preached in much clearness and fulness, bringing multitudes into peace and liberty before God.

But that movement, like others in their day, has spent much of its spiritual force. It is true these great themes are still with us, but for the most part they are buried in books that are seldom read. And they linger still, in a traditional sort of way, among certain circles of Christians who are apt to think—as we all are—that in having the truth in terms they have the truth which the terms denote. A greater mistake could not be made! Who so foolish as to suppose that talking about pounds, shillings and pence, houses, lands and other forms of wealth, is the same thing as having them in actual possession? But this should only lead us the more earnestly to pray that God would revive His work in the midst of His Church, and that the great truths of “the faith once delivered to the saints” may be so ministered that they shall live and burn afresh in the hearts and lives of His people? That is the revival we ardently long to see, and for which we might well importunately pray.

And if God, in His great mercy, hearkens to our prayers we shall find that His truth is still living and powerful, and that it will yield the same results as it did in days gone by. Then it brought men out from the world—religious or otherwise—willing to share the fortunes of their rejected Lord and Master. They esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” and found in Him and in His love such untold wealth that the glittering prizes of earth were no longer their object and desire. Pilgrims and strangers here, they waited for God’s Son from heaven, their Deliverer from coming wrath. Their citizenship, their home, all that they loved most, was *there*. Oh, that God would raise up once more in His poor Church chosen vessels—men who know the power and preciousness of these things themselves, and who shall be able to minister them afresh to His saints in the power of the Holy Ghost!

And while praying, expecting, and waiting on God for this revival, let us begin at once to give the most earnest heed to the Word of God—each for himself. Let it be read with greater attention and with more heartfelt prayer that the Holy Spirit might enrich us with its eternal treasures. “He satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” And this, as by the working of an unfailing law, will

give intensity to our prayers and supplications for others. It is the law of love.

Nor will that be all. We shall not forget that these imperishable things are the heritage of all believers—young and old. For there is no law of primogeniture in the family of God, no right that does not equally belong to all the children. Why then should His people wander about like mendicants? Why should they live in the workhouse and not in the house and home of their Father? Why hold out the hand to receive the world's alms as if they were beggars? Why drink at its polluted streams and broken fountains—weary and unsatisfied—when unsearchable riches are theirs?

As we think of these things, perhaps we shall feel more than ever that all of us, in some sense, are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” Then, moved by a heaven-born impulse we shall begin to speak of these “mysteries” to others, knowing that gold buried in the earth yields no revenue, and grain in bags and barns, will cover no fields with waving corn. But to pursue this further would divert us from the immediate object of our paper. Prayer—fervent, importunate, unwearied prayer for a revival in the Church of God is what we ask for. Will the reader join us in it?

(Extracted)

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *John ii.* 14—27.)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

HAVING given, in verse 13, the features which characterize respectively the fathers, young men and little children, the Apostle begins, in verse 14, his special message to each of the three. He commences again with the fathers.

His message to them is marked by the utmost brevity; moreover it is expressed in exactly the same words as those used in the previous verse, when he described their characteristic feature. This is remarkable, and we may well inquire what is the reason for it. The reason we believe to be that when we come to the knowledge of "Him that is from the beginning" we reach the knowledge of God in a fulness which is infinite and eternal, beyond which there is nothing. He who is "Son," and "the Word," the "Word of life," manifested amongst us, is the One that is from the beginning. In Him God is known to us, and there is nothing beyond this knowledge of such infinite profundity.

Now the fathers knew Him in this deep and wonderful way. The God who is love had become the home of their souls, and

dwelling in love they dwelt in God and God in them. They had but to go on deepening in this blessed knowledge. Nothing needed to be said to them beyond this.

The young men had not as yet grown up to this, but they were on the way to it. They were characterized by having overcome the wicked one, as verse 13 told us. We now learn how this overcoming had been brought to pass. They had been made strong by the Word of God abiding in them.

We all enter upon the Christian life as little children, but if healthy growth marks us we advance to be young men. Now the *knowledge* of the Word of God must come first. We cannot abide in that of which we are ignorant. Here then we are brought face to face with the reason why so many true believers of many years standing have remained little children—just stunted babes. They have never become really acquainted with the Word of God. The great adversary of the work of God knows the need of this right well, and it is easy to see the skill of his deeply laid designs in the light of this fact.

Romanism takes the Scriptures out of the hands of its votaries on the ground that, being God's Word, it is far above the layman and only fit to be in the hands of the doctors of the church, who alone can inter-

pret it. Modernism is prevalent in the Protestant world. In its full-blown form it denies the Word of God entirely: the Bible is to them only a collection of doubtful legends interspersed with obsolete religious reflections. In its diluted form—which often seduces real Christians, and therefore is the more mischievous as regards ourselves—it weakens the authority of the Word, and therefore dooms its followers to perpetual spiritual babyhood. And where these evils are absent, so frequently people are content to take their knowledge of the Word from the texts upon which their minister may happen to preach. They do not read, and mark and learn and inwardly digest the Word for themselves. Hence their growth also is stunted.

But the Word is not merely to be known, *it is to abide in us*. It is to dwell in our thoughts and in our affections; in this way it will control us, governing the whole of our lives. If that point is reached by any of us, then it can be said that we are strong, for our lives will be founded upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. Even so however, strength is not everything, for we have yet to be conducted to that knowledge of Him that is from the beginning, which characterizes the fathers.

The young men are faced by a danger which, if it prevails, will hinder them advancing still further into this blessed know-

ledge. That danger is the world, and the love of it: not merely of the world as an abstract conception, but of the concrete, material things that are in the world. We *use* a great many of these things, and occasionally at least we *enjoy* them, but we are not to *love* them. That which we love dominates us, and we are not to be dominated by the world but by the Father. The love of the world and the love of the Father are mutually exclusive. We cannot be possessed by both. It must be one or the other. Which possesses us?

If the love of the Father possesses us, we shall see the world in its true light. We shall possess a spiritual faculty which acts after the fashion of the much prized X-rays. We shall get down beneath the surface of things to the skeleton framework on which all is built. That skeleton is revealed to us in verse 16 as, "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" all of which spring not from the Father but are wholly of the world.

The lust of the flesh is the desire of *having*—the desire to possess oneself of those things that minister to the flesh. The lust of the eyes is the desire of *seeing*, whether with the eyes of the head or with those of the mind, all the things that minister to one's pleasures. It would cover man's restless intellectual cravings as well as his continual hunt for spectacular pleasures. The

pride of life is the desire of *being*—the yearning to be somebody, or something that ministers to pride of heart. This is the most deep-seated evil of the three, and often the least suspected.

Here then we have exposed for us the framework on which the world system is built; every item of it totally opposed to the Father, and to that world which is to come, when the present world order is displaced. "The world passeth away," we are told, and so does the lust of it. We are not surprised to hear it. What a mercy that it does, for what greater calamity could there be than that the world and its lusts should be perpetuated for ever! The world will disappear; the Father and His world will abide. We shall indeed be foolish if we are filled with love for that which vanishes away instead of love for Him who abides.

How striking the contrast in verse 17! We might have expected the end of the verse to have been, "but the Father abides." That however is so obvious as hardly to need stating. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever;" that is the wonderful fact. It is the world that passes away. When believers die we remark that So-and-so has "passed away." The world gets on very well without them and seems perfectly stable. The Apostle John views things from the Divine side,

and helps us to do the same. Then we see the world about to pass away, and the doer of the will of God, though he be withdrawn from earthly scenes, is the one who abides for ever. He serves the will of God. The will of God is fixed and abiding. The servant of that will is abiding too.

From verse 18, onwards to verse 27, the "little children," or "babes," are addressed. Without any preface the Apostle plunges into a warning against the anti-christian teachers which were beginning to abound. "Antichrist" is a sinister personage, whose appearance in the last days is predicted. He is not yet come, yet many lesser men, who bear his evil character in greater or smaller degree, have long been on the scene. This shows us that we are in the last time; that is, the epoch immediately preceding the time when evil will come to a head and meet with summary judgment.

Now the antichrists, who had appeared when John wrote, had once taken their place amongst the believers, as verse 19 shows. By this time however they had severed their connection and gone out from their midst. By this act they made it manifest that they never really belonged to the family of God—they were not "of us." The true believer is characterized by holding fast the faith. They had forsaken it and gone out from the Christian company, thereby

revealing that they had no vital connection with the children of God. The real child of God has an Unction from the Holy One, and this was just what the antichrists had never possessed.

The "Unction" of verse 20 is the same as the "Anointing" of verse 27, and the reference in each case is to the Holy Spirit. Indwelling the children of God, He becomes the Source whence proceeds their spiritual understanding. Now the simplest babe in the Divine family has received the Anointing, and so may be said to "know all things." The word for *know* is the one meaning *inward, conscious knowledge*. If it be a question of acquired knowledge, there are ten thousand details of which at present the babe is ignorant; but the Anointing gives him that inward capacity which brings all things within his reach. He knows all things potentially, though not yet in detail.

Hence even the babe may be said to "know the truth," and he possesses the ability to differentiate between it and what is a lie. He may at the moment only know the Gospel in its simplest elements; yet in the Gospel he has truth undiluted—foundation truth out of which all subsequent truth springs—and every lie of the devil can be detected if it be placed by way of contrast against the bright background of the Gospel.

Every lie of the devil is in some way aimed at the truth concerning the Christ of God. He is no mean marksman, and even when he appears to be directing his shots at the outer rings of the target he is calculating on a rebound action which will ultimately land them fairly on to the bullseye. In the Apostle's day he aimed at the centre openly. The antichrists boldly denied that Jesus was the Christ: they denied the Father and the Son. In our day some of them are still doing this. Many more however hardly do this: they introduce teachings of a more subtle kind, not so harmful on the surface but ultimately leading to just the same denials, whereby the centre of the target is hit.

The Antichrist, when he appears, will be the full and perfect denial of the Father and the Son. He will "magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods" (Dan. xi. 36), and this prediction is amplified in 2 Thessalonians ii. 4. The "many antichrists" who have preceded him all run on similar lines. Their denials relate more particularly to the Son who has been manifested on earth, and they may profess that they have nothing to say as to the Father or against Him. Such a profession is unavailing. To deny the Son is to deny the Father. To confess the Son is to have the Father also. Though distinct in person They are one in the Godhead, and he who

has the Anointing (the Holy Spirit), who also is one with Them in the Godhead, knows this right well, and is not likely to be deceived on the point.

The whole drift of the *Old Testament* is that Jesus is the Christ, as is shown by Acts xvii. 2, 3. The truth as to the Father and the Son is disclosed in the *New Testament*. It is not that just then the relationship of the Father and the Son began to be; but that this eternally existing relationship in the Godhead was then for the first time fully disclosed. The fellowship into which we are brought is with the Father and the Son, as we were told in the opening of the epistle; and therefore the denial of of this truth must be destructive of our fellowship.

It is worthy of note that error most frequently takes the form of denying truth. Denials are dangerous: they should be issued with care, based upon wide knowledge. Usually more knowledge is needed to deny than to assert. For instance, I may assert that a certain thing is in the Bible, and I need know but one verse in the Book, where it is stated, in order to prove what I say. If I deny that it is in the Bible, I shall need to know the Bible from beginning to end, before I am sure I cannot be successfully contradicted.

From the beginning then Jesus had been manifested as the Christ, and as Son He

had revealed the Father. To this knowledge even the babes had come and it was to abide in them, as also it is to abide in us. Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Anointed One: we have received the Anointing so that the truth may abide in us, and then as a consequence, we shall abide in the Son and in the Father.

The Apostle Paul instructs us that we are "in Christ" as the fruit of God's gracious work. The Apostle John instructs us as to the revelation of the Father and the Son, and as to the communion established in connection with that relationship, into which each child of God—even the youngest babe—is brought, so that we may continue "in the Son and in the Father." The Son comes first, 'since we can only continue in the Father as we continue in Him. To "continue" is to abide in the conscious knowledge and enjoyment of the Son and the Father, possible for us inasmuch as we are born of God and have received the Anointing.

This continuing in the Son and in the Father is eternal life. There was the promise of eternal life even "before the world began," as stated in Titus i. 2. The Lord Jesus spoke of eternal life as, "that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). Verse 25 of our chapter carries this a step further. He who abides in the

Son and in the Father is abiding in the life which is eternal. The Eternal Life had been manifested and had been seen; but that had been the privilege of the Apostles only. Now we may possess that life and be in it; and this is for all of us, for these things were written to the babes in the family of God.

All this the Apostle had been saying in order to fortify the babes against the seducing teachers. In verse 27 he reverts again to the Anointing, for it was by the Spirit given to them that all these things were made available for them. What a comfort it is to know that the Anointing abides in us. There is no variation or failure there. Again the Anointing not only abides but teaches of all things. Instruction may reach us from without, but it is by the Holy Spirit that we have the capacity to take it in. We do not need that any man should teach us. This remark is not intended to discredit teachers whom the Lord may have raised up and gifted to do His work, otherwise we might use it to discredit the very epistle we are reading. It is intended to make us realize that even gifted teachers are not absolutely indispensable, but the Anointing is.

The Anointing Himself is truth. This is repeated in slightly different words in chapter v. 6. Christ is the truth as an Object before us. The Spirit is truth, bringing

it into our hearts by divine teaching. To these babes John could say, "even as it hath taught you," for the Anointing was already theirs.

Thank God, the Anointing is ours also. Hence for us also the word is, "Ye shall abide in Him." We may be but babes: our knowledge may be small; but may nothing divert us from this life and communion in which we are set. It all centres in Him. Let us abide in Him.

F. B. HOLE.

SEEKING **FIRST** THE KINGDOM.

SOME time ago an old lady, living alone in an attic heated merely with an oil-stove, sent £100 to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and in the covering letter said that it was the result of care in spending. She had "worn the same hat for seven years"!

During the war an anonymous donor wrote to the same Society, saying he was over seventy but came to the City daily to work, and had a penny cup of coffee each day after lunch. He had resolved to do without the coffee, and for the greater part of the war sent 6d. a week under the name "Old Coffee," to provide gospels for the soldiers.

Let us not forget that one of the greatest gifts in history was two mites, which make a farthing. How many of us are sacrificing anything for the work and the kingdom of God?

REDEMPTION.

NOT only has sin plunged us into guilt, and brought us face to face with condemnation, but it has entangled us in bondage of a very fearful sort; a bondage from which we are utterly unable to extricate ourselves.

Then, as regards the Gospel, not only does it proclaim forgiveness in relation to our guilt, and justification instead of condemnation, but it reveals to us God, acting as a Redeemer, delivering His people from bondage, and thereby freeing His inheritance from all the encumbrances under which formerly it lay.

There is a good deal about redemption in the Old Testament, and one of the words used for it has the meaning, it is said, of, "freeing, whether by avenging or repaying."

In Exodus we find the great *type* of redemption. To the children of Israel, who were just downtrodden slaves, Jehovah said, "I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments (vi. 6). So this was clearly a case of redemption by avenging their wrongs upon Egypt; though

we also see the *repayment* of what they owed to God as sinners in the shed blood of the lamb. When all was effectively accomplished we find Israel on the further banks of the Red Sea, singing, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed" (xv. 13).

A striking *illustration* of redemption is given to us in the book of Ruth. Boaz redeemed Elimelech's inheritance by payment, and this involved the raising up of the name of the dead by the taking of Ruth. Boaz took both to himself—the wife and the inheritance—by right of redemption.

Both in the type and in the illustration bondage of one sort or another was in question. In the type, Israel were in sore bondage under Pharaoh, and again and again in reference to them Egypt is called, "the house of bondage." In the illustration, the inheritance of the dead Elimelech was in danger of passing into other hands, and the widow and daughter-in-law of lapsing into a condition of servitude. This disaster was averted by the action of Boaz as their kinsman-redeemer.

Turning to the New Testament, we find that redemption as well as justification is mentioned in Romans iii. We are said to be, "justified . . . through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This serves to emphasize an important point; namely, that

these different aspects of the work of Christ and its effects are most intimately connected, so that we cannot have one without the other. Yet though never to be divided the one from the other they are clearly to be distinguished. The earlier part of Romans iii. has brought before us not only the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also its bondage. The word itself is not actually used until chapter viii. is reached, yet the idea is there, for the Apostle says, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." To be "under sin" is to be under the power of it, that is, to be in bondage to it. Christ has done the great work which avails to pay off all the liabilities under which we lay, and thus redemption is in Him for us.

If we read on through the Epistle to the Romans, we discover in chapters vi., vii. and the early part of viii. how we are actually set free from the tyranny of sin and the yoke of the law; all of which had proved us to be in "the bondage of corruption." This phrase is actually used in chapter viii. 21, where we learn that the whole earthly creation lies under its thrall, but that all shall be delivered and brought into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." When the Lord comes and the children of God stand forth in their glory, then there will be proclaimed a jubilee of liberty for all creation.

For that moment we wait, and in verse 23 it is said that for us it will be, "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here again redemption appears, since the point in question is deliverance from bondage; and the redemption of our bodies is presented to us as a freedom gained by avenging, as it says, "I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hosea xiii. 14). This scripture is alluded to and applied to the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians xv. 55. In that glad day the bodies of all God's saints will be delivered from the grip of death, the last enemy.

The redemption work of Christ also comes rather prominently before us in the Epistle to the Galatians. We read that, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (iii. 13), and this was by paying the price on our behalf, for it adds, "being made a curse for us."

But not only did we lie under the curse of the law but the law itself held us in bondage. We were "in bondage under the elements of the world" (iv. 3). Lower down in the chapter Paul speaks of, "the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage" (iv. 9). The word translated "elements" has the force of "principles," and is so translated in

Hebrews v. 12. We may at first be inclined to wonder that such terms as these—almost contemptuous terms—should be applied to the law, which was given of God, but the “we” of chapter iv. 3, clearly indicates Jews, just as the “ye” of verse 6 indicates the Galatian Gentiles. Both were under bondage to the principles of the world. The law of Moses made no difference as to this. It brought in the demands of God, but they were to be met according to the principles of the world. The root principle of the law was that the favour which men were to receive from God was to be wholly determined by what they rendered to Him in obedience. This is altogether a principle of the world, whereas grace is not. There was no bringing in of principles which lie outside the world altogether, as is the case in Christianity.

From the principles of the world, whether found in Judaism or elsewhere, weak and beggarly as they are, Christ has redeemed us that we might receive the adoption of sons. Such is the mighty grace of God.

Redemption, as we have seen, extends even to the resurrection of the body, and this side of the matter we again find in the Epistle to the Ephesians. While we read of, “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (i. 7), we also read of the earnest of the Spirit being, “until the redemption of the purchased possession”

(i. 14), and of our being, "sealed unto the day of redemption" (iv. 30). The first of these passages speaks of that which is ours to-day, and which never will be more ours than it is to-day. The second and third speak of redemption in a form for which we wait. *All* that Christ has bought by His death shall be taken from beneath the sway of the usurper and of every adverse power. As far as our bodies are concerned that moment will arrive at the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints. That having taken place, the Lord will set His hand to the work of redeeming by power from the hand of the enemy all the rest of the possession which He purchased by His blood.

This coming redemption by power is a great theme of Old Testament prophecy. It is particularly prominent in the latter part of Isaiah. Israel needed redemption for he was being trodden down by the Gentiles and hence is addressed as "thou worm Jacob;" and Jehovah announces Himself as, "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (xli. 14). Having introduced Himself in this light, He continues to speak of Himself as Redeemer until chapter lxiii. is reached, where the prophet sees Him in vision, coming forth from Edom and Bozrah, because at last, as He says, "The day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." The re-

demption of the true Israel of God means vengeance upon all their foes.

Yet in the midst of these striking chapters with their many promises of a coming redemption by means of the avenging might of God, we get a most marvellous prediction concerning the yet deeper matter of redemption by means of the death of Christ. We read, "Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (lii. 3). This is followed by the heart-moving chapter wherein the blessed Servant of Jehovah is portrayed as the suffering, dying One, whose soul is made an offering for sin by Jehovah Himself. The Redeemer is going to "come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob;" (lix. 20), but this is only possible inasmuch as He has first redeemed them without money as the result of the travail of His soul.

It is to this scripture perhaps that Peter referred when he wrote, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 18—19). Isaiah lii. speaks of our being "redeemed without money." Isaiah liii. of the One who "had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," and yet "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" for our redemption.

We sometimes hear people speak of "the finished work of redemption." Is it quite correct to speak thus in view of the fact that we still wait for the redemption of our bodies?

Not quite correct, no doubt. But when people speak thus they are probably dwelling in their minds exclusively upon the work of redemption by blood. That part of the great work is indeed finished, and never to be repeated. Propitiation has been made once and for all, so when it is a question of that, or of forgiveness, or of justification, there is no future aspect to be considered. But there is a future aspect of redemption, as we have seen. And it is well to remember that, and to speak with care lest we obscure the finishing touches which are to be given to the work of redemption in the days to come.

On the other hand, seeing there is this future aspect of redemption, is it quite right if we speak of ourselves as **having been** redeemed? Ought we not rather to speak of ourselves as **being** redeemed?

"We have redemption through His blood." So says the Scripture twice over—in Ephesians i., and Colossians i. Therefore we cannot be wrong if we say with all boldness that *we have it*. But it is *through His blood*, you notice. Redemption in that aspect of it is wholly in the past. The redemption of our bodies is wholly in the future. But redemption is never presented in Scripture as a process which is going on. It is never said that we

are being redeemed day by day, though there is such a thing as day-by-day salvation.

Is it not a rather uncomfortable doctrine that redemption, a certain part of it at least, lies in the future? Might there not be a loophole here for just a little uncertainty to creep in?

If redemption were a human work, or if even a small human element entered the question, there would be uncertainty right enough—not just a little creeping in, but floods of it sweeping everything before them. We may well thank God that it is a work not human but Divine. God never leaves His work uncompleted: this we may see in the history of the typical redemption which He wrought in Egypt. He did not redeem the children of Israel by the blood of the Paschal lamb and then forget them, so that they remained under the taskmasters of Egypt. No. All those whom He redeemed by blood He also redeemed by His mighty power clean out of Egypt. Each, down to the youngest child, had to go; not even a hoof was to be left behind. God will complete His work concerning us. Every one redeemed by the precious blood of Christ will be there when at His second coming He redeems the bodies of His saints.

Is redemption the great end that God has in view for His people?

No. It is not the end in view, but rather the all-important means to that end. In

the old dispensation the purpose that God had in view was that Israel should be His own peculiar nation, serving Him in the land He had given them. He had to redeem them out of Egypt in order that this might be brought to pass, for they could not serve Him so long as they were in servitude to Pharaoh. In our case the end in view is of a much higher order.

It is His purpose that we should be sons before Him in love. Ephesians i. 5---7 speaks of this; and we find that redemption is necessary as a means to that end. Colossians i. shows that we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and again redemption is mentioned as necessary for this. Peter, in his first epistle, instructs us that God purposes to have us as an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ; but as a preliminary to this he speaks of our having been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Other scriptures to the same effect might be cited. God has many thoughts for us His people, but their fulfilment is only possible upon the basis of redemption. First we must be redeemed from every adverse power. Then God has His way with us to carry out His bright designs.

The book of Ruth shows us that in Israel only certain kinsmen had the right of redemption. Has this any significance for us?

Undoubtedly it has. To purchase was one thing—anyone might do that: to redeem was another. The nearest kinsman had the first right, but one had to be a kinsman to have any right of redemption at all. There is no kinship between angels and men: hence no angel could redeem a man even if he had possessed the power to do so. The Lord Jesus did not become an angel; He became a Man and thereby established that kinship which qualified Him to become our Kinsman-Redeemer. How important then is the true Manhood of our Lord.

Hebrews ii. does not contain the word redeem. But it tells us that He did not take hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham when He undertook through death to annul him that had the power of death and deliver us—that is, to accomplish our redemption.

We read in Ephesians i. 14 of "the redemption of the purchased possession." Should we then draw a distinction between purchase and redemption?

We believe that we should. We might put it in this way—redemption involves purchase, but purchase very often has nothing to do with redemption. Believers are said to be "bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 20). But false teachers will go so far as "denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter

ii. 1). The buying of believers involves their redemption. The buying of the false teachers, who go to destruction, did not involve their redemption; had it done so destruction would not be their end. By His death the Lord Jesus has acquired purchase rights over all things, even where He has not redeemed them.

In Ephesians i. 14 however the point is not exactly this, but rather that what He has purchased by His death He will ultimately redeem by His power from every adverse force. It is really the distinction between redemption by blood and redemption by power.

THE EDUCATION OF THOMAS.

THOMAS Didymus was not a voluble man like his friend Simon Peter, he was a man of few words, but when he did speak it was to the point, revealing the sort of man he was. Only John records his words, and we may be sure that the Holy Spirit who inspired him to write his Gospel had a purpose in that.

It seems to me that the disciples were thoroughly bewildered when that point of their association with the Lord was reached which is recorded in John xi. They had seen Him subdue a great storm and overthrow the power of devils and even break

the power of death, but, when it was a question of men and their attempt to murder Him, He had not used any power, but simply escaped out of their hands and retired beyond Jordan. They felt 'that He was safe there and they were safe with Him. And when He proposed to return to Judæa they looked upon it as a very foolish thing to do, and asked in surprise, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?"

When it was evident that they could not turn Him from His purpose Thomas spoke out and said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." It looks as though some of them were holding back, but not he. He had cast in his lot with his Master and would share His fortunes in life and in death, whatever others might do. He had a mind of his own, and it was made up; but it was a dull mind, a pessimistic mind, and he saw nothing before his Lord at that time but death. He had affection for Him, there can be no doubt about that, but faith and spiritual intelligence were greatly lacking. Anyhow, he would die with his Lord; he meant that, though when the fury of hell began to rage he fled like the rest of them.

In chapter xiv. he speaks again. It would appear as though the bewilderment of the disciples had grown. The Lord was telling them of preparing a place for them,

not on earth, not in Jerusalem, but in the Father's house. That to them was an unknown place and a long way off, and yet the Lord says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas with, it would seem, some impatience exclaims, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" His dullness gave the Lord the opportunity of uttering one of His most important words, but there can be no doubt that at that time Thomas shewed himself incapable of receiving such spiritual thoughts.

Why was he not with the rest of his brethren on the Resurrection day—that glorious first day of the week? We cannot say, unless it was that his dull and pessimistic mind had so mastered him that he had forsaken their company and gone off alone somewhere to weep and mourn, so that Mary Magdalene could not find him to give to him the Lord's message. Yet his brethren found him during the week that followed, and there were ten of them, and everyone of the ten said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But did that move Thomas? Not at all. No faith, no hope stirred in his heart. Listen to the man; he says, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, *I will not believe*" (xx. 25). Why, he was a materialist; his dullness had descended

into stubborn unbelief; his brethren were a band of visionaries, but not he. He would believe nothing that he could not see and feel.

Oh! the tender pity and grace of our Lord. On that second first day of the week the disciples were again together, and the dismal, disputing Thomas with them, and for his sake, it would seem, the Lord appeared to them that day. I can imagine Thomas, shrinking behind his brethren at the sight of Him; drawing away with wonder and fear. But looking upon him with pity, and stretching out His hands to him in entreaty, He said to him, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless but believing."

There might have been none others there for twice did the Lord address him by name. He discovered that the very thoughts of his heart were all known by his Lord. The unbelief that was so dishonouring to Him, sinful unbelief, He knew, and yet those wounds in His incorruptible body were the mute though eloquent witnesses to the fact that He whom Thomas had seen crucified had taken His life again. The scales fell from his eyes, his heart cast off its unbelief, the glory of the only begotten Son burst upon his astonished soul, and falling prostrate before Him he cried, "*MY LORD AND MY GOD.*"

It was not enthusiastic Peter, it was not John who leaned upon the Lord's bosom, who first gave voice to that which is the faith of all who have believed, but Thomas, dull, calculating, materialistic Thomas; he it was who was convinced by what he saw, and the truth of the opening of the Gospel was confessed at the end of it by the lips of the last man of the twelve from whom we might have expected it.

Happy Thomas, yet happier are those who have not seen yet have believed. Believed what? That the One who bears in His body the wounds that He sustained upon the cross of Golgotha is none other than the Eternal Word by whom all things were made, our Lord Jesus Christ.

J. T. MAWSON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 *John* ii. 28—iii. 12.)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE paragraph especially addressed to the babes, or "little children," which begins at verse 18, ends at verse 27. We have the words "little children" in verse 28, but the word there is not the one meaning "babes," but the word for "children" in a more general sense, the same word as

is used in verses 1 and 12, and also in the next chapter, verses 7, 10 and 18.

With verse 28, then, the Apostle resumes his address to the whole family of God, to all those who are His children, irrespective of their spiritual growth or state. He had just assured the babes that the Anointing was theirs, and that consequently they might "abide in Him." Now he turns to the whole family of God and exhorts them to "abide in Him." What is good for the babes is good for all, and this abiding is the way of all spiritual fruitfulness and growth. When we are diverted from Him and our hearts' affections and interests abide in the things of the world, then we are feeble and unfruitful. The Apostle looked on to the manifestation of Christ, when all of us will stand revealed in our true character; and he desired that we all may have confidence in that day and not be ashamed.

He will be manifested, and we too shall be manifested at His coming; and there is evidently the possibility of the believer being put to shame in that solemn hour. It is very likely that in these words the Apostle indicated his own sense of responsibility toward them, and he wished them to do him credit—if we may so put it—in that day. But they also surely indicate that we each may be put to shame on our own account. Let us each so really abide in Him that we may be fruitful now and have

confidence then; and so neither we may be put to shame nor those who have laboured over us, whether as evangelists or shepherds.

Verse 28 stands as a short paragraph by itself, and the second chapter would more fittingly have ended with it. Verse 29 begins another paragraph which extends to verse 3 of chapter iii. At this point someone might well have desired to enquire—But who are the children of God, and how exactly may they be distinguished from those who are not?

The answer given here is that those who are born of God are the children of God, and that they may be distinguished by the doing of righteousness. The doing is something habitual and characteristic. It is not that they do righteousness off and on, now and again; but that they practise it as the habit of their lives. They are far from being perfect in it—only One was that. Still, as born of God they necessarily have His nature. He is righteous: we know that right well. Then of necessity those born of Him are characterized by righteousness: it could not be otherwise. Therefore when we see anyone really practising righteousness we are safe in assuming that such an one is a true child of God.

The practice of righteousness is a very big matter, going far beyond the paying of

twenty shillings in the pound. We have to begin with God and render to Him that which is His due, and then consider rendering to all others that which is their due. No unconverted man can be said to practise righteousness for such have never begun at the beginning. They do not practise what is right in regard to God.

We know God. He is righteous. Here is someone who practises righteousness. We are safe in regarding that one as born of God. He belongs to the Divine family. But then what amazing love this is! And it is bestowed upon us by the Father Himself!

The word that John uses here is "children" rather than "sons." It is a more intimate term. Angelic beings are spoken of in Scripture as "sons of God," and all things are of Him as creatures of His hand; but to be His children we must be "born of Him." This is something more profound as well as more intimate, and we may well marvel at the manner of the Father's love which has bestowed upon us such grace as this. Into this new relation we have been brought by God's own act, wrought within us by the power of the Holy Ghost. It might have pleased Him, while saving us, to have brought us into a relation with Himself far inferior to this. But no; such has been the manner of His love.

But further, just as this act of His in begetting us has *connected* us with Him in this new relationship, so also it has *dis-connected* us from the world, and that in a most fundamental way. When Christ was here the world knew and understood neither Him nor His Father. That was because in origin and character 'He was totally opposite to them. He said to them, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." And again, when they claimed that God was their Father He said, "If God were your Father ye would love Me" (John viii. 23, 42). The trouble with them was that they had not the nature which would enable them to know or understand Christ. Now we, thank God, have the nature which knows Him and loves Him; but for that very reason we also are not known and understood by the world. It must be so in the very nature of things.

The children's place is ours NOW. The love of the Father, which is proper to the relationship, is ours NOW. Yet there is that for which we wait. What we shall be has not yet appeared; but it is going to appear when He appears. When He is manifested in His glory, we shall not only be with Him but like Him, for we are going to see Him as He is. The world will see Him in that day, arrayed in His majesty and His might. They will see Him in His official glories. We shall see Him in His

more intimate personal glories. The kings of this world are seen by the populace in official trappings on state occasions: but by members of the royal families they are seen in private *as they are*.

Now we must be like Him to see Him as He is. Only as bearing the image of the Heavenly One can we tread the heavenly courts and gaze upon Him in this intimate way. We are actually going to be LIKE HIM. The children of God to-day are nothing much to look at. They are often a very poor and despised people. In the autumn we may see a number of dull, uninteresting caterpillars crawling upon the nettles. What they are going to be does not yet appear. Wait till next summer, when they will emerge as gorgeous butterflies! Even so we shall emerge in His likeness in the day of His manifestation. We shall be seen then in the estate which is proper to the children of God.

Such then is our hope in Christ. As we contemplate it we must surely be conscious of its elevating and purifying power. If this is our high and holy destiny we cannot possibly be content to accept the defilements of this world, whether they are within or without us. We must purify ourselves with such a hope in view. We might rest content with the defilement if these things were mere notions or theories to us, but not if they are a real hope. Burn-

ing as a hope within our hearts, we must purify ourselves, and this process will continue as long as we are here, for the standard of purity is "even as He is pure." We may make an application of Mark ix. 3, which speaks of His raiment as "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." No fuller on earth can white us to that standard: we shall only reach it when like Him in glory.

Passing from verse 3 to verse 4 of our chapter, we are conscious of a very abrupt change. We have just been told how we may discern the true children of God by their practice of righteousness. We are now to see the complete contrast that exists between the children of God and the children of the devil. There are two distinct seeds in the earth from a moral and spiritual standpoint, diametrically opposed the one to the other. They cannot be confused or mixed, though an individual may be transferred from one to the other by an act of God, by being begotten of Him.

But first of all the true nature of sin must be exposed. One of the few blemishes of our excellent Authorized Version occurs in verse 4, where the word for lawlessness is translated as "transgression of the law." "Every one that practises sin practises also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (New Trans.). If sin really had been the transgression of the law, then there would

have been no sin committed in the world between Adam and Moses, as Romans v. 13, 14 says. But sin is something deeper than that, for lawlessness is the denial and repudiation of all law, and not merely the breaking of it when given. If the planets that encircle our sun were suddenly to repudiate all law, the solar system would be destroyed. Lawlessness amongst the intelligent creatures of God's hand is equally deadly, and destructive of His moral order and government.

Sin therefore is utterly abhorrent to God, and cannot be permitted to continue for ever. Hence Christ has been manifested—One in whom sin was entirely absent—that He might remove it. Verse 5 only goes as far as this, that He was manifested to remove our sins, the sins of the children of God. Our sins are only a part of the whole, but they are the part in question here, for the point is that the children of God have been brought out of the lawlessness that once marked them and into obedience.

The One in whom is no sin has been manifested, and as a result He has taken away our sins, so that we may abide in Him and sin not. Verse 6 presents the contrast from an abstract point of view and must be read in connection with verse 4, so that "sinneth" has the special force of "practiseth lawlessness." The children of God are characterized by this: they abide in Him

who has been manifested to take away our lawlessnesses, consequently as under His control they do not practise lawlessness. On the contrary, the one who does practise lawlessness has not seen nor known this blessed One.

The righteousness of verse 7 is in contrast with the lawlessness of verse 6. We are not to be deceived upon this point, for the tree is known by its fruit. We may reason of course from the tree to its fruit, and say that he that is righteous doeth righteousness. Here however we reason from the fruit back to the tree, for John declares that he who practises righteousness is righteous, according to the righteousness of the One by whom he has been begotten. This is apparent if we connect the verse with verse 29 of chapter ii.

On the other hand, he who practises lawlessness is not of God at all. He is of the devil since he is displaying the exact character of the source from whence he springs. From the beginning the devil sins. He was committed to lawlessness from the outset; and the Son of God has been manifested that He might destroy his works. What the devil has done, leading men into lawlessness, the Son of God came to undo.

Verse 9 emphasizes what has just been said in verses 6 and 7, putting it in a still more emphatic way. No one that has been begotten of God practises lawlessness, and

this for a very fundamental reason. The Divine seed remains in him, and hence as begotten of God he cannot sin. Here are dogmatic statements of great strength. No qualifying statements are allowed to enter and modify their positive force. Consequently they have presented a great deal of difficulty to a great many minds.

Two things help to clear up these difficulties. The first is a simple understanding of the force of abstract statements. When we speak abstractly we purposely eliminate in our minds and utterances all qualifying considerations, in order that we may more clearly set forth the essential nature of the thing of which we speak. To take the simplest of illustrations: we say, cork floats, alcohol intoxicates, fire burns. Thereby we state the essential character or nature of these things, without committing ourselves to the consideration of what may look like contradictions in practice. The old lady in yonder cottage, for instance, might say that on this cold and windy day she only wished that her fire *did* burn. We all know that this unfortunate abnormality, occurring at certain times, does not alter the truth of the abstract statement—fire burns.

The second thing is that we read this passage in the light of verse 4, which acts as a preface to it. There is no mention of sin from verse 12 of chapter i. down to verse 4 of chapter ii. But between verse

4 and verse 9 we have the word in different forms about ten times; and at the outset the exact meaning attaching to the word is given to us. The word is defined for us; hence the mistranslation of the definition is particularly unfortunate. The point all through is the practice of righteousness, which expresses itself in obedience, in contrast with the practice of lawlessness, which expresses itself in disobedience.

In verse 9 the one begotten of God is viewed in his abstract character. If viewed apart from his abstract character he is found with sin in him and with sins that have on occasion to be confessed and forgiven, according to earlier statements in this very epistle (i. 8.—ii. 1). Viewed abstractly he does not practise lawlessness, indeed he *cannot* be lawless just because he is begotten of God.

What a wonderful—perfectly wonderful—statement this is! Such is our nature as begotten of God. At present the fact is often obscured by reason of the flesh still being in us, and our giving place to it. But when we are with Him and like Him, seeing Him as He is, the flesh will have been eliminated for ever. There will be no qualification then. The fact will be *absolute*, and not only abstract. When we are glorified with Christ it will not only be that we do not sin but that absolutely we cannot sin. We can no more sin than He.

If any desire further help on this matter they may get it by contrasting our passage with verses 7 and 8 of Romans viii. There the flesh is viewed in its abstract nature, and it is the precise opposite of what we have here. It is essentially lawless, and completely opposed to God and His nature.

In verse 10 another feature that characterizes the true children of God is brought forward. They not only practise righteousness but they also are marked by love. Other scriptures show us that love must characterize our dealings with the world. Here we are told that we display it towards our brethren; that is, all others who with ourselves are begotten of God. So those who have their origin of God and those who have their origin of the devil are sharply differentiated by those two things. The one have righteousness and love: the other have neither.

Love and righteousness are closely connected yet distinct. Love is entirely a matter of nature. "God is love," we read, while we do not read that God is righteousness. Love is what *He is* in Himself. Righteousness expresses *His relation* to all outside Himself. We are begotten of Him: therefore we display His nature on the one hand, and act as He acts on the other.

In the child of God love must necessarily flow out to all others who are His

children. It is the love of the Divine family. The instruction that we should love one another was not something new, rather it had been given from the beginning. From the outset love had been enjoined. See how fully the Lord enforced it in John xiii. 34, 35.

In just the same way the hatred which marks the world—those who find their origin in the devil and his lie—is a very ancient thing. It also goes back to the beginning, the outset of the devil's activities amongst men. No sooner was there a man begotten in sin, and in that way morally the seed of the devil, than the feature was seen in him. Cain was that man, and the hatred that belongs to the seed of the devil came out in full force. He slew his brother. There was no love there but hatred. And why? Because there was no righteousness but lawlessness.

So the illustration is complete. Cain the seed of the devil, was a lawless man who as a result hated and slew his brother. As begotten of God we have *love* as our proper nature, and are left here to practise also *righteousness*. Loving our brother and practising righteousness, we make it plainly manifest that we are children of God.

May that fact be more and more plainly manifest in all of us.

F. B. HOLE.

THE YOUNG CONVERTS OF ANIWA.

AFTER careful examination I set apart nine boys and girls about twelve or thirteen years of age, and advised them to wait for at least another year or so, that their knowledge and habits might be matured. They had answered every question, indeed, and were eager to be baptized and admitted; but I feared for their youth, lest they should fall away and bring disgrace on the Church. One of them, with earnest eyes, looked at me and said: "We have been taught that whosoever believeth is to be baptized; we do most heartily believe in Jesus and try to please Him."

I answered, "Hold on for another year, and then our way will be clear."

"But," he persisted, "some of us may not be living then. We long to be baptized by you, our own Missi, and to take our place among the servants of Jesus."

After much conversation, I agreed to baptize them, and they agreed to refrain from partaking of the Lord's Supper for a year, that all might have knowledge of their consistent Christian life. Though so young in years, this discipline, I thought, would be good for them, and the Lord might use

it as a precedent for guidance in future days.

Of other ten adults, at this time admitted, one was especially noteworthy. She was about twenty-five, and the elders rejected her, because her marriage had not been according to the Christian usage in Aniwa. She left us weeping bitterly. I was writing late at night, as was my wont, in that oppressive tropical climate; and a knock was heard at my door. I called out "*Akaiera?*" (Who is there?).

A voice softly answered, "Missi, it is Lamu. Oh, do speak with me."

This was the rejected candidate, and I at once opened the door.

"Oh, Missi," she began, "I cannot sleep, I cannot eat; my soul is in pain. Am I to be shut out from Jesus? Some of those at the Lord's Table committed murder; they repented, and have been saved. My heart is very bad, yet I never did any of these crimes of heathenism; and I know that it is my joy to try and please my Saviour Jesus. How is it that I only am to be shut out from Jesus?"

I tried all I could to guide and console her, and she listened to all very eagerly. Then she looked up at me and said: "Missi, you and the elders may think it right to keep me back from showing my love to Jesus at the Lord's Table: but I know here,

in my heart, that Jesus has received me; and if I were dying now, I know that Jesus would take me to glory and present me to the Father."

Her look and manner thrilled me. I promised to see the elders, and submit her appeal. But Lamu appeared and pled her own cause with convincing effect. She was baptized and admitted with the other nine, and that Communion day will long be remembered by many souls in Aniwa.

It has often struck me, when relating these events, to press the question on the many young people, the highly privileged white brothers and sisters of Lamu. Did you ever lose one hour of sleep, or a single meal, in thinking of your soul, your God, the claims of Jesus, and your eternal destiny?

And when I saw the diligence and fidelity of these poor Aniwan elders, teaching and ministering during all these years, my soul has cried aloud to God: "Oh, what could the Church not accomplish, if the educated and gifted elders, and others in Christian lands would set themselves thus to work for Jesus to teach the ignorant, to protect the tempted, and to rescue the fallen."

From J. G. Paton's *Autobiography*.

To this let us add, what could not be accomplished if all believers were marked by deep-toned consecration to the Lord and

His interests? Let us take home to ourselves the contrast between these once devil-deluded, sin-possessed savages of heathendom, and such as ourselves.

The Lord said to His disciples, "If ye love Me keep My commandments." His word, "This do in remembrance of Me," is not a mere commandment. It is the request of love, and if we love Him we shall respond to it.

And yet there are to be found some who do not seem much concerned to respond. They have never been refused like Lamu for they have never even asked to come. How many are there who have lost even one hour of sleep or a single meal because they found themselves debarred from this great privilege?

In the day when all things are rightly appraised, how shall we stand as compared with the converts of Aniwa?

To serve rightly I must spend time in the sanctuary of His presence and I must be there because He attracts me there, because His presence is better even than His service.. And I must know that He delights to have me there, as He delighted in Mary when she sat at His feet, and in John when he reclined on His breast at supper. I must know that I am in His favour, then will I serve with a glowing heart and keep myself for Him.

PREVAILING PRAYER.

AND King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty; so she turned and went to her own country" (I Kings x. 13).

No more successful prayer than this has been placed on record, for not only did the suppliant receive an answer to her full satisfaction, but out of his royal bounty the king gave her more than she could ask or think. Greater than Solomon and more liberal in His giving is our Lord, and this Ethiopian queen, by her coming to Solomon, shews us how needy folk may come to Him, whether they are sinners or saints, and no matter how far they have lived from Him, and be enriched beyond their best expectations and in turn enrich others. It is an interesting and instructive story.

She "heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord" (verse 1).

She heard of his fame; this is the first step, for "faith cometh by hearing," and it is faith that puts the soul in motion towards the Lord, and, "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard." But there are some who hear and are unmoved; they do not believe. The story of the glory of the great Lord and Redeemer of men is to them as a tale that is told; they are like the people who lived during the Lord's life on earth; they heard with unhearing ears, and did not

heed the words of wisdom that flowed from His lips; they would not come to Him that they might have life. Like them we must not be, or this Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against us.

Having heard of Solomon, nothing would satisfy her but she must see him, and become acquainted with him. Moreover, there were many baffling problems in her life and kingdom, which her wise men could not solve; she felt that Solomon could. Her very needs urged her to go to him.

"She came to prove him with hard questions"
(verse 1).

She was not disappointed, for as she unburdened her heart to him, he answered with God-given wisdom. All her difficulties disappeared, for "Solomon told her all her questions; there was not anything hid from the king that he told her not." It is even thus when the heart turns to Christ; and to whom can we go but to Him? He is the wisdom of God, and is made wisdom to us, and He has the words of eternal life. He only can solve our problems. Have we wrestled with those great problems concerning our sins, our sinful self, our past, our present, our future? Do questions as to our relations with God and our fellow-men disturb our tranquility and burden our spirits? He has said, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest." What a relief it is to lay our burdens at His feet, and to place ourselves there and learn of Him. This is

no mystical, unreachable, imaginary theory; it is real, and thousands can testify to its reality. It is the knowledge of Christ, and the entrance of the Word of Christ into the heart, that gives the peace of Christ in view of all difficulties.

When the Queen's mind was relieved of all its questions she was able to consider Solomon and his wisdom and his works. And so great did she find him to be, and so wonderful the wisdom of his works, that there was no more spirit left in her, and she exclaimed:

"Mine eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me" (verse 7).

She was entranced with his greatness, and it was under the influence of his royal splendour that she made her requests. It is a great day when the soul reaches this point in regard to Christ; when the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord breaks first upon the soul; when it is set free from a profitless self-occupation and from all its harassing questions, to be Christ-centred and filled with the glory of His greatness. Why, this will be our heaven in heaven!

"For ever our still wondering eyes
Shall o'er His beauties rove;
To endless ages we'll adore
The riches of His love!"

This is the one true condition of heart for prevailing prayer. It is when Christ and His glory controls us that we shall pray in His Name and "whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will

I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." It was charged against some, "Ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James iv. 2, 3). We shall not be guilty of such folly as that, if the glory of the Lord fills our souls; for no man could seek His glory and the gratification of his own lusts at the same time. If we are near to Him we shall know the wealth of His giving and **we shall ask**. We shall be guided in our asking by our knowledge of Him, and **we shall not ask amiss**. We shall desire only that He may be magnified and **we shall not desire to consume what we expect from Him upon our lusts**.

"**She turned and went to her own country**" (verse 13).

She went to spread Solomon's fame in her own land and to shew the benefits of acquaintance with him by the great gifts he had given her. And in like manner it is the Christian's privilege to witness for Christ in the world, and it is in connection with this witnessing that prayer is indispensable. We can understand how this dusky Ethiopian woman would say "O king, I am returning to my people, they know nothing of your greatness. Give to me that which will shew to them the truth as to it, that I may shew it to them." The king could not refuse such a request as that. And will the Lord refuse our prayers if we pray in such a spirit and to such an end? Nay, He will give to us all that we desire, whatsoever we

ask, and He will do more, He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, for this is His royal bounty. And to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

J. T. MAWSON.

“CAST THY BREAD UPON THE WATERS.”

THE wise writer of Ecclesiastes xi. 1—6, from whom we borrow the title of this article, recognized the power of propaganda. Similarly Christianity has ever been a propagating power. The risen Lord gave the commission to His disciples as He left this earth, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark xvi. 15).

It is evident that the Spirit of God uses more than oral means. This is seen as far back as Moses, who put inspired pen to paper, or perhaps stylo to clay tablet, and gave us the Pentateuch. Others were raised up, inspired not only to speak but to write, and so we have Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc. etc., and then again the four Evangelists, Paul, Peter, James and Jude.

It is said that there was long ago a flourishing Roman Catholic mission in Central Africa, but it has entirely died out, only leaving a faint memory behind. Why has

the mission died out? It is because they did not give the natives the Bible. A Bible withheld means that the converts only remained such as long as they were in touch with their instructors. Once they parted company they were cut off from the source of supply.

The fact that the Bible has been translated into 600 languages is proof of the necessity being felt of putting the sacred writings into the hands of the converts, so that they can come *first-hand* to the Word of God.

In the spirit of all this there has been much earnestness in printing and spreading the tract, pamphlet, volume, presenting the truth of the Scriptures, and there have been abundant results therefrom.

These lines are written to exhort the young Christians to this service. We are saved from many of the expensive tastes the worldling indulges in. Tracts and books cost money, but (it is money well spent if guided in prayer to purchase the right kind and distribute them in dependence upon God. Moreover, what costs us nothing is not worth much. Sacrifice is the keynote of Christian living.

The printed page can go where we cannot. A halfpenny will take it to some far-flung outpost of the Empire, to some lonely sinner in the back blocks of Australia, to the shacks in the forest of Canada, to the

orange groves of Palestine, to Egypt, India, China, nay, in the words of our Lord's commission, “to every creature.” We appeal to our young Christian readers, will you not earnestly, systematically, prayerfully begin and continue this blessed Christ-like service?

Oral communications can easily be forgotten or even misunderstood. The printed page can be referred to again and again and memory refreshed and intensified.

The right choice of literature is important. As a general rule the writer, whose voice is used in the conversions, is likely to give forth writings which will be similarly used.

More than 150,000,000 copies of C. H. Spurgeon's sermons have been circulated, and no wonder, for he was a remarkable evangelist, and God has blessed his writings to literally thousands.

Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment, a booklet written by the late George Cutting, an evangelist, has perhaps been more widely used than any booklet of its size.

The late Sir Bartle Frere, travelling in India was astonished to find a small town where the temples and idol shrines were neglected, and the town generally speaking professing the Christian Faith. It appears that an English resident had given a cast-off garment to a native. In the

pocket was found a Gospel portion with eight or nine tracts in the native language. From that seed had quietly sprung up a wonderful harvest.

Four copies of H. L. Hastings' *Lecture on the Inspiration of the Bible*, were given at different times by one person to four infidels. All four were converted and became gospel preachers.

Martin Luther wrote a treatise on the Galatians. Long years rolled by and an English translation found its way into the hands of John Bunyan, and played a part in his conversion. Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and just because it is full of the Word of God and presents the truth of the Gospel it has been translated into 135 languages and dialects.

The Word of God *lives* and produces life. "The Word of God is quick [*living*] and powerful" (Hebrews iv. 12). "Being born again [*life produced*], not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter i. 23.)

When Paul and Silas entered Thessalonica with nothing but the Word of God on their lips, they were described as the men "that have turned the world upside down," so great was the effect of the Word of God.

Why has the Bible been translated into over six hundred different languages? The colossal work this represents, the enormous cost involved, the urge on the part of translators, contributors in the way of money, running into millions, distributors in every part of the globe, all bespeak something far, far out of the common. No book has met with such bitter and sustained attacks as the Bible.

In a chamber at the foot of Cleopatra's Needle, that Egyptian monolith as ancient as Joseph, erected on the Thames Embankment, 270 translations of one verse—John iii. 16—are placed. Is any book in the world treated with such respect?

In 1806 the French Institute enumerated 80 geological theories, which were hostile to the Bible. Would the French Institute have set forth these theories, if it could have been foreseen that every one of them were to be overthrown as further light came to hand? The Book survives, and even flourishes in spite of the attacks made upon it. Men do not write hundreds of books against the Koran or the Zend Avesta or any of the sacred books of the heathen. Why this bitter and sustained attack? The Devil does not fight a false book, nor a man of straw.

The Bible never alters, yet its message is as fresh and potent to-day as when the ink was wet upon the page.

Young Christian, read your Bible, read it on your knees, "behave it," as the heathen convert phrased it; scatter it far and wide, whether the Scriptures themselves or the tract or booklet containing the message of salvation, and God will give surely a mighty harvest. The time is short and opportunities become fewer.

A. J. POLLOCK.

A STUDY IN LAMENTATIONS.

THE DISMAL BOOK.

1. THE DISMAL SIDE OF IT.

If there is one book of the Bible which is only read once in the proverbial blue moon, it is the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

The title itself is forbidding, because we human-kind tend to shun what we fear will depress us, and cling with pathetic blindness to our childish dreams of an easy happiness. When childhood has passed and we are launched upon life it becomes necessary for us to be weaned from that desire for an easy happiness, so that, by facing the real and unescapable facts of life, we may win through by God's grace to a settled, mature joy. "Happiness" depends upon what "happens." Joy depends on our true spiritual resources, and persists *despite* what happens.

This is where the value of Lamentations

lies. Until you reach verse 21 of chapter iii. you find no ray of hope. Even though Jeremiah's source of despair no longer affects us, and although long centuries have made an almost unbridgeable gulf between him and ourselves, his sorrow, expressed with the utter simplicity of extreme human distress and made poignant with human sobs, speaks a universal language. It is a language which every man and woman of deep experience understands.

Perhaps it will be interesting to sketch with a few hasty strokes the background of the book.

After years of warning and entreaty the storm clouds of judgment which the Prophet foresaw have massed themselves against the nation. Jeremiah, who has yearned for them, and whose love had been repeatedly thrust back upon his own over-wrought heart, now sees the glory of Israel utterly departed. The king is gone, and the cream of the nobility are in Babylon. Those who are left are in a desperate plight of hunger, exposure, shame and slaughter.

If a man has loved his child and has watched him going with heedless tread, despite the entreaties of his own baffled love, towards the inevitable ruin of his life; and lives to see him diseased in body through sin, hopeless in mind through despair, a social outcast and lost at last in the doss-houses and prisons of the land—that

is a picture of Jeremiah's sorrow. As a father is identified with his son, so Jeremiah was identified with his people, God's heritage; and their ruin forced, as it were, all the tides of a nation's sorrow through the channels of a single heart.

The Christian mind has seen in this a picture of the greater drama of the identification of the Saviour with the sorrow of a world of sin. Especially has it seized upon verse 12 of chapter i. "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?——"

As we advance in our Christian experience God gives to us, each one, the capacity (in some degree) of walking in the steps of Jeremiah and our Lord Himself, "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."

That verse is perhaps a difficult one, but if you are interested you can run through the references to the word "sufferings" in a concordance—a list of which is appended to this article.

So long as we try (like children) to repudiate the thought of suffering, we shall never enter into the rich, deep joy of life. It is strange how sorrow, *accepted*, loses its power to hurt, and from being an enemy becomes almost a friend.

One word of warning. There are many Christians who have stumbled across this great principle of life, but with the pervers-

sity of human-kind they have given it a morbid twist. There is no point in courting undue gravity or in taking a pride in being gloomy. It is a horrible and self-righteous thing, reminiscent of the arch-error of trying to find salvation through good works. The man who is capable of sorrow is correspondingly more capable of entering richly into all the beauty and good cheer which God so lavishly gives us.

It is the Pharisee who puts ashes on his face. The disciples of Christ are men of good cheer. Were ever those two words more frequently on the lips of any man than they were on the lips of Christ?

The great Christian sufferer was Paul, and surely only a reader of the dullest wit can miss the pulsating vigour of joy in his writings.

As ever we must hold the two sides of truth, one in each hand and so keep the balance of Truth itself. On the one hand, "Blessed are they that mourn"—"the fellowship of His sufferings," and on the other, "Rejoice in the Lord. And again I say—Rejoice!"

Do not *try* to be a man of sorrows, or a man of joy. Hide these things in your heart, ponder them sometimes as you find them in the Word, and follow with humble and loyal heart the Man who was above all others *the Man of Sorrows and of Joy*.

So will His Spirit transfigure yours.

A. F. S. POLLOCK.

2 Cor. i. 5, 6, 7.	} These verses show various sides of the necessity of suffering in Christian life—external and internal.
Phil. iii. 10.	
Col. i. 24.	
Heb. ii. 10.	
1 Pet. i. 11.	
1 Pet. iv. 13.	

There will follow (D.V.), a further article on the message of Lamentations.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 JOHN iii. 13—iv. 1).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

EACH created thing reproduces itself "after his kind." This fact is intimated ten times over in Genesis i. In our chapter we find that the same law holds good in spiritual things. Those who are "begotten of God" are characterized by love and righteousness. Those who are "children of the devil" are characterized by hatred and lawlessness, just because they are after his kind. The two seeds are clearly manifest in this: and they are wholly opposed the one to the other.

There is nothing surprising therefore if the believer is confronted by the hatred of this world. The "world" here is not the world-system—that

cannot hate—but the people who are dominated by the world-system. The child of God does not hate them. How could he, when it is his very nature to love? The world hates him, for the same reason as he who does evil hates the light, for the same reason as Cain hated Abel. It must be confessed as a sad fact that very often we do marvel when we are hated, but it is very foolish of us. It is rather that which we should expect in the very nature of things.

The Christian does not hate, he loves. But in verse 14 it does not say by way of contrast that we love the world. If it did we should be in danger of a collision with verse 15 of the previous chapter. It is true that we should be characterized by love towards men generally, as shown in Romans xiii. 8—10, but what is said here is that we love the brethren; that is, all others who have been begotten of God. Love is the very life of the family of God.

How do we pass from death unto life? One answer to that question is given to us by John v. 24. It is by hearing Christ's word and believing on Him that sent Him. In the passage before us the answer evidently is, by being begotten of God—the context makes this clear. Putting the two scriptures together, we get, what we may call, our side of the matter on the one hand, and God's side of the matter on the other. To decide precisely how the two sides, the Divine and the human, combine is of course beyond us. The exact mode in which the Divine and the human

are united must ever be beyond us, whether in Christ Himself, or in Holy Scripture, or anywhere else.

But the fact remains that we have passed from death unto life, and the proof of it is that we love the brethren, for love is practically the very life of the family even as it is of the Father Himself. Here the Apostle John corroborates the sweeping statements made about love by the Apostle Paul in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians xiii. He tells us that if any of us do not love our brother we abide in death, no matter what we may seem to be. Paul tells us that, no matter what we may seem to have, if we have not love we are nothing—we simply do not count at all in God's reckoning.

Verse 15 puts the case even more strongly. The fact is that in this matter we cannot be neutral. If we do not love our brother we hate him; and he who hates is potentially a murderer. Cain was an actual murderer, but in Matthew v. 21, 22 the Lord Jesus lays the emphasis not on the act but on the anger and hatred which prompted the act, and so does our scripture here. He who is possessed with a spirit of hatred is possessed with the spirit of murder, and no such person can be possessed of eternal life. As we have seen, eternal life is ours as continuing or abiding "in the Son and in the Father" (ii. 24, 25). Abiding in Him, eternal life abides in us, and the essential nature of that life is love.

But though love is the simple breathing forth of the life that we possess, we none of us have it as though we were each a little self-sufficient fountain of it. The subjective display of love in us can never be disconnected from the objective display of it in God. Hence we ever need to look outside ourselves if we would really perceive love, as love really is in itself. "Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us" (New Trans.). This was the supreme display of the real thing.

We have to ponder very deeply upon all the virtue and excellence and glory that is compressed into the "HE," and then contemplate the sin and wretchedness and misery that characterized the "us," if we desire in any adequate way to perceive the love. It is very important that we should do so, for only then can we possibly face the obligation which as a consequence is laid upon us. He manifested the love by laying down His life for us. As the fruit thereof we live in His life which is a life of love. A beautiful circuit is completed. He loved. He laid down His life for us. We live of His life. We love.

Now for the obligation. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Love with us ought to go as far as that. Priscilla and Aquila went as far as that for Paul, since they "laid down their own necks" for his life. Would they have done so for some very lowly and utterly undistinguished saint, we wonder? Very likely

they would, for they are placed at the very head of the long list of Christian worthies who are saluted in Romans xvi. At any rate that is the length to which love of a divine sort goes.

If love goes to that length, it obviously will go to any point that falls short of it. There are many ways in which the child of God may lay down his or her life for the brethren which do not involve dying, or even facing actual death. The household of Stephanus, for instance—of whom we read in 1 Corinthians xvi. 15—"addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," or "devoted themselves to the saints for service." If they did not lay **down**, they at least laid **out** their lives for the brethren. They were serving Christ in His members, and displaying the love in very practical fashion.

The love of God was dwelling in them, and it is to dwell in us, as verse 17 shows. If it does it must necessarily find an outlet towards others who are children of God. God has no needs for us to meet. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, if He needed them. It is the children of God who are afflicted and who have need in this world. The practical way of showing love to God is to care for His children, as we see them have need. If we have this world's substance, and yet we refuse compassion to our brother in need in order to eat our morsel alone, it is very certain that the love of God is not abiding in us.

At this point we may remark that one word which is very characteristic of this epistle has al-

ready been translated by four different words in English:—abide, continue, dwell, remain. The four words used are no doubt quite suitable and appropriate in their place, but it is as well that we should know this fact, for it helps us to preserve in our minds the continuity of the Apostle's thought. Dealing, as he does, with what is fundamental and essential in the Divine life and nature, he necessarily has to speak of things that **abide**.

Verse 18 is not addressed to the babes, but to all the children of God irrespective of their spiritual growth. We all have to remember that love is not mere sentiment, not a matter of endearing words uttered by the tongue. It is a matter of action and of reality. The love that we have perceived, according to verse 16, did not exist in mere words but came out in an act of supreme virtue. The love of God dwelt in Him and He laid down His life for us. If the love of God dwells in us, we shall express our love towards our brother in action and work, rather than in word alone.

If we love thus **IN truth** it will be manifest that we are **OF the truth**. We are, so to speak, begotten of the truth, and hence truth expresses itself in our actions; and not only will other people be assured that we are of the truth, but we shall gain assurance for our own hearts as before God. A man may buy what is stated to be an apple tree of a certain variety, and to assure him he is handed a certificate signed by the hor-

ticulturist who raised the tree. That is good, but a mistake is possible. When in due season he picks from that tree apples of just that variety, he has as perfect an assurance as it is possible to have. When the love and the truth of God bear their fruit in the life and in deed, our hearts may well be assured.

“Alas! I am none too positive. This desirable fruit has often been lacking in me.” That is what many of us would have to say. That is just what the Apostle anticipates in the next verse. Considering these things, our hearts condemn us. How solemn then is the fact that “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” Solemn, and yet very blessed. For see how this great fact worked in the heart of Simon Peter, as recorded in John xxi. 37.

Peter who had so confidently boasted of his love to the Lord, had signally failed to show it in deed. He had instead thrice denied Him with oaths and curses. The Lord now thrice questions him on the point, letting down a probe into his conscience. Instead of having assurance, Peter’s heart condemned him, though he knew that at bottom he **did** love the Lord. If Peter had some sense of his failure the Lord who knew all things saw the depth of it as Peter did not. And yet by that very fact He also knew that, in spite of the failure, genuine love was there. So Peter said, “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” He was glad to cast himself upon the fact that “God is greater than

our hearts, and knoweth all things." So may we be, when in a like situation.

On the other hand there are times—God be thanked—when our heart does not condemn us; times when the life and love and truth of God in our souls has been in vigour, expressing themselves in practice. Then it is that we have confidence and boldness before God. We have liberty in His presence. We can make request of Him with the assurance of being answered, and receiving in due season that which we have desired.

The word "whatsoever" in verse 22 presents us with a blank cheque, leaving us to fill it in. But the "we," who are presented with it, are limited by what follows as well as by what precedes. They are those whose heart does not condemn them, who keep His commandment, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. Such individuals can be entrusted with the blank cheque. They are Christians who love in action and not merely in word, they are marked by that obedience which is so pleasing to God. He who is characterized by love and obedience will have his thoughts and desires brought into harmony with God's, so that he will ask according to His will, and consequently receive the things that he desires.

We keep His commandments; but there is one commandment which stands out in a very special way, and which divides into two heads—faith and love. We are to believe on the Name of

Jesus Christ, God's Son, and then love one another as He commanded His disciples; notably in John xiii. 34, 35, for instance. We recognize here the two things that are so often mentioned together in the epistles. Paul had not been to Colosse, but he gave thanks to God on their behalf having "heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints" (Colossians i. 4). These two familiar things are proof of true conversion, evidence of a genuine work of God.

What perhaps is not so familiar to us is both of them being treated as a commandment. It is worthy of careful note that of all the apostles John is the one to write a great deal to Christians about the **commandments** given to us. He wrote when the other apostles had gone, and when the tendency to turn grace into license was becoming pronounced; hence this particular emphasis, we believe. They are not commandments of a legal sort, to be carried out in order that we may establish our righteousness in the presence of God, but they are commandments nevertheless. What John declares to us in this epistle is in order that we may be introduced into fellowship, or communion, with God. If we enter into the communion we soon discover the commandments, and there is nothing incompatible between them. They are wholly in agreement, for only in obedience to the commandments is the communion enjoyed and maintained.

This is emphasized in verse 24, where we find

that it is the saint walking in obedience that abides in Him. At the end of the previous chapter the children—all the family of God—were exhorted to abide in Him, for it is the way of proper Christian life and fruitfulness. Here we find that the abiding is contingent upon obedience. The two things go together, acting and reacting upon each other. He who abides obeys, but equally true it is, that he who obeys abides.

But obedience leads to His abiding in us, as well as our abiding in Him. If we abide in Him we necessarily draw from Him all the fresh springs of our spiritual life, and as our practical life is thus drawn from His, it is His life which comes into display in us, and He is seen to be abiding in us. Here, we believe John sets forth in **principle** what Paul states as his own **experience** in Galatians ii. 20. It was as he “lived by the faith of the Son of God” that he could say, “Christ liveth in me.”

By the Spirit, who has been given to us, we know that Christ abides in us. The Spirit is the energy of the new life that we have in Christ, and other scriptures show us that He is “the Spirit of Christ.” Other people may know that Christ abides in us by observing something at least of His character being displayed by us. We know it by His Spirit having been given to us.

The Holy Spirit has been alluded to in chapter ii., as the Unction or Anointing, thus giving even to the little children a capacity which enables them to know the truth; but now we are thinking

of Him as the Spirit by whom Christ abides in us so that we may manifest Him here. He was also dwelling here in order that He might give utterance to the Word of God. This He did at the beginning through the apostles and prophets whom He inspired. He is the power by whom the Word of God is **given**, as well as the power by whom it is **received**.

This fact furnished the "antichrists" with a point of attack. These earliest "antichrists" were known as **gnostics**, a word which signified, the **knowing ones**. They too would speak by power that was obviously of a spirit. They claimed that they knew, and set up their ideas in opposition to that which had been revealed through the apostles. It was because of this that the Apostle digresses a little from his main theme in the opening verses of chapter iv.

The digression was important in that day, and it is no less important in ours, as we shall see.

F. B. HOLE.

If we have not been able to discover the good thing in our brother and fellow-servant; if our eye has only detected the crooked thing; if we have not succeeded in finding the vital spark amid the ashes—the precious gem among the surrounding rubbish; if we have only seen what was of mere nature; why, then let us with a loving and delicate hand draw the curtain of silence around our brother, or speak of him only at the throne of grace.

RECONCILIATION.

A NUMBER of different words have been employed by the Spirit of God to convey to us the far-reaching effects of the work of Christ. Reconciliation is one of them, and it possesses great definiteness of meaning. It carries us further into the positive blessings of the Gospel than do justification or redemption. The very idea it expresses belongs to the New Testament.

At first sight this hardly appears to be the case. A good concordance (such as "Young's") shows us that the word occurs nine times in the Old Testament; but on closer inspection we discover that in seven of these it is used to translate the ordinary word for "atonement." In one case it is used for a word that has to do with offering or receiving a sin offering. The remaining occurrence of the word comes nearer to the New Testament meaning (in 1 Samuel xxix. 4), but there God is not in question.

In the New Testament there are three passages that deal with reconciliation—Romans v., 2 Corinthians v., Colossians i.—and there is also a reference to it in Ephesians ii.

Justification is needed by us because of the guilt of sin and the condemnation thereby incurred. Redemption is needed because of the bondage

which sin has produced. Reconciliation to God we must have because one of the gravest effects of sin has been the way it has alienated us from God, producing utter estrangement of heart on our side. The word "alienated" occurs in Colossians i. 21, where it stands in full contrast to the fact that we now have been reconciled. We shall better understand the fulness of the reconciliation if we begin by grasping the full tragedy of the alienation.

One other passage refers to the state of alienation into which man has fallen—Ephesians iv. 18. We get right to the bottom of things when we discover that we have been "alienated from the life of God." Connected with this alienation are such things as vanity, darkness, ignorance, blindness, lasciviousness, uncleanness. This is not surprising for the life of God is the exact opposite of all these things. Sin, having alienated us from God, has cut us off from all the things that go to make up life according to Him.

Alienated from God we have naturally no desire for Him, nor for the light and life that His presence brings. This came out most clearly directly sin had entered and the alienation had come to pass. Genesis iii. bears witness to it; the action of Adam and his wife plainly declared it. Directly the voice of the Lord God was heard in the garden they hid themselves. God did not instantly destroy them. He dealt with them in mercy; still they had erected a barrier between themselves and Him which nothing on their side could surmount,

and which He ratified by placing a barrier on His side in the shape of cherubim with a flaming sword.

Sin thus spoiled the Divine pleasure in man. To say this puts the matter too mildly. We have only to turn on to Genesis vi. to find that, mankind having been given sufficient time in which to develop their sinful propensities, an utterly unbearable state of affairs was produced, so that, "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." At the end of Genesis i. everything, man included, was pronounced to be "very good." Once man had been very good in the Divine eye, now he was a perfect grief to contemplate. The alienation was complete.

And it was complete on man's side also. God had become as distasteful to man as man had become to God. The latter part of Romans i. unfolds the dreadful story of man's alienation from God. The sunken state of mankind is attributable to this, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (ver. 28). Romans iii. corroborates this by telling us that, "there is none that seeketh after God." When we get to Romans v. it is plainly stated that when the reconciliation reached us we were "enemies."

Here we must carefully draw a distinction. On our side the alienation was not only in life but in heart also. On God's side the alienation in life was felt far more acutely than ever we could feel

it, but there was no alienation in heart. In other words while we as sinners hated God, He never hated us. Had He hated us He could have just damned us, and left it at that. Instead of which He has Himself made available for us the reconciliation; a reconciliation brought to pass at so great a cost as "the death of His Son."

The Lord Jesus came into the world in the spirit of reconciliation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). This characterized His life and ministry. Not judgment but forgiveness was His work; and even where guilt was most pronounced and manifest, He did not impute it: see for instance John viii. 11, and Luke xxiii. 34. All that God could do was done by Him, yet every overture was rejected by men and He was crucified. But it was just then that God's reconciling mercy registered its most signal triumph.

Then it was that God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now it is evident that if we are made in Christ—in the Christ who died and rose again—the very righteousness of God, there can be no longer found in us that which is obnoxious and distasteful to Him. It cannot be any longer a grief to His heart to look down upon us, but the exact reverse. Christ was identified with us and our sin under the judgment of God. We are identified with Him and His acceptance as risen from the dead.

In Colossians i. 21, 22, the same truth is stated, but in other words. We have been reconciled "in the body of His flesh through death," for He became a Man, thereby possessing Himself of the body of His flesh, in order that He might die. As the result of the reconciliation we can now be presented "holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight."

"In the body of His flesh" may seem a rather peculiar expression, but a similar form of words occurs elsewhere; Romans vii. 4; Ephesians ii. 15; Hebrews x. 10 and 20. If we understand the matter aright, the thought is that the Lord Jesus in His grace identified Himself with our place and condition in assuming Manhood apart from sin, so that He might lay down His life, presenting His sacred body as a sacrifice for sin; and then take up life again in resurrection, in which life believers may now be identified with Him. His death was thus the judgment and judicial ending of the old order; His resurrection the real beginning of the new.

This mighty change then has been brought about for us "in the body of His flesh through death;" and consequently our whole standing before God is manifestly altered. Once we were exactly in the position of fallen Adam, and nothing could be worse than that, nothing more repugnant to God. Now, being in Christ, we have the position that is Christ's as risen from the dead, and nothing could be better, nothing more delightful,

more pleasing to God than that. This is what we may call God's side of reconciliation; the work which He has Himself effected in the death of Christ. It is perfect and absolute; accomplished for us, accomplished for ever. It is work of a new creation order, as 2 Corinthians v. 17 shows.

But there is our side of the matter which had equally to be met. It was we who were "alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works," and consequently there had to be a complete and fundamental change of mind and attitude as regards God with every one of us. There was no need that His heart should be turned towards us, but there was every need that our hearts should be turned towards Him. Hence the Gospel was committed to the Apostles as "the word of reconciliation." They carried on that ministry as "ambassadors for Christ," praying men "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 19, 20). When we believed the Gospel, the ministry of reconciliation became effective with us, and it could be said, "we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 11, margin). As the fruit of having received the reconciliation we "joy in God," whereas formerly we feared and even hated Him.

We may sum up then this most blessed truth by saying that everything about us which was obnoxious to God and deserving of judgment has been judged in the death of Christ; and as the fruit of reconciliation we stand in a perfect acceptance before Him. His work it is, for "He hath made

us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6). Christ's acceptance is the measure of our acceptance: and the measure of His acceptance may be discerned in the title given to Him—"the BELOVED," And further, since we do not believe the Gospel apart from the work of the Spirit in us, by which new birth is effected, we receive the reconciliation in believing. Our thoughts Godward are altogether altered; the enmity that once filled our hearts is removed, and we joy in Him. A new day has dawned in which He can look down upon us with complacency, and we look up in answering love to Him.

We can now see more clearly perhaps how reconciliation does carry us more fully into the positive blessings of the Gospel. As forgiven, we know that our sins have been dismissed. As justified, that we have been cleared from all charge. As redeemed, that our days of slavery are over. But as reconciled, we have full entrance into the wealth of the favour and love of God. It is the introduction into blessing of the highest order.

An old hymn states the matter thus:

"My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear."

that is hardly in keeping with what we have been seeing, is it?

It is not. It was we who needed to be reconciled. It was God who did the reconciling through the Lord Jesus Christ. But though this is so, we must not overlook the fact that God had to be

propitiated in regard to sin. The publican of our Lord's parable knew this, for he said, "God be merciful [propitiated] to me a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13). God had to be propitiated inasmuch as sin was an outrageous challenge to His righteousness and holiness. He never hated us however. His heart was not estranged from man, for had it been He would never have sent His Son to be the propitiation, which was needed to meet the claims of His righteousness and holiness.

Do we understand then that reconciliation has more to do with our state before God than with the guilt of our sins?

It certainly has. It is worthy of note how the fact of our enmity comes into view when reconciliation is in question. The passage in 2 Corinthians v. is an exception to this, but even here enmity, though not mentioned, is inferred, for it says, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Old things are passed away wherever new creation comes to pass, though they are very much in evidence in the world at present. As new creation beings we are reconciled to God. Nevertheless we must not overlook the fact that "the blood of His cross" is the basis of the reconciliation, for it was there that sin met its judgment, and everything in us that was offensive and obnoxious to God was condemned. Our guilt is not overlooked, but even here it is more a question of the judgment of our sinful state than the expiation of our innumerable sins.

Why then, in Hebrews ii. 17, do we read of Christ as "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"?

Simply because the translators of the Authorized Version inserted here the wrong word. It is "to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people," as the Revised and other versions show. Under the law Aaron the high priest made atonement by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy-seat. The Lord Jesus has fulfilled the type, but on an infinitely grander scale. It is an interesting fact that in the Old Testament the word for "mercy-seat" is one closely allied to the word for **atonement**; whereas the word in the New Testament is as closely allied to **propitiation**. This shews that the propitiation of the New Testament embodies the idea of atonement, yet going beyond it. Reconciliation is to be distinguished from both, though not to be disconnected from either.

We have been dwelling on the fact that believers are reconciled now. What about the reconciliation of all things, spoken of in Colossians i. 20?

That far-reaching reconciliation is coming in its season. You will notice that the verse limits the blessing to "things in earth, or things in heaven." The "things under the earth," of Philippians ii. 10, who are to bow at the name of Jesus, are not mentioned here. The blight of sin has affected certain parts of the heavens, through the fall of angelic beings. Wherever sin has been,

there reconciliation is needed. A time is coming in which all that is evil will be swept into the place of judgment, there to lie under God's fiery indignation; and then all things purged and reconciled both on earth and in heaven will be delightful to God, and themselves delight in God.

The blood of His cross that has already brought us into reconciliation, has power and value to accomplish even this.

There seems to be a sense in which the world is already reconciled, according to Romans xi. 15. What does that passage mean?

The whole passage has to be read and carefully considered if we would arrive at the Apostle's thought. He is discussing God's ways with Israel as a nation, showing how they have been set aside for the present in order that He may pursue His purpose of extending mercy to Gentiles. Throughout the dispensation of law, God concentrated His favour and His dealings exclusively upon Israel: they were in the light of His countenance, and the nations were left in their darkness—the darkness which they had chosen for themselves, according to Romans i. 21. But with the advent of Christ and His rejection by Israel a great change in God's ways came to pass. Israel is fallen from their place of national favour, and this has led to what is called "the riches of the world," in verse 12, and to "the reconciling of the world," in verse 15.

The "world" here has evidently the force of the Gentile world as distinguished from Israel. The reconciling has been brought to pass by the change in God's dealings which has led Him to set Israel aside from their special place of national favour, and to bring the Gentile world before Him for blessing. Formerly the position was that the Gentiles had deliberately turned their faces from God, and He had turned His from them. Now He has turned toward them; and as Paul elsewhere said, "The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and . . . they will hear it" (Acts xxviii. 28). This dispensational reconciliation has taken place and Paul was the chosen servant, sent to offer salvation to the Gentile world.

Does the reconciliation which we receive to-day involve more than this?

Most evidently it does. When we receive it we "joy in God," as we are told in Romans v. 11. This is a thing which the world cannot do, in spite of the fact that the mercy of God is active towards it in connection with the Gospel. When God gave His only-begotten Son He had the world in view, and love to the world was behind the gift. This dispensational reconciliation brings to all the ministry of reconciliation, of which 2 Corinthians v. speaks; and that is not dispensational but intensely vital. Believers are really brought to God in righteousness and love, with every stain and discord removed, and every fear banished for ever.

A STUDY IN LAMENTATIONS.

THE DISMAL BOOK.

2. THE BRIGHT SIDE.

(All references are to chapter three unless otherwise stated).

NOTHING in the Bible is wholly dismal. When the blackest cloud has been seen there is always a momentary break while the sun shines through. For the crucifixion there must be the Resurrection—and for every lesser calamity there is a corresponding triumph.

Verse 21 of chapter iii. of Lamentations is where the cloud breaks for a moment.

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope!”

Jeremiah's stay in the midst of his despair is his conviction that, however deep the distress, God's mercy still compasses us about, saving from final and irretrievable ruin, and flecking the night sky's hopelessness with a multitude of compassions and indications of His faithfulness, like stars of hope. For the soul whose hope is not in circumstances of good or ill fortune, but in God and His ultimate purposes, there can never be despair. Read the clear, lovely words of 21 to 24: see how they wrap the soul about with comfort and strength. Here is the kernel of the book—the climax to which the long sad complaint has been leading.

Perhaps we may call this first lesson—"The discovery that God cares." That discovery is a rock upon which we can safely build.

The next three verses carry the point still further. They show us the attitude of mind and heart with which we must face the problem of pain and sorrow. It is a double state of mind. First we must learn to **wait**. It is a useless thing to struggle and strive against the flowing tide of circumstance, and we must learn to wait while the tide comes in to its highest point, confident that it will ebb again. While "waiting," we must **seek** the Lord. Sorrow is the very time when our seeking of God's face meets with the highest success, because in the whirl of success our hearts are too busy and scattered to enter much into the meaning of God's will, and it is not until sickness or stress bring us to a concentration of mind that we begin to think seriously about the deepest things.

In the depths of spiritual or emotional distress Jeremiah uses the word "good" three times. In that very difficult experience the soul of a man sees more clearly than ever before that the Lord is **good**. His insight approves that it is **good** to wait quietly for God, and it is **good** that, while young, the pressure should be felt, so that the soul may be strengthened and matured to the rich joy of ripe experience.

May we put it the other way round to bring out the point of it? "It is bad for a man to hustle

and bustle trying to wrest 'salvation' out of the hands of God." "It is bad for a young man (or woman) to shun life's responsibilities and pain. If he does, they will take him unawares and wreck his later life."

Here we approach the great secret of the matter, the sovereign technique for facing life. An eminent writer on nervous and mental troubles has only last year gone into the matter from the medical point of view at great length—and here it lies in three verses (28 to 30) in a book written before Christ was born.

The writer to whom I refer contrasted the healthy way of facing life's rough places, with the neurotic way. The former fights with life like an expert in jiu-jitsu. The latter tries to face it by force, like a boxer in a panic aiming wind-mill blows in blind fury. In jiu-jitsu, the art of the game is to win by yielding; using the opponent's very strength to beat him, and it is well known that the stronger the opponent the greater injury he will suffer because his strength is deflected against himself.

Now see how this "yielding" technique is described in verse 30. We are to **permit** life's adverse forces to batter upon us knowing that when the fury has abated we shall find ourselves victorious. See how magnificently it is exemplified in the Cross. Our Lord gave His back to the smiter and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair. He bowed to the storm of judgment, and now He is highly exalted, and we love to think

of Him as the Conqueror of that which seemed to conquer Him.

It is worth watching how some people use the brute-force method against life, to see how the more they struggle the more they are caught—the more they repudiate life's knocks, the more sorely are they battered about.

Verses 31, 32 and 33 let us into the great hope which makes this yielding technique feasible. It lies in the fact that we know that God will ultimately bless, and that every stroke of fortune is necessary for our blessing. How easy it is to write or read that, but how hard to live in the light of it!

The golden purpose of sorrow is to make us honest with ourselves and with God so that we detect our natural rebelliousness and turn to God with utter simplicity of heart (verses 40 to 42).

Just one word more. We cannot leave this hasty study of Lamentations without referring to verses 55 to 57.

It is in the low (R.V. lowest) dungeon of circumstance that our calling upon God is most wonderfully answered. Have you ever felt as if you were in the lowest dungeon? It may have been a dungeon of your sense of sinfulness, or a dungeon of doubt or a dungeon of crushing experience. Take courage in the lowest dungeon and call upon God. He hears us and draws near and says (with such authority that our hearts respond in a moment) "FEAR NOT."

The book ends with a note of despair despite all these glorious liberating truths. We can only imagine that Jeremiah, despite his faith, was still in the maelstrom of his grief. There is no cheap and easy escape from our problems, but let us affirm with confident hearts the words of chapter v. 19 and 21: "Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; Thy throne from generation to generation . . . Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old."

SETON POLLOCK.

A FACT TO BE FACED.

IT is very difficult for people to be convinced of faults which go with the grain of their character. If a man of tender feelings says an unkind word, it rankles in his conscience for days; while a hard man inflicts a score of wounds in a day on his family and dependants, and never has a reproachful pang. A truthful person will not be easy, until he has repaired an accidental inaccuracy, whereas a man who habitually boasts and exaggerates tells a hundred lies, or conveys any number of false impressions in a day, and never feels a weight on his conscience.

I suppose a miser who has been grinding as much as he can out of every one all his days, living for nothing but to make his hoards more

and more, and safer and safer, lies down at night pitying his poor, extravagant brother, and thanking God that he has not the love of money which led his poor tempted neighbour to forge a bank-note.

It is easy to repent of the sins which some temptation has led us into **against** the current of our character; but it does seem as if nothing but Almighty power could make us feel the sins which go **with** the current of our characters, and yet this is exactly what constitutes **our sin**, and only One Voice can awaken souls to this fact.

(EXTRACTED).

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked [or lawless] way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm cxxxix. 23-24).

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(I JOHN iv. 1—14).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

AMONGST the wiles of the devil imitation takes a foremost place. In the Old Testament, for instance, we find that when God wrought powerfully through Moses in the presence of Pharaoh, the Egyptian magicians imitated what was done as far as they could, in order to nullify

the impressions made on the mind of the king. Again we find that when the sanctuary had been established in Jerusalem with its ordinances of divine service, Jeroboam easily diverted the ten tribes from it by the simple device of establishing an imitation religion connected with Bethel and Dan. The early verses of chapter iv. indicate that very soon after the faith had been delivered to the saints through the chosen apostles, Satan commenced his deceptive imitations.

The Apostle John, the last of the apostolic band, lived long enough to see that, "many false prophets are gone out into the world." The Apostles whether by word of mouth or in writing, had communicated the inspired Word of God, manifestly moved and borne along by the Holy Spirit. Before long other men rose up. They too spoke as those borne along by the power of a spirit, and consequently their utterances also were inspired. But what they said was very different from what the apostles had taught, though they claimed that their teachings were just an improvement and amplification of their words. It all sounded rather attractive, and hence was seductive. But was it true? How could the matter be tested?

We have before remarked upon the way in which all pretension is tested in this epistle, and it is evident that the more we are faced by imitations the more necessary tests become. The question now is a supremely important one. How may we distinguish between "the Spirit of God" and the "spirit of Antichrist;" between "the spirit of

truth and the spirit of error"? The spirits have to be tried: but what is the criterion by which we may try them?

In the first place, Christ Himself and the truth concerning Him is the test. Does the spirit confess Jesus Christ, come in flesh? If so, He is of God: if not so, he is not of God. This is a very simple test, and if we meditate thereon a little we shall see that it is a very profound one.

We cannot rightly speak of ourselves as having "**come** in flesh." Long ago the Lord had said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Gen. vi. 3). We **are** flesh. And even apart from this consideration we should not speak of ourselves as coming in flesh, for we had **no** previous existence, and we had **no** option as to how we came. To be of the human race we **must** be found here in bodies of flesh and blood. Now it was otherwise with Jesus Christ. He had previous existence, and He might have come in other modes. Indeed we believe He did appear in other modes in Old Testament days; as "The Angel of the Lord," for instance.

The truth is that Jesus Christ—that Person, the eternal Son of God—came in flesh, so that He was a true Man amongst us. The antichristian teachers did not confess this. They were not sound as regards His Deity, as verse 22 of chapter ii. showed us. They were not sound as to His Manhood, as this verse shows. History informs us that one of the first heresies to afflict the early

church is that which John is meeting here. It is known as Docetism: the teaching being that, as matter was evil, Christ could not have had a true human body of flesh and blood; it must only have **appeared** to be such, being in reality a phantasy. Another form of error as to Christ's humanity also troubled the early church, when men arose who recognized that the seat of sin is found in the spiritual part of man rather than in his material body. These denied the spiritual part of His humanity, while emphasizing the reality of His flesh; but they rose up a century or two later and there is no reference to them here.

Jesus Christ came in flesh of a perfectly holy kind, and hence there was in Him that wonderful manifestation of eternal life, of which the first verse of the epistle speaks. To deny His coming in flesh would mean the denial not only of the possibility of this clear manifestation amongst us, but also of there being in Him the Divine fulness to be manifested. But the matter is put here even more strongly. We need not wait for a flat denial; for even non-confession of the truth betrays the spirit of antichrist.

In verse 4 we have the contrast between the saints (the word here is again that for the whole family of God, and not the babes merely) and these false prophets. The one "of God," the other "of the world." In chapter ii. we saw how the Father and the world are wholly in contrast: here we find that there are two families springing

respectively from these two sources; and they are as much in contrast as the sources whence they spring. Moreover there is in each an indwelling power, though the mode of indwelling is doubtless different. There is "He that is in you," and "he that is in the world." The children of God have the Anointing of the Spirit of God. As for the world it "lies in the wicked one," (v. 19. New Trans.)—the wicked one is consequently in it.

What an immense encouragement it is to know that the Spirit of God is greater than all the power of the adversary. Herein lies the secret of the marvel that the faith of Christ has survived. We have the best authority for the statement that, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." We are not a wise folk judged by ordinary standards; and that, alas, does not exhaust the story: there has been much unfaithfulness. The greatest and heaviest blows against the faith have been given by those who have professed it. Yet the faith has survived all the blows against it struck **by** unfaithful believers, as well as all the blows aimed by the wicked one **at** faithful believers, by reason of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The point here however is that by Him we overcome the seductive teachings of the antichrists. In chapter ii. we saw that we overcome them by the Word of God abiding in us. But then of course it only does abide in us as we are governed by the Spirit of God. The Spirit and the Word go together.

The first five words of verse 5, "They are of the world," stand in sharp contrast not only with what goes before, "**Ye** are of God," but with what follows in the next verse, "**We** are of God." The "We" here evidently means the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament, through whom the Word of God has reached us; since the contrast lies in the utterances of the one and of the other. Those who are of the world speak of the world; that is, the world characterizes both their own origin and their utterances. Those who are of God speak as of God.

This fact presents us with another criterion by which we may test teachings that reach us. The false teachings are "of the world," for they proceed from worldly principles and bear a worldly stamp. As a result worldly folk enjoy them, understand them and receive them. They are flattered and confirmed in their worldliness, instead of being disturbed and dislodged from it.

The apostolic teaching was of another order altogether. They spoke of and from God, and the power and authority of their utterances was at once recognized by those who were of God and knew God, whilst those not of God did not hear them.

Here we have a third criterion. Do those who come to us as teachers of truth accept the authority of the Apostles, or do they not? If they do not "hear" them, we may safely assume they are not of God.

This test, you observe, is the same as that stated by the Lord as applying to Himself, in John x. "My sheep hear My voice," whereas those who were not His sheep did not believe. When the Lord was on earth those who were of God were marked by hearing **Him** with the hearing of faith. When the Apostles were here those who were of God were marked by hearing **them** with the hearing of faith. And now that they are gone, we have the Apostolic writings, the inspired Scriptures; and those who are of God are marked by hearing **them** with the hearing of faith. The mode of communication may be different, but what is communicated is in each case of equal authority. An earthly king may speak in person, or he may speak through the lips of his duly accredited ministers, or they may commit the message to writing: there is difference as to the mode, but none as to the authority of the message.

It is well to be quite clear on this point for there are not wanting to-day those who discredit the Apostles and their inspired writings under the specious cry of "Back to Christ!" They begin by claiming that only His direct utterances must be quoted as having full authority; but they do not long stop there. There is no secure foothold in such a position, for every recorded utterance of His has been reported to us through apostolic or prophetic writings. Hence they soon reach the position of only "hearing" so much of His reported teaching as they wish. They end therefore, by believing in their own powers of discrim-

ination and selection, that is to say, **in themselves**. How exceedingly dull and commonplace is all this high-sounding modern infidelity when subjected to a little analysis!

We may indeed be thankful that God overruled the uprising of these early heresies to the giving us of these simple tests, which are still as valid as in the day they were first propounded. Hereby indeed we may know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. If we are wise, when confronted with doubtful teachings, we will at once apply these tests instead of leaning to our own understanding.

With verse 7 we come back again to the main line of the Apostle's thought. It is necessary now and again to digress in order to guard against evil; but we are mainly concerned with that which is good and of God. Now love is of God, and as children of God our first business is to love one another. Thereby we display the Divine nature, and make it evident that we are born of God and know Him. He who is born of God loves after this divine sort. He who loves after this divine sort is for a certainty born of God. Both statements are true; the only difference being that in the former we reason from the source to the outflow, and in the latter back from the outflow to the source.

On the contrary, he who does not love after this divine sort does not know God; for the simple reason that God is love. At the outset of the epistle we heard that God is light. That fact lies

at the very basis of all that has come to light in Christ. In our chapter we get twice over the companion fact that God is love. On the surface there may seem to be a clash between the two. Sin was introduced by the devil in order that there might be a clash between light and love in God. The whole of Scripture may be regarded as the working out of the answer of God to the challenge—the story of the wonderful way in which both light and love move harmoniously to the establishment of His glory and our blessing.

God is love. This is indeed a dogmatic statement; and if men seek confirmation of this dogma, in the sinful and disordered world that surrounds them, they will fail to find it. We must look in the right direction. There has been a perfect manifestation of God's love, but only in one direction, as verses 9 and 10 so plainly state. The sending of the Son, and all that was therein involved, completely manifested it. The Son was sent into the world, where we lay under the weight of our sins spiritually dead. He came with the object that we might live through Him, and to this end He made propitiation for our sins. Life was the objective, but if we were to live propitiation was a necessity.

Life and propitiation—two immense things! When just converted the second mainly engages our thoughts. We have been convicted of our sins and know how we needed forgiveness; and how great has been the relief of discovering the propitiation wrought by the Son, who was sent

into the world as ~~the~~ gift of God's love. Then presently we begin to realize that propitiation has opened the door to life for us, and that God's purpose is that we should live through His Sent One.

Here the great fact is stated in a general way: we live **through** Him, for He has brought it to pass. In the next chapter we find that the life we have is **in** Him: it is because we are in Him that we have it. In Galatians ii. 20, we find that in a practical way our life is **by** Him, for He is the object of it. In 1 Thessalonians v. 10, we learn that our life is to be **with** Him for ever. We may well be filled with praise and thanksgiving that He came into the world that we might live through Him; especially when we consider what His coming involved both to Him and to the God who sent Him. It was love indeed!

This marvellous love imposes upon us an obligation. The word which indicates obligation is, "ought." It is not that we **may**, or even that we **do**, but that we **ought** to love one another as having received such great love. Let us not shirk the thought of obligation. It is not legal obligation; something which must be, if we are to establish our standing before God. It is an obligation based upon grace, and upon the nature which is ours as born of God. As children of God it is our nature to love, but that does not alter the fact that we ought to do it.

We ought to love one another because, as verse 12 says, the love of God is thereby perfected as

regards us. The love has flowed forth upon us, and its end is completely, or perfectly, reached when it flows out through each saint to all the rest. Then indeed God dwells or abides in us—for He is love—and He can be seen as reflected in His children. This verse should be compared with John i. 18. Both verses begin in the same way. In the Gospel, God is declared in the Son. In the Epistle, He is to be seen as dwelling in His children. That is clearly inferred in this verse.

If God dwells in us He will certainly be seen in us, but our knowledge of His dwelling is by the Spirit which He has given us. Compare verse 13 with the last verse of the previous chapter. There it was His abiding in us. Here it is our abiding in Him and He in us. But in both cases our knowing these great realities is said to be by the Spirit having been given to us. Being born of Him, we have His nature which is love; but in addition to this He has given us of His Spirit; and by this anointing we know that we abide in Him and He in us.

Moreover the Spirit is the power for testimony, and hence that which is the characteristic testimony of the children of God comes before us in verse 14. The “we” of this verse may again be, primarily at least, the Apostles. They had seen Him as the Saviour of the world in a way that the rest of us have not. But in a secondary sense we can all say it. We know that the Father sent the Son with no smaller design in view than that. It has often been pointed out how the Gospel of

John leads our thoughts away from everything that was limited to the Jew to the larger designs connected with the world.

In John i., for instance, He is announced not as the Deliverer of Israel, but as the One who "taketh away the sin of **the world.**" In John iv. the Samaritans hear Him for themselves and discover Him to be "the Christ, the Saviour of **the world.**" Now, what they discovered we all have discovered; and having made the discovery, it has become the theme of our testimony.

How wonderful is the sequence of all that we have been considering. God is love. His love was manifested in the sending of the Son. We live through Him. The Spirit is given to us. We dwell in God. God dwells in us. We love one another. God, who is invisible, is reflected by us before men. We testify to men that the Father has sent the Son as the Saviour of the world. All hinges upon love—Divine love—made known to us and now operative in us.

And the more love is operative in us, the more effective will be our testimony to the Saviour of the world.

F. B. HOLE.

If you want to be rich, Give!
If you want to be poor, Grasp!
If you want abundance, Scatter!
If you want to be needy, Hoard!

See Proverbs xi. 24-25.

“WORK . . . LABOUR . . . PATIENCE”

FOR three sabbath days the Apostle Paul preached in the synagogue at Thessalonica.

A great stir ensued. Jews were converted, a great multitude of pagan Greeks were reached and not a few of the leading women of the city. Persecution broke out, and Paul and Silas were obliged to leave these young converts all too soon.

He showed his solicitude for them by writing two letters. They evidently were out-and-out converts for he praises them. He speaks of

“Your work of faith, and labour of love,
and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus
Christ, in the sight of God and our Father”

(1 Thessalonians i. 3).

Thessalonica was a very young assembly. It was made up, as we have seen, of recent converts—Jews, pagans, chief women of the place. But young as it was, immature as they must have been as babes in Christ, they possessed the vital **spring** that led to their Christian activity. **Faith** made them work; **love** made them labour, **hope** made them patient—

“Work . . . Labour . . . Patience.”

How different alas! was the case of the well-established, highly gifted Ephesian assembly.

They were the recipients of wonderful teaching, as witness Paul's epistle to them. If we can count on the dates at the heading of the epistles, Paul wrote to them in A.D. 64 and the Apostle John addressed the angel of the church in Ephesus in his "Revelation of Jesus Christ" in A.D. 96. Thirty-two years had rolled by, and alas! instead of increase in the things of God, we read

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience" (Revelation ii. 2).

What a contrast to 1 Thessalonians i. 3! There the **spring** of the activity is happily mentioned; here in Revelation ii. 2, we find an ominous silence as to the spring of it all. Why is this? Because Ephesus had left her first love. Here is the first mark of declension in the church, as it is the first mark of declension in an individual. It does not say that faith or hope waned, but love.

1 Corinthians xiii., the great love chapter says in closing, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Why should love have this pre-eminence? God is called "the God of hope" (Romans xv. 13), that is, hope is a characteristic feature of God; but 1 John iv. 16 tells us "God is love," that is, love is His very nature.

Moreover, faith will turn to sight, hope to glad realization; then faith and hope will cease, but "love never faileth." Prophecy will fail, for it will be fulfilled, and when the last prophecy is fulfilled, prophecy will fail, that is, cease.

Tongues will cease, for there will be only one vehicle of speech in the eternal state. Nationality, confusion of tongues, Babel, will cease in the triumph of God's counsels in grace. Knowledge, that is **relative** knowledge, will vanish away in the fulness of knowledge that all will share in the coming day. One will not know more than another. "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians xiii. 12).

"When faith and hope shall cease,
And love abide alone,
Then shall we see Him face to face,
And know as known."

But this absence of the **spring** of Christian activity in the address to the Ephesian church (Revelation ii. 1-7) is serious. It is a challenge to every one of us. We live in Laodicean days—days when Ephesian departure has become full blown.

1 Corinthians xiii. tells us how much we may do, and yet be wanting the true spring of Christian activity, how we may appear to be as active as ever, and yet be altogether missing the mark. You may speak beautifully—have "the tongues of men and of angels"—your theology may be sound, your language convincing and clear, and yet no result. Nothing but empty noise—"sounding brass"—"tinkling cymbal"—if love is not the spring.

We may have wonderful knowledge, our Bibles may be worn to rags, our notes and comments

numerous, correct and illuminating; we may be able to prophecy, to look with unerring eye into the future and unfold its mysteries; we may be able to remove mountains, to surmount the impossible, and yet if love is lacking be nothing. "God **is** love." If love were lacking in Him He would cease to be God. So if love is lacking in us, whatever our knowledge and power may be, we are nothing.

We may be self-denying, ascetic, ready to immure ourselves behind high walls or live a life of complete self-abnegation, strip ourselves of all our possessions to feed the poor, and even give our body to be burned, but it profits nothing—nothing, if love is lacking. "Love never faileth."

Now all this is a staggering challenge to the writer and the reader—a challenge we cannot escape. How far is the true vital spring of Christian activity characterizing us?

Perhaps a poignant example of declension on these lines is seen in the mission field. There are earnest Christian people, who have been undermined by Modernism, and lost their grip on the Fundamentals, because they have lost their grip on Christ.

For instance, travelling between India and Australia we saw two young ladies, and happening to get into conversation, learned to our great surprise that they were missionaries in a Mahomedan country. The moment something vital and fundamental to Christianity was mentioned

there was an ominous silence, an unspoken resentment. They talked of education, of raising the status of the people among whom they worked, but nothing of salvation and eternal life. They left the sad impression that they had given up evangelization for education: had given up the fundamentals of the Christian faith and were content to be mere social reformers, missionaries for this life, but not for the life to come.

A little later one saw with sadness one of them in scanty evening dress, leaving a large part of her body shamelessly uncovered, sitting in a deck chair, leisurely smoking a cigarette, talking to a man of the world. As a woman in many ways she may have been an estimable person, but as a missionary she was an utter disgrace to the name. On the same journey we came across another missionary, who essayed to present Christianity to Mahommedans, Hindus, Parsees, Sikhs, etc. All he did was to press the golden rule—do to others as you would be done by—as the essence of Christianity. A Mahommedan or Hindu or any other pagan might press this equally. This so-called Christian missionary was leaving out the very vital essence of Christianity—"Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He divorced the Sermon on the Mount from the essentials of Christianity, and by it he was deceiving the very heathen to whom he set out to be a missionary. No wonder Laodicea is to be spued out of the mouth of Him who is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God."

These are illustrations of how there may be activity, but the **spring** absent. Alas! they could be duplicated by the thousand.

Works without true faith, labours without true love; patience without true hope, and what then? Spued out of Christ's mouth is the doom of Laodiceanism.

May each and all be concerned about themselves in relation to this Laodicean day.

"Work . . . Labour . . . Patience"

Shall we earnestly seek to fill this up in the only way in which "work, labour, patience" is of any avail? God grant it. "Work of **faith**, labour of **love**, patience of **hope**."

A. J. POLLOCK.

CLOVEN TONGUES.

(Acts ii. 1—11).

IT will greatly enhance the grace of this lovely passage of scripture to bear in mind what it was that rendered the cloven tongues necessary. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis, we have the inspired record of the first grand effort of the children of men to establish themselves in the earth—to form a great association, and make themselves a name. And all this, be it remembered, without God. His name is never mentioned. He was not to form any part of this proud and popular scheme. He was entirely shut out. It was not

a dwelling place for God that was to be erected on the plain of Shinar. It was a city for man—a centre round which men were to gather.

Such was the object of the children of men, as they stood together on the plain of Shinar. It was not, as some have imagined, to escape another deluge. There is not a shadow of foundation in the passage for any such idea. Here are their words, "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; **and let us make us a name**, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." There is no thought here of escaping another flood. It is sheer imagination without any scripture basis. The object is as plain as possible. It is precisely similar to all those great confederacies, associations, or masses of flesh that have been formed on the earth from that day to this. The Shinar Association could vie with any association of modern times, both in its principle and object.

But it proved to be a Babel. Jehovah wrote confusion upon it. He divided their tongues and scattered them abroad, whether they would or not. In a word, divided tongues were sent as the expression of divine judgment upon this first great human association. This is a solemn and weighty fact. An association without God, no matter what its object, is really nothing but a mass of flesh, based on pride, and ending in hopeless confusion. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces" (Isa.

viii. 9). So much for all human associations. May we learn to keep clear of them! May we adhere to that one divine association, namely, the Church of the living God, of which a risen Christ in glory is the living Head, the Holy Ghost the living Guide, and the Word of God the living Charter!

It was to gather this blessed assembly that the cloven tongues were sent, in grace, on the day of Pentecost. No sooner had the Lord Jesus Christ taken His seat at the right hand of power, amid the brightness of heaven's majesty, than He sent down the Holy Ghost to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the ears of His very murderers. And, inasmuch as that message of pardon and peace was intended for men of various tongues, so the divine Messenger came down prepared to address each "in his own tongue wherein he was born." The God of all grace made it plain—so plain that it cannot be mistaken—that He desired to make His way to each heart, with the sweet story of grace. Man, on the plain of Shinar, did not want God; but God, on the day of Pentecost, proved that He wanted man. Blessed, for ever, be His holy name! God had sent His Son, and man had just murdered Him; and, now He sends the Holy Ghost to tell man that there is pardon through that very blood which he had shed, for his guilt in shedding it. Matchless, marvellous, overwhelming grace! Oh! that it may subdue our hearts, and bind us to Him who is, at once, its source, its channel, and the power of enjoyment! The grace of God has far out-

topped all the enmity of man. It has proved itself victorious over all the opposition of the human heart, and all the rage of hell.

Thus, then, in Genesis xi. divided tongues were sent in **judgment**. In Acts ii. divided tongues were sent in **grace**. The blessed God of all grace would cause each one to hear of full salvation, and hear of it in those very accents in which his infant ears had hearkened to the earliest whisperings of a mother's love. "His own tongue wherein he was born." It mattered not whether the tongue were soft or harsh, refined or barbarous, the Holy Ghost would use it as the vehicle for conveying the precious message of salvation right home to the poor heart. If divided tongues had once been given to scatter in judgment, they were again to gather in grace; not now round an earthly tower, but round a heavenly Christ; not for the exaltation of man, but for the glory of God.

Now, it is well worthy of notice, that when God was giving the law from Mount Sinai, He spoke only in one tongue and to one people. The law was carefully wrapped up in one language, and deposited in the midst of one nation. Not so the Gospel. When that was the burden, God the Holy Ghost Himself descended from heaven, in cloven tongues, to waft the soul-stirring tidings, far and wide, over the whole world, and convey them "to every creature under heaven" in the very dialect wherein he was born. This is a great moral fact. It comes down upon the heart with

uncommon weight and power. When God was speaking in terms of requirement and prohibition, He confined Himself to one language; but when He was publishing the message of life and salvation, pardon and peace, through the blood of the Lamb, He spoke in every language under heaven. When man's duty was to be declared, God spoke in one dialect; but when God's salvation was to be published, He spoke in every dialect under heaven.

This, surely tells a tale. It declares plainly which is more in harmony with the divine mind, law or grace. Blessed be His Name, He delights in grace. Law and judgment are His strange work. He has pronounced the feet of those that publish the Gospel to be beautiful; whereas, of those who desired to be teachers of the law, He has said, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." Thus His acts and His words discover the bent of His loving heart towards poor unworthy sinners. He has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, to prove His perfect willingness to save and bless; and therefore all who die in their sins will perish without excuse, and those awful words will echo through the regions of eternal gloom, for ever and ever, **"I would, but ye would not!"** Reader, think of this! Are you yet in your sins? If so, we earnestly beseech you to flee, now, from the wrath to come. Accept the message of pardon, now sent to you in your own tongue wherein you were born, and go your way rejoicing.

In conclusion, we might add, that Genesis xi., Acts ii., and Revelation vii. 9—17, form a very lovely group of scriptures. In the first, we see divided tongues sent, in **judgment**; in the second, divided tongues given in **grace**; and in the third, divided tongues gathered in **glory**. Well may we say, “Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul love them.”

FROM *Things New and Old*, 1863.

THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Revelation xxii. 13.

THERE is portrayed to us in this short, yet striking verse that which commands our attention, calls forth our praise and bows us in worship.

These things are mentioned as descriptive of some of the glories of Him who has captivated our hearts and won them for God—Jesus. Precious name! embracing as it does His down-stooping grace and path of infinite perfection, of complete submission to and concert with, the will of God, of devotion to the Father and superlative grace to men. Well said were those adoring words:—

“Thy name encircles every grace
Which God as man could shew;
There only could He fully trace
A life divine below.”

We may rejoice in the fragrance of that name which "is as ointment poured forth," and delight to contemplate some of the higher mysteries of the fame of Him who bore it.

"Alpha and Omega" the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet indicate the speaking of God, bringing before us the Glory of the Lord as the Word. In the beginning He was with God—a distinct Person, and was God: thus He was fully competent to give expression to all the mind of God.

Every communication of God to the creature was through the Word. When the prophets in times past spoke, it was by the Spirit of Christ, which was in them (1 Pet. i. 11). And in these last days God has fully spoken in Him. So we see that as the "Alpha and Omega" Christ is the One in whom God is declared.

The Lord Jesus it is by whom God has been revealed in the fulness of His nature as Light and Love. The eternal life too into which believers are introduced—that life which has this distinctive character that it is with the Father, has been manifested in Him. All this blessedness has been brought to man as revealed by Him.

If we contemplate the holiness of God which necessitates the removal in judgment of everything that is contrary to it, this too finds its expression in the Alpha and the Omega, for Revelation xix. 11-20 gives us a glimpse of heaven opened that we might behold One who is faithful

and true, who judges and makes war in righteousness, who comes out to smite the nations and to tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty, and His name is called the Word of God.

Whether then God is expressed in grace or judgment He is so in Him who is the Eternal Word, the Alpha and Omega, the first word and the last word of all that He has to say.

“The Beginning and the End.”

This conveys the thought of activity or work. The work of Creation is ascribed to the Son. The universe sprang into being by the word of His power. “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him” (Col. i. 16).

He is the beginning, the Originator of every created thing. The creation of man was the outcome of divine counsel. God, Elohim—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—equally participated therein, but the act of creating is attributed to the Son. He is the Beginning and He is the End. He is the object for whom all are created—He is yet going to be honoured throughout the bounds of the creation.

As to the new creation He is the Beginning who is the First-born from among the dead and the end in view is that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

Hear Him in John iv., "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." In John xvii. anticipative of the work of redemption being accomplished . . . "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." On the Cross "It is finished." Creation, Redemption and Judgment are the work of Him who is the Son—the Beginning and the End.

"The First and the Last."

The work of God, the speaking of God, have come to fruition in Him; but here we come to that which sets Him forth in all the glory and majesty of His Being. He is the great **"I Am"** of Isaiah xli. 4; xlv. 6, and John viii. 58. What He is in His own Person, is conveyed to us in the expression **"the First and the Last."** As the One who entered man's estate in lowly guise, the One in whom God has acted and spoken, the devil has attacked Him and has sought to bring Him, in the estimation of the creature, to the level of the creature.

But no—He is the Christ who is over all **God** blessed for evermore. He is the self-existent Almighty and Eternal one. In Manhood He is addressed in terms of equality by the Father. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. i. 8). The Holy Spirit through the apostle John quotes Isaiah vi. as being directly fulfilled by Him. "These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him" (John xii. 41). This testimony is given to the glory of the Person whom men despise and slight—The Lord Jesus

Christ—The Son become man—The First and the Last.”

And while this was true of Him, as to the glory of His Person, His work and His Word, did He meet with united acclamation? Not at all. John vii. 43, ix. 16 and x. 19 witness that they divided on what He said, what He did, and who He was.

But our eyes being opened, like the man in John ix., being introduced to Him who is the Son of God, we believe and prostrate ourselves in worship at His feet: The Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End, The First and the Last.

“The mention of Thy name shall bow
Our hearts to worship Thee;
The chiefest of ten thousand Thou,
Whose love has set us free.”

N. ANDERSON.

THE PERSON OF THE LORD.

THE Gospel of Luke reveals the Lord to us in His holy manhood. We see Him there the Man, Christ Jesus. Thus it has been taught, and we believe rightly. The whole character of the Gospel bears witness to this. Yet it is instructive and we must take notice of it, that titles are given to Him in the very beginning of it that warn us that though Man, He is different to every other man that ever came

into the world. He is the Son of Man, and the Seed of the woman, most certainly, but He is also the Son of God. And we question whether any other Gospel is more emphatic than Luke's as to the divine titles of the Lord. Let us consider some of these.

Said the angel to Mary, "Thou shalt . . . bring forth a Son, and shalt call His Name JESUS" (i. 31). He was the true Son of His mother; He came into the world "made of a woman" (Gal. iv. 4), but, added the angel, "*He . . . shall be called the Son of the Highest.*" No wonder that Mary enquired as to how such a thing could be. The answer was, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also *that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (i. 35).

When Elizabeth welcomed Mary to her home she greeted her by the surprising title of "the mother of MY LORD" (i. 43). What was it that made her address her young kinswoman like that? We are not told that she had heard of the angel's visit to Mary, then how did she know what lay before her? The answer is that she "was filled with the Holy Ghost" (ver. 41), and she spoke by divine inspiration.

Her husband Zacharias, also, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he addressed his child John saying, "And thou, child, shall

be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of THE LORD to prepare His ways" (verse 76).

To the shepherds who watched their flocks by night the angel announced, "Unto you is born . . . a Saviour, which is CHRIST THE LORD" (ii. 11). And to Simeon, the Holy Ghost revealed that "he should not see death before he had seen the LORD'S CHRIST" (ii. 26). By the same Spirit he came into the Temple, and he took the Child Jesus into his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen THY SALVATION" (ii. 29—30).

The first words that are recorded for us from His own lips, when Mary spoke of Joseph and herself as, "Thy father and I" were, "Wist ye not that I must be about MY FATHER'S BUSINESS" (ii. 49).

But when angels, spirit-filled women, and pious men, had borne witness to Him, the heavens were opened and the Father spoke from the excellent glory, and said, "THOU ART MY BELOVED SON; IN THEE I AM WELL PLEASED" (iii. 22).

J. T. MAWSON.

Every truth has practical consequences, and these are the test of its truth.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 JOHN iv. 15—v. 5).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

WHEN John wrote his epistle it was a matter of common knowledge that a man—Jesus of Nazareth—had appeared in the world and died on the cross. There was no particular need to testify as to that. The testimony that had to be rendered concerned the truth as to **who** He really was and **what** He came to do. Hence we declare that He was the Son, sent of the Father, with the salvation of the world in view. All those who receive the Christian witness believe on Jesus as the Son of God, and confess Him as such. Now, whosoever does so confess Him, “God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

We have before remarked how this word—variously translated as, abide, dwell, remain, continue—characterizes the epistle. In chapter ii., from verse 6 onwards, we have four references to our abiding in Him. There is a fifth reference to this in verse 6 of chapter iii., and a sixth in the last verse of that chapter. But in this sixth reference the corresponding fact of His abiding in us is introduced: and we know that He does abide in us by the Spirit who is given to us.

In chapter iv. this second thought of His abiding in us comes into prominence—verses 12, 13, 15, 16. It is not disconnected from our abiding in Him, but evidently it is the truth now em-

phasized. But the order observed is clear and instructive. We must first be established as to our abiding in Him, and then, as flowing out of that, He abides in us. In these four verses His abiding in us is connected with (1) our loving one another; (2) the gift to us of His Spirit; (3) the confession of Jesus as Son of God; (4) our abiding in love, God Himself being love. He abides in us in order that His character, His love, His truth, may be manifested through us.

We may observe in passing how all this runs parallel with the teaching of the Apostle Paul. We read the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and find, "in Christ" to be that which characterizes everything. We are in Him. Turning to the Epistle to the Colossians, "Christ in you," is the theme. We are in Christ in order that Christ may be in us. There is this difference however: with Paul it is more a question of our standing and our state; with John it is more a question of life and nature.

Another thing worthy of note in our epistle is that when we read of "abiding in Him," the "Him" refers sometimes to Christ and sometimes to God. For instance, in ii. 6, ii. 28, iii. 6, the reference pretty clearly is to Christ. In iii. 24, iv. 13, 15, 16, it is to God. In ii. 24, it is abiding "in the Son and in the Father." In ii. 27, it would be difficult to say which is in view. The whole treatment of this matter here is surely intended to teach us how truly the Son is one with the Father, so that we cannot be in the Son with-

out being in the Father, and we can only be in the Father by being in the Son. For that reason the Son comes first in ii. 24.

But in our verse it is God who is in question. We abide in Him, and He is to abide in us. In the Epistle to the Colossians we are seen as the body of **Christ**, and **He** is to be manifested in us. Here we are the children of **God**, forming His family, deriving from Him our life and nature, hence **He who is Father** is to abide in us, and be displayed. God is love, and he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and the God who is love will be seen as abiding in him.

A wonderful thing this—to be abiding in love! Any kind of vessel, flung into the ocean, and remaining in the ocean, is full of ocean: so the child of God, immersed in the love of God, is filled with it. Depend upon it, this is the thing that is needed if our testimony as to the Father sending the Son is to be effectual. That we testify by word of mouth is necessary and good; but when in addition to this God, in the fulness of His love, is seen as abiding in His children, then the testimony is bound to have effect. A Christian full of the love of God wields a power, which though unconscious is most effective.

In verse 17, “our love” is literally “love with us” as the margin shows. Love has been perfected with us: that is to say, the love of God as regards ourselves has been carried to its full end and climax. And it has been perfected “herein,” or “in this,” referring no doubt to what

has just been stated. He who dwells in God because dwelling in love, and in whom consequently God dwells, must of necessity have boldness in the day of judgment. Indeed he will have boldness as to the day of judgment before it arrives—at the present moment.

It is a most wonderful thing that the love of God should shine upon us at all: but that we should be brought to dwell in it, so that God, who is love, should dwell in us, carries us to the very climax of the story. It means this, that “as He is so are we in this world.” This short statement composed of nine monosyllables is very profound in its meaning. It is perfectly true if we read it in connection with our standing and acceptance before God. But that is an application of it, and not the interpretation of it in its context. When the Son became incarnate, there was found **the perfect Man**, who dwelt in God and in whom God dwelt, whether in His sojourn here, or in His present glory above. And now again we have to say, “Which thing is true in Him and in you” (ii. 8). Here are the children of God, and **they** dwell in God and God in them. They are as He is, and they are that now.

Very marvellous, this climax of love! If we apprehend it, though only in a very small degree, we shall certainly have boldness in the day of judgment. Though that day means the terror of the Lord to those that know not God, it can have no terror for the heart of the one who at the present moment and in this world is dwelling in God, and God dwelling in Him.

This is what verse 18 tells us. There is in truth "no fear in love." This perfect love on God's side—for all proceeds from Him—must of necessity cast out fear with all its torment. It is contemplated however, that there may be found some who entertain fears, whether in regard to the day of judgment or anything else. Such are not made perfect in love. On God's side love has been perfected in regard to us: on our side we may not be made perfect in regard to it. We may quite believe that God loves us, and yet not be so consciously abiding in love that fear finds no place in our hearts.

The love of God, known and enjoyed by us, not only casts all fear out of our hearts but also produces love by way of a response to itself. We have no capacity for love of a divine sort apart from the inflow of the love of God. In this matter we are only like tiny cisterns. He is the ever-flowing Fountain. Brought into connection with the Fountain it is possible for love to flow forth from us.

We are warned by John, in verse 20, that we must be practical in this matter. A man may say, "I love God," a general sort of way. He may even say it in a highly elaborated style: he may address God as though in the spirit of worship, expressing beautiful thoughts and using endearing words. Still, it must all be tested; for God is unseen, and to some active minds beautiful thoughts and words come easily and cheaply. What will test the genuineness of such a profession as this?

Why, there is the brother who can be seen! If I myself am born of God, every other who is also born of God is a brother to me. The God whom I cannot see is presented to me in the one who is begotten of Him, this brother whom I can see. That being so, the test propounded by John's question is quite irresistible—"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" The same test is stated in a positive and dogmatic way in the first verse of the next chapter, "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him."

This is the third time in this comparatively short epistle that this matter of the believer's attitude towards his brother has come up. In chapter ii., verses 9—11 were occupied with it; in chapter iii., verses 10—23. So it is evidently a matter of very great importance. We deduce this not only from the amount of space that is given to it, but from the fact that again in verse 21 of our chapter it is spoken of as a commandment. That we should love one another as brethren is not only the **message** "that ye heard from the beginning," (iii. 11), but "His [God's] **commandment**, . . . as He [His Son Jesus Christ] gave us **commandment**," (iii. 23). It is the commandment of the Lord Jesus ratified and endorsed by God. A commandment therefore of the utmost solemnity.

The sad history of the church shows how much it has been needed. Far more dishonour to the

Name of God, and disaster to the saints, has been brought about by dissension, and even hatred, within the Christian circle than by all the opposition, and even persecution, from the world without. Had love been in active exercise with us, we should not have escaped difficulties but we should have met them in a different spirit, and instead of being defeated by them we should have prevailed. Are we not told elsewhere that "Love never faileth"?

When we contemplate the responsibilities which are ours in connection with our brethren, we are always apt, if the flesh prevails with us, to fall back upon Cain's question, asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Not exactly his **keeper** perhaps, but we certainly are to be his **helper** in the spirit of love. We are also apt to fall back upon a question similar to the one asked by the lawyer in Luke x. Wishing to justify himself, he asked, "And who is my **neighbour**?" We may ask, "And who is my **brother**?" The answer to this question is given to us in very direct fashion in the opening words of chapter v. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." So then we have to recognize as our brother every one that believes in Jesus as the Christ, whoever he may be. There can be no picking and choosing.

Many of these believers, who are born of God, may not appeal to us in the slightest degree upon a natural basis. By upbringing and habits we may have very little in common; moreover we may not see eye to eye in many matters connected

with the things of God. Now these are just the ones to put us to the test. Are we at liberty to disclaim all interest in them, and pass by on the other side? We are not. If I love the brother who is nice and agreeable to me I am only doing what anybody might do. "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matt. v. 46). If I love my brother because he is begotten of God, even though he be not nice and agreeable to me, I am displaying the love which is the nature of God Himself. And nothing is greater than that.

Verse 2 seems to sum the matter up in telling us that we know that we love the children of God when we love God and walk in obedience. The **love** of God **moves** us to love His children, and the **commandment** of God **enjoins** us to love His children. Then for a certainty when we **do** love God and keep His commandments, we **do** love His children. Moreover love and obedience go together, as we have previously seen in this epistle, so that it is impossible to love Him without being obedient to Him.

Perhaps we have seen before now a child full of apparent love for the mother—"Oh, mother I do love you!" followed by many hugs and kisses. And yet within five minutes mother has given the child directions which slightly cross its wishes, and what an outburst of anger and disobedience has ensued! The onlookers know how to appraise the "love" that was so loudly protested a few minutes before. It is worth exactly

—nothing. Well, let us remember that “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.”

The child may have found its mother’s demand to be grievous in some small degree, as keeping it from its play. If we stray into ways of disobedience we have not even that excuse, for, “His commandments are not grievous.” What He enjoins is in exact keeping with love, which is the Divine nature. And we possess that nature, if indeed we are begotten of God.

It would indeed be grievous if we were commanded that which is totally opposed to our natures—just as it would be for a dog to eat hay, or a horse to eat meat. The law of Moses brought “heavy burdens and grievous to be borne,” but that was because it was given to men in the flesh. We have received commandments, but we have also receive a new nature which delights in the things commanded; and this makes all the difference. John’s word here is corroborated by Paul when he says, “God . . . worketh in you both to **will** and to **do** of His good pleasure” (Phil. ii. 13). James also corroborates in speaking of “the perfect law of **liberty**” (Jas. i. 25).

We gladly recognize every true believer as our brother, inasmuch as he is begotten of God. Now, in verse 4 we discover that another feature marks him—he overcomes the world. Moreover, this victory over the world is connected with our faith. “Faith” here, we believe, is not merely that spiritual faculty in us which sees and receives the truth, but also the truth which we receive—the

Christian faith. The very essence of that faith is that Jesus is the Son of God, as verse 5 shows us.

Now, see the point at which we have arrived. We have had before us the Christian circle, the family of God, composed of those who have been begotten of Him. God is love, and hence those begotten of Him share His nature, and dwell in His love. Abiding in Him, He abides in them, and they love one another and thus keep His commandments. But also they overcome the world, instead of being overcome by the world. Though they pass through the world, the family of God are **separated** from the world and **superior** to it.

The secret of the overcoming is twofold. First, the Divine work wrought **in** the saints. Second, the faith of Jesus as the Son of God, presented as an Object **to** us, and to be received **by** us in faith.

In verse 14 of chapter ii., we found that overcoming "the wicked one" was possible for those born of God. In verse 9 of chapter iii., that the one born of God "doth not commit sin." Now we have it that the one born of God overcomes the world. So the fact really is that this Divine begetting ensures victory over the devil, the flesh and the world.

But another element enters into the question. Not what is done in us, but what is set before us in the Gospel. Jesus is the Son of God. He was not merely the greatest of the prophets, to bring in an order of things on this earth to which the

prophets had looked forward. He was the Son in the bosom of the Father, and He made known **heavenly things lying far outside and above this world.** Let faith once lay hold of **that**, and the world loses its attraction, and can be laid aside as a very little thing. He who is born of God, and lives in the faith of Jesus as the Son of God, cannot be captured by the world. He overcomes it.

Of course in all this we are still viewing things abstractly. We are looking at things according to their fundamental nature, and for the moment eliminating from our minds other considerations connected with our present state down here, which would introduce qualifying clauses. It is of great value to view things in this abstract way, for thereby we are instructed in the true nature of things, and see things as God sees them. Moreover we are seeing things as they will be displayed in the day to come when God has finished His work with us, for He "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6).

If it be a question of our realized state to-day, how far are we from what we have been considering! How little do we dwell in love, and consequently dwell in God, and God in us! Let us be honest and acknowledge it; while at the same time we maintain the standard, and judge ourselves by it. This will contribute to our spiritual health and fruitfulness.

F. B. HOLE.

SALVATION.

WE now come to a word of very large meaning, so large indeed that it may be used in a sense that covers other gospel words such as, justification, redemption, reconciliation. An instance of the large meaning which may be attached to it is found in Hebrews ii. 3, where the mighty intervention of God on man's behalf, which first began to be spoken by the Lord Himself, is spoken of as "so great **salvation.**" In Acts xiii. 26, the Apostle Paul speaks of "the word of this **salvation,**" using the term in just the same broad sense. So also in Ephesians i. 13, the whole deliverance which has reached us, in all its parts, is summed up in that one word. The Gospel which announces that mighty deliverance is, "the Gospel of our **salvation.**"

Salvation is largely spoken of in both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament it is nearly always salvation from **enemies** that is before us, as Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, stated. In his prophecy he declared that the holy prophets, raised up since the world began, had said that Israel should be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all that hate them. (See Luke i. 70, 71). The New Testament in its very first chapter speaks of Jesus

saving "His people from their **sins**" (Matt. i. 21). This at once lifts the whole matter on to a much higher platform.

But whether in the Old or the New the very fact that salvation is offered infers that those to whom it is offered are in **peril** of some sort: they are in danger of perishing. Indeed in 1 Corinthians i. 18, the contrast is drawn between "them that **perish**, and "us, which are **saved**;" and the same contrast in almost exactly the same words appears again in 2 Corinthians ii. 15. Again we read, "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was **lost**" (Luke xix. 10). "Lord save us: we perish," was the cry of the disciples when in the storm on the lake of Galilee. It was only a matter of temporal deliverance, but then it was only in view of temporal danger. Salvation and perishing are clearly directly opposed as to their meaning.

As guilty, we need forgiveness. As under condemnation, we need justification. As having lapsed into bondage, we need redemption. As enemies in our minds by wicked works, utterly alienated from God, we need reconciliation. As lost and perishing, it is salvation we need.

When we considered ourselves as guilty or condemned, we had a perfectly crisp and definite thought before our minds. We saw ourselves arraigned at the bar of God. We stood, as it were, in a criminal court, charged with our sins. The thought was equally definite when we thought of ourselves as being in bondage to sin and Satan,

or as being alienated from God. Sin now appeared to us as a taskmaster on the one hand, and as a dark cloud, shutting us out from God, on the other.

But now we have to consider ourselves as lost, as threatened by innumerable dangers both present and future, and consequently in danger of perishing. We cannot deal with this matter in quite the same crisp way. But what we have lost in definiteness we have more than made up in largeness and breadth of thought. God's salvation is a deliverance from **every peril which in the past or present or future could possibly threaten us.**

Still, though there is this comprehensiveness of meaning about the word, we must not miss the fact that it always carries the thought of deliverance from peril; and inasmuch as sin lies at the root of every peril that threatens us, the New Testament very appropriately opens with salvation from **sins**. This salvation is not merely from the penalty of sins, but from the power of sins, and even from the love of them. The Gospel does not offer any exemption from sin's penalty while leaving us free to continue under the power of sin, or in the enjoyment of sin's temporary pleasures. Were it to do so it would be no true salvation, for it would just encourage us to continue in sin: which God forbid!

Yet again and again we find in Scripture that salvation does mean exemption or deliverance from the wrath of God. The Gospel is "the power of God unto **salvation**, to every one that believeth

... for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (Rom. i. 16-18). A little later in the same epistle we read, "We shall be **saved** from **wrath** through Him" (v. 9). Again we read, "God hath not appointed us to **wrath**, but to obtain **salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 9). And yet again in 2 Thessalonians ii. 12, 13, we find that salvation is put in direct contrast with damnation.

The fact is that the Old Testament has as its chief theme the dealings of God with Israel His people in view of the coming of the Messiah. Hence the consequences of sin as regards God's **governmental** actings are mainly in view. When Israel sinned, God in His government brought up enemies against them, and when they repented He saved them. The New Testament brings into view the **eternal** consequences of sin, and the way in which every individual soul of man is subject to God's judgment and the infliction of wrath from heaven. From that wrath we are saved.

It is in this connection that salvation may be spoken of as a past and completed thing, so that believers can speak of themselves as, "us, which **are** saved." The Lord Jesus is our Deliverer from the wrath to come, and we can never be more secure than we are to-day, before the wrath actually falls. Yet when we speak of ourselves as saved the emphasis seems mainly to lie on the fact that once we were engulfed in every kind of evil and defilement and now we are rescued

out of it all. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But . . . He **saved** us" (Titus iii. 3-5).

It is very evident however, that though we can speak of God as the One who "**hath** saved us," (2 Tim. i. 9), we are still in a world that is full of seductions, with the treacherous flesh within us, and Satan the astute adversary without. Hence we need salvation daily—salvation of practically a continuous sort. Scripture speaks very plainly of this present salvation. The Lord Jesus is living in heaven as our High Priest to minister it to us. He is able to "save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25).

The present salvation, which we need and get as believers, is of course based upon the death of Christ, but it actually reaches us by His priestly activities on our behalf as He lives for us on high. We are being "saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10); and inasmuch as He ever lives we shall be saved to the uttermost. We shall be saved completely, to the extremest point of time; to the moment when the last foe has disappeared, and we are beyond the need of any further salvation for ever.

In order that we may enjoy this practical, everyday salvation we are granted the instruction which is furnished by the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures are able to make us "wise unto

salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15). The next verse speaks of the Scriptures being profitable not only for teaching but also "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." This shows the kind of salvation that was in Paul's mind when he wrote, and emphasizes the great part which the Scriptures play in our daily salvation.

When Paul wrote these words he of course alluded to the Old Testament Scriptures, which Timothy had known from his childhood. They abound with salutary warnings for us, and if we heed them we shall be saved from a thousand snares and dangers. We need hardly add that what Paul asserts of the Old Testament is equally true of the New, which some of us have been privileged to know from our youth.

We might sum up the matter as regards this daily and present salvation by saying it is ours as the result of Christ's High Priestly intercession, and of our having the Word of God, coupled with the possession of the Holy Spirit, whereby we may understand it and accept its instructions and its warnings.

There remains a further group of Scriptures that clearly speak of salvation as a future thing. It is our hope, and is to be worn "for an helmet" (1 Thess. v. 8). Our hope of salvation will be realized at the second advent of Christ. It is true that He is coming as the Judge, but we do not look for Him in that character. For us it is written, "We look for the **Saviour** . . . who

shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. iii. 20, 21). Hence it is that we are left here to "look for Him" when He shall "appear the second time, without sin, unto **salvation**" (Heb. ix. 28).

This future salvation altogether depends upon the crowning act of mercy which will reach us as the last delivering act of the Lord Jesus on our behalf. It will involve the raising of the dead saints, and the catching away of the living saints before the full storm of God's righteous wrath breaks on the earth. Then all of us—both dead and living—are to be found for ever with Christ in bodies of glory like to His own. This will be the final thing. Salvation as regards ourselves will be absolutely completed.

The Philippians were bidden by Paul, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." How do you reconcile this injunction with what we have had before us?

A long passage leads up to this injunction. If we want to get an idea of the context we have to go back as far as verse 27 of chapter i. The Philippian believers were threatened by adversaries without and dissension within. The close of chapter i. alludes to the one. The opening of chapter ii. alludes to the other. The former is easily disposed of: to meet the latter the whole weight of the matchless example of Christ has to be brought in. And then the Apostle himself was no longer present for their help, for he was in a Roman prison.

Under these circumstances they were to show their spiritual mettle and work out their salvation from the threatening dangers: but not as being cast upon their own resources, for "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (ver. 13). If the next three verses were fulfilled in them, they would indeed have worked out their salvation.

A present, daily salvation is in question: and our side of the matter is emphasized here. The Divine side must come first—the Priesthood of Christ, the work of God in us by His Spirit, the instruction and correction of His Word. But the human side has its importance. We have to diligently avail ourselves of the grace that God provides.

On the day of Pentecost Peter exhorted the anxious enquirers saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation;" and those who received his word were baptized. In his first Epistle he again speaks of baptism as saving us. What is this salvation which baptism effects?

It is salvation from "this untoward generation," as Peter said. Another translation puts it, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Now baptism is, in one word, **dissociation**. It is only an outward ordinance, yet it has a meaning: and that is its meaning. It is based upon the death and resurrection of Christ, for we are "baptized into His death," (Rom. vi. 3), and so we are "buried with Him" (Col. ii. 12). Nothing more effectively dissociates us from the present order of

things, cutting our links with the world, than death and burial.

The particular point that Peter makes, both in his sermon and his epistle, is that baptism cut the link between the repentant and believing Jews and the unrepentant and unbelieving mass of that nation. That lies upon the surface of Acts ii., and is involved, we believe, in 1 Peter iii. 21; for his epistle was addressed to believing Jews. He tells them that baptism is a "like figure" unto the waters of the flood that of old cut the link between believing Noah with his house and the world of the ungodly. Noah and his house had been saved "by" or "through" the water from the ruin and death that came in upon the godless earth. Those to whom Peter wrote had been saved through baptism from the godless mass of their nation. They suffered much from the ungodly mass but they were saved from their fate, whether in this life, at the destruction of Jerusalem, or in the world to come.

When a big ship is sinking, it is not enough to let down small boats by ropes and then get into them. Unless the ropes are cut there will be no salvation. Baptism cuts the ropes, and in that sense saves.

"He that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved." In the light of this is it not premature to speak of ourselves as saved, while we are still on our way to the end?

It certainly would be, IF these words of our Lord referred to the way in which sinful men

might receive the salvation of their souls. These words however, which occur in the course of His prophetic discourse recorded in Matthew xxiv., and Mark xiii. do not refer to that. The Lord was not addressing sinners but men who already had been brought into relationship with Himself—His **disciples**. At that moment they were representative of the chosen remnant of Israel, who will be found on earth at the time of the end.

"The end" in this passage is not the end of this or that individual life, but the end of the whole time of persecution, trial and sorrow, which end will be brought about by the second coming of Christ. Endurance is the supreme virtue which is to mark these saints, for their salvation is sure when Christ appears.

That is the primary bearing of this passage ; but there are of course many profitable applications of it which we may make for ourselves. However to apply it so as to teach that one cannot be really sure of salvation until one dies is not one of them.

Why is "confession with the mouth" so definitely connected with salvation in Romans x. 10?

Because salvation is a term of such wide meaning, and includes deliverance from the world, amongst other things. We believe on Christ as risen from the dead with our hearts, and that means our justification before God. Both these however—the faith and the justification—are not observable by men. Our salvation is observable,

for it is not so much a judicial fact as a practical fact—we are really saved from the power of world, flesh and devil. The very first step towards a salvation of such a sort must be the confession of Christ as Lord, made with the mouth so that men may hear it. A silent confession of Christ in the mind—just thinking it—obviously would not do.

The distinction made in this passage between the faith of the heart leading to righteousness and the confession of the mouth leading to salvation is very striking. It greatly helps to show the special force of salvation.

Is that why Cornelius, God-fearing man though he was, needed Peter to come to him that he might be saved? He was told that Peter "shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

No doubt it was so. Until Peter arrived with the Gospel message concerning the risen Christ, Cornelius could not believe in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead. Again, if he had thought of Him in any sense as Lord, it would doubtless have been as Lord of the children of Israel. Peter preached Him in the house of Cornelius as "Lord of all."

Cornelius had turned from his heathenism to the fear of God very sincerely; but salvation came to him when he believed on and confessed the risen Christ as Lord.

You do not wish us to understand then that salvation is a higher order of Christian blessing into which

we may come subsequent to conversion?—so that, for instance, a man might be forgiven yet not saved.

Such a deduction as that from the case of Cornelius would be quite unwarranted. Yet we must not miss the instruction conveyed by the fact that though he had the fear of God, and faith in Him, and even knew certain facts about Christ's ministry on earth, he was not saved until he heard and believed the glad tidings of the risen Christ and forgiveness in His Name. Then it was that he was delivered clean out of the old world system which had held him and was brought to God.

Almost all that we have been considering is in connection with what we are saved from. What are we saved to?

We are saved to every blessing that is ours in Christ. And yet, if we carefully follow Scripture phraseology, salvation is mostly, if not always, connected with what we are delivered from; and if it is a question of what we are brought to the word used is "**calling.**" God has "saved us, and called us with an holy calling" (2 Tim. i. 9).

Israel was saved out of Egypt in order that they might enjoy the land to which God called them. We are saved from the world, the flesh, the devil, and the wrath of God which is to come, in order that we may enjoy God's call to the place of sons and share the coming glory of Christ. The salvation which is ours in Christ is a very mighty and wonderful thing; and thereby

we are liberated to enjoy our calling. Yet all those things to which we are called according to the sovereign purpose of God are more wonderful still.

NOTHING—EVERYTHING.

THERE are many clubs in existence, political, military, naval, national, county, working-men's, artist's, shoeblack's, etc., etc. Their names are legion.

To enter a club an entrance fee must be paid. This may range from sixpence to fifty guineas or more. Then an annual subscription must be paid, and this may range from one shilling to twenty guineas or more.

A Scottish University Professor was asked to address the members of a select and fashionable club in the West End of London. He was a Christian man and sought to impress upon his hearers things that really matter. He began his address in a most remarkable way. He said, "Gentlemen, the entrance fee into the Kingdom of Heaven is—**nothing**; the yearly subscription is—**everything**."

It is quite true that the blessings of the gospel are "without money and without price." At untold price to the Saviour, without cost to the sinner. "The GIFT of God is eternal life through

Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vi. 23). What do we pay for a gift? The smallest return for a gift would turn it into a purchase, however trivial this return might be. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the GIFT of God: not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians ii. 8, 9). Clearly the entrance fee into the blessings of the Gospel is—NOTHING.

What of the yearly subscription? A shilling, a few guineas, will suffice for the clubs of earth. What is the yearly subscription for the Christian? EVERYTHING is the answer. The ransomed soul, bought at the amazing cost of the death of the Son of God on the cross can sing:—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine;
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, MY ALL."

So thought the saints composing the churches in Macedonia in the olden days. They were passing through great affliction, yet in "their deep poverty [they] abounded unto the riches of their liberality." The Apostle Paul writing to the rich Corinthian assembly reported thus of their poor Macedonian brethren, "This they did, not as we hoped, but **first gave their own selves** [EVERYTHING] to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians vii. 5).

It is good indeed when we pay our annual subscription to the Lord—all that we have, all that

we are—EVERYTHING. He is worthy of it all. Everything that we had as our own has been forfeited by sin—life, health, providential mercies, all has been forfeited by sin. All that we have is God's gift, gained at an infinite cost by His Son in all the agony of the cross. Surely we can joyfully exclaim:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead [**spiritually**]: and that He died for all, that they which live [**spiritually**] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but UNTO HIM [giving **everything**] which died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians v. 14, 15).

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(1 JOHN v. 6—21).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE faith that Jesus is the Son of God lies at the very heart of everything. Jesus Christ—that historic Personage—has been in this world. No one can successfully deny that fact. But who is He?—that is the question. Our faith—the Christian faith—is that He is the Son of God.

That being settled, another question arises. How, and in what manner, did He come? The answer to this lies in verse 6: He came "by water and blood."

This is another of those brief statements which occur so frequently in John's writings; very simple as to form, though rather obscure as to meaning, and yet yielding to devout meditation a rich harvest of instruction. The reference clearly is to that which happened when one of the Roman soldiers with a spear pierced the side of the dead Christ, as recorded in John xix. 34. No other of the Evangelists records this event, and John lays very special emphasis on it in recording it, saying, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." John wrote his Gospel that we might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (xx. 31). So evidently this episode of the blood and the water bears witness to the fact that He is both Christ and the Son; and these two points are before us in our passage.

In the first place, the water and the blood witness to His true Manhood. The Son of God has come amongst us in flesh and blood; a real and true Man, and not a phantom, an apparition. This fact was never more clearly established than when, His side being pierced, forthwith there came out blood and water.

Water and blood each have their own significance. The water signifies **cleansing**, and the

blood, **expiation**. We may further say therefore that the coming of Jesus Christ was characterized by cleansing and expiation. These two things were absolute necessities if men were to be blessed: they must be cleansed from the filth in which they lay, and their sins must be expiated, if they were to be brought to God. The one settles the **moral** question, the other the **judicial**; and both are equally necessary. Neither a moral renovation without a judicial clearance, nor a judicial clearance without a moral renovation, would have met our case.

Here then is another witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. He was indeed a true Man, but no mere man could come in the power of cleansing and expiation. For that He must indeed be the Son, who was the Word of Life.

In the Gospel it is "blood and water," in the Epistle it is "water and blood." The Gospel gives us, what we may call, the historic order: first our need of forgiveness, second our need of cleansing. But in the Epistle the great point is that which is wrought in us, inasmuch as we are born of God; and the holy and blessed characteristics of our new life, a life so essentially holy ("he cannot sin, because he is born of God") that a wonderful cleansing has thereby reached us. Very appropriately therefore does water come first; and it is linked in our thoughts with the death of Christ, for we must never separate in our minds the work wrought in us and the work accomplished for us.

But though the water is mentioned first, it is specially emphasized in verse 6 that His coming was not by water **only**, but by water and blood." His coming into the world was not only for moral cleansing but also for atonement. This is a peculiarly important word for us to-day, for one of the pet ideas of modern religious unbelief is that we can discard all idea of atonement while holding that Christ came as a reformer to set a wonderful example to us all, and to cleanse men's morals by the force of it. They hold that He did come by water only. His death, as the supreme example of heroic self-sacrifice, is to exorcise the spirit of selfishness from all our breasts. His death, as an atonement by blood for human guilt, they will not have at any price.

Those who deny the blood, while admitting the water, will have ultimately to reckon with the Spirit of God, whose witness they deny. The Spirit who bears the witness is truth, therefore His witness is truth; and they will be exposed as liars in the day that is coming, if not before. In the Gospel, where the historic fact is related, the Evangelist is content to take the place of bearing witness himself, as we have seen. By the time he wrote the Epistle however men had arisen who were challenging all that was true, so John steps back, as it were, from himself the human channel of witness, to the Spirit who is the Divine and all-important witness-bearer, and points out that He who is truth has spoken. His witness establishes **who** it is that came, and **what** His coming really signified.

The larger part of verse 7 and the opening of verse 8 have to be omitted, as having no real authority in the ancient manuscripts. The Revised, and other later versions show this. It simply is, "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." The Spirit of God is the living active Witness. The water and the blood are silent witnesses, but all three converge on one point. The point on which they converge is found in verses 11 and 12. Verses 9 and 10 are parenthetical.

We are to realize that the witness, whether rendered by the Spirit or the water and the blood, is the witness of GOD; and it demands that it be treated as such. We certainly do receive the witness of men: we are bound to do so practically every day of our lives. We do so in spite of the fact that it is frequently marred by inaccuracy, even when there is no wish to deceive. The witness of God is far greater, in its theme and in its character. **The Son** is the theme, and **absolute truth** its character. When the Son was on earth He bore witness to **God**. Now the Spirit is here, and the witness of God is borne **to the Son**. Very remarkable, is it not?

Moreover, he who believes on the Son of God now has the witness in himself, inasmuch as the Spirit who is the Witness has been given to indwell us. We begin, of course, by believing the witness to the Son of God that is borne **to us**, and then "by the Spirit which He hath given us"

we have the witness in ourselves. No unbeliever can have this witness within, for, believing not the witness which God gave of His Son, he has in effect "made Him [God] a liar." A very terrible thing to do.

The witness of God is concerning His Son: but in particular it is that God has given to us believers eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. The Spirit of God is the living and abiding witness of this. He is spoken of elsewhere by the Apostle Paul as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." To this also the water and the blood bear witness, only in a more negative way. When we see the life of the Son of God poured forth in death on behalf of those whose lives were forfeit, we know it means that there was no life in them. The Apostle Paul again corroborates this in saying, that if He "died for all, then were all dead." That is it: all were dead, and hence the Son of God yielded up His life in death. The water and the blood testify that there is no life in men—the first Adam and his race—but only in the One who yielded up His life and took it again in resurrection.

The witness then is that eternal life is ours. It has been given to us of God; and it is "in His Son." He who has the Son has the life, and he who has not the Son of God has not the life. The issue is perfectly clear. No one could "have" the Son who denied the Son, as these antichristian teachers did. In chapter ii. 22, 23, we saw that no one could "have" the Father who denied the

Son. Here we see that they cannot "have" the Son, and consequently cannot have life.

Verse 13 indicates the significance of the word "have" used in this way. The better attested reading here is as the R.V., "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." We might have expected John to say, "These things have I written unto you that have the Son;" instead of which he inserted what is involved in having the Son—believing "on the name of the Son of God." It is the believer on the Son of God who has the Son, and has eternal life; and John was led to write these things that we who believe might know it.

No doubt, when John wrote these things he had in view the help and assurance of simple believers who might be overawed and shaken by the pretentious claims of the antichrists. They came with their advanced philosophies and their new light; and the simple believer who pinned his faith to "that which was from the beginning," would be treated by them as quite outside the high intellectual "life" that they enjoyed. After all however it was just the believer on the name of the Son of God, who had the Son, and the life; and the life he had was the eternal life—the only life that counts.

And there the verse stands, with all its happy applications for trembling believers to-day. The Apostle John has given us the characteristic marks of the life in what he has written; and we

may know that the life is ours, not only because of what God has said, but also because the marks of the life come out into display. Happy feelings, which some people think so much about, are **not** the great characteristic of the life: love and righteousness **are**.

Verse 14 seems to present us with an abrupt and complete change of thought. The Apostle picks up a thread, which he pursued for a few verses in chapter iii., dropping it at verse 22. If we compare the two passages we shall find that the change is not so complete as it appears. There the point was that if we love in deed and in truth our hearts will have assurance before God, and hence have boldness in prayer. Here the sequence of thought seems similar. As the fruit of what John has written to us we have happy knowledge—conscious knowledge—that we have eternal life. Hence we have confidence (or, boldness) in Him, to the effect that “if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.” And if He hear us, our petitions are certain to be granted.

As having the life, His will becomes our will. How simply and happily then can we ask according to His will. This is the normal thing for the believer, resulting in answered prayer. Alas, that so often our actual experience should be the thing that is abnormal—because we walk according to the flesh—rather than normal.

Verse 16 assumes that we are not selfish in our prayers but concerned about others. We pray in

an intercessory way for our brethren. The boldness that we have before God extends to this, and is not confined to merely personal matters. But it also makes it plain that, though we have boldness, there are certain things which we may not and cannot request. The government of God in regard to His children is a very real thing and cannot be waived at our request. The death spoken of here is the death of the body, such as we see, for instance, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

We may ask life—and doubtless anything short of that also—for any whose sin is not unto death; and all unrighteousness is sin, so that we have a very large field that may be covered. But if the sin is unto death our lips are sealed. It is possible that in writing this the Apostle had some definite sin in his mind, connected with the antichristian deceptions which were abroad, but he does not specify; so we are left to take heed of the broad principle. We know that hypocrisy and false pretence was the sin unto death in the case of Ananias, and gross disorder and irreverence at the Lord's Supper was the sin unto death among the Corinthians.

In verses 16 and 17 we have things looked at practically as they exist amongst the saints, for the one who may sin a sin unto death is a "brother." In verse 18 we come back to the abstract view of things. The one begotten of God does not sin, if we consider him according to his

essential nature. This we have seen earlier in the epistle. Moreover, that being so, such are enabled to keep themselves so that the wicked one does not touch them. This last remark rather supports the thought that the sin unto death, which John has in view, is something connected with the wiles of the devil through antichristian teaching. Viewed abstractly, the one born of God is proof against the wicked one. Viewed practically, since the flesh is still in believers though they have been born of God, the brother may be seduced by the wicked one and bring himself under the discipline of God, even unto death.

We have now reached the closing words of the Epistle and things are summed up for us in a very remarkable way. Abiding in that which was from the beginning, there are certain things that we know. We know the true nature of those who are born of God, according to verse 18. But then we know that we—who are of the true family of God—are of God; and thereby wholly differentiated from the world, which lies in “wickedness,” or, “the wicked one.” There was no such clear differentiation before the time of Christ. Then the line was rather drawn between Israel as a nation owned of God, and the Gentiles not owned of God, though doubtless faith could always discern that not all Israel were the true Israel of God.

Now the line is drawn altogether apart from national considerations. It is simply a question

of who are born of God and who are not, no matter what nation they may have belonged to. The family of God are wholly and fundamentally separated from the world.

Further we know what has brought all this to pass. The Son of God is come. That Person has arrived on the scene, and the life has been manifested in Him. Here we are brought back to the point at which the Epistle started, only with an added fact brought to light. At the outset our thoughts had to be concentrated on what was brought to light by His coming. But what has been subsequently unfolded in the Epistle has brought us to this, that as the fruit of His coming we have been given an understanding, so that we may know and appreciate and respond to the One who has been revealed. It is easy to see that if the understanding be lacking the most perfect revelation before us would be in vain.

Thank God, the understanding is ours. We have been begotten of God, and He has given us of His Spirit, as the Epistle has shown us, and we could never have been possessed of that Anointing if the Son of God had not come. Now we know "Him that is true," for the Father has been made known in the Son. Yet the next words tell us that we are "in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." So, "Him that is true," is an expression that covers both the Son and the Father, and we pass almost insensibly from the One to the Other. Another witness to the fact that the Son and the Father are one in Essence, though distinct in Person.

Then, having thus brought us to "His Son Jesus Christ," John says very pointedly, "This [or, He] is the true God, and eternal life." No stronger affirmation of His Deity could we have. Also He is the eternal life, and, as we have seen, the Source of it for us.

What a marvellous summary of the Epistle is this brief verse! The life has been manifested, and Him that is true made known in the coming of the Son of God. As the fruit of His coming we have received an understanding, so that we may be able to appreciate and receive all that has come to light. But then not only is "Him that is true" revealed, and we rendered capable of knowing Him, but we are in Him, by being in the One who has revealed Him. Apart from this we might have been merely wondering onlookers, without vital connection with God. But, thank God, that vital connection exists. And the One, in whom we are, is the true God and eternal life.

How apposite then the closing words, "Children [the word meaning all the family of God] keep yourselves from idols." An idol is anything which usurps in our hearts that supreme place which belongs to God alone. If we live in the reality and power of verse 20, we shall certainly say like Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hosea xiv. 8).

Once let the Son of God, and all that He has done and brought, fill our hearts, and the idols, that charmed us once, will charm us no more.

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT

I can see the gracious provision God made for His people by the cities of refuge, as recorded in Joshua xx.; but should be glad of your help as to what we are to learn from it—BIRMINGHAM.

THE provision of the cities of refuge had, we believe, a typical significance in view of Israel's great national sin in the crucifixion and death of their Messiah.

When this supreme tragedy and sin took place, what was to be the Divine action in reply? Everything hinged upon whether the death of Christ at the hands of Israel was to be accounted as murder or manslaughter. If the former, there could be no response but devastating judgment. If the latter, there might be a provision of grace, as foreshadowed in the cities of refuge.

This point was settled when the Lord Jesus "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12), by praying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). This was tantamount to asking:—let it be considered as a sin of ignorance, rather than a wholly wilful sin: as manslaughter and not murder.

This great prayer was answered. On the day of Pentecost it was given to Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, to announce tidings of remission of sins to the very people guilty of His death. He presented the slain Messiah, now risen and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, as a "City of Refuge" to those implicated in His death. And the same day there fled to that "city" three thousand souls.

Now though the Jews were primarily responsible for His death the Gentiles also had a part in it. Hence we all come in under the scope of this gracious provision.

Going back to the type in Joshua xx., we notice that the arrangement was not permanent but **provisional**. The manslayer was protected in the city of refuge **until the death of the high priest**. Now although **our** High Priest never dies, yet there is going to be a change in the functions of His priesthood when He comes again. Then He will no longer need to care for the infirmities of His people after the pattern of Aaron, of which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks so much. He will act simply after the pattern of Melchizedek, blessing the men of faith after the victory is won. When that change in the Priesthood comes, Israel redeemed and restored will at last enjoy full liberty and blessing in their land.

In the strict interpretation of the type, that refers to Israel. We—the Christians of to-day, whether Jews or Gentiles—are carried into blessing of a heavenly order, which goes far beyond anything that the type indicates.

In Luke xv., the prodigal son was sent by a citizen of the far country into the fields "to feed swine."

In John xxi. the risen Lord bids the restored disciple to "feed My lambs . . . feed My sheep."

VISION.

MAN has five senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. These five senses enable man to be in intelligent touch with his environment. They are all receptive. Sight receives the effect of light; hearing of sound; smelling of odours; tasting of food and drink; feeling of touch. These five senses put us in touch with the world in which we live, and with the present.

As Christians we have another faculty outside this world and the present moment. Faith gives us vision. It is not visionary in the sense of being unpractical, and imagining things that only exist in a disordered mind.

No: faith puts us into more real touch with things outside and above us than things around us, which we can see and take account of. We Christians look "at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians iv. 18). The things the Christian touches in this world are present and passing. Death comes, and in a moment they are past. The five senses cease to operate and there is no more seeing out of the glassy eyes of the dead; no more hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling. But the things that faith puts us in touch with are

eternal. Faith puts the believer in touch with them, and death cannot rob him of them.

We all need a vision in the true sense of the word. Abraham had a vision. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2). What a change it made in his life! He became a stranger and a pilgrim for the rest of his days. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews xi. 10).

No city on earth has foundations that will last. London, Paris, Berlin, Bombay, Sydney will all pass away. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter iii. 10).

How good it is to have a vision! See how faith acts. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians v. 7). Do we? That is the question for us all to answer.

Moses had a vision. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews xi. 27). Doubtless this refers to the second time that he left Egypt. On the first occasion, we read, "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh" (Exodus ii. 15). On the second occasion he withstood Pharaoh to his face, and brought the children of Israel under the mighty hand of God in triumph out of Egypt.

What nerved Moses to turn his back upon the most brilliant position the world then offered—

the son of Pharaoh's daughter, one of the most remarkable women rulers the world has ever known? A vision! He was not visionary but eminently practical. Recently we looked out upon the vast stretches of desert from the banks of the Suez Canal, the very desert which the children of Israel traversed, and marvelled that Moses could endure for forty years, summer and winter, day and night, such utter barrenness, such scorching sun, such company as the stiffnecked and rebellious children of Israel. He had a vision! He endured as seeing Him that cannot be seen (with mortal eyes).

With what regret will Christians, who have mainly lived for this world, look upon their wasted lives. They may have amassed wealth for **this** world, and find themselves poor in the coming Kingdom. They may have inscribed their names high on the roll of earthly fame, and find they must take a back seat in favour of some simple, faithful, Christian woman who lived on the dole in a cottage, but who lived a life of faith, who had a vision and was governed by it.

How good it was that Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews xi. 26). What an example for us, who have greater knowledge and privileges than ever he had. May we be found following it.

“THE LAST HOLD-FAST.”

WE should like to quote from a letter referring particularly to Revelation iii. 11, which we received, three years ago, from a Christian lady who bore an honoured name, and who departed to be with Christ in February 1936, in her ninety-seventh year. Here it is:—

“We hear Him—the Lord Jesus Christ—calling up a hold-fast to ‘the Holy—the True;’ to ‘My Name;’ ‘the Word of My patience;’ those who know His love (Revelation iii. 9). No boast of what they are doing or saying. They are in **THE LAST HOLD-FAST**. He will not say it again. He sees love to Himself: and He is writing His own precious writing on each one who is listening to His voice. It would be the most precious moment of the nineteen hundred years if we were all in that hold-fast. I would like to read Revelation iii. every day, and mark how His last hold-fast is leaving its mark on those known to me.”

The letter closes with these inspiring lines,

“Jesus, Lord! we look to Thee,
 Now the journey’s ending;
 Soon Thy glorious face to see,
 On the cloud descending.
 Saints of God in every land
 Swell the sacred chorus!
 Wake! Arise! Join heart and hand;
 Glory is before us.”

How refreshing it was to read such words from one who had faithfully trod so long a pilgrim journey, and who was then almost within sight of home.

We venture to reproduce it because there seems to be in it a clarion call to all who love the Lord and who desire to follow Him. In the first place, do we realise that we are in "the last hold-fast"? Have **we** heard the Lord saying to **us** "Hold that fast which thou hast"? That this is His last call? That it will not be repeated? In the next place, Have we faced the difficulties of "the last hold-fast"? An artful enemy would seek to rob us of that which we have, which has been bought at no small price (Proverbs xxiii. 23), by those who have gone before us, and which has been handed down to us as a priceless legacy.

The adversary does not make a frontal attack; he does not denounce these teachers, nor what they taught. On the contrary, he concedes that they ministered and acted according to their convictions, and that it was all right for the day in which they lived. Times and circumstances have changed, however; there no longer exists the need for a separate path; the barrier between true believers and the world; between true believers and that which professes Christ's name, but which so sadly dishonours it, need no longer be kept up. The way to success in the religious world is considered by some to be on terms of intimacy with all; indulge in their habits; follow

their pursuits; and thus raise them to a higher level.

There are also, alas! companies of true believers who have parted, who have each chosen their own path, and who see no reason for doing otherwise. Latitudinarianism says, Let this cease; allow differences to be forgotten; agree to differ; come together and let us go on as if nothing had happened. Thus by presenting a path of ease, and of no reproach to those who may think that their way is best, would the enemy seek, as he beguiled Eve through his subtilty, to corrupt the minds of the Lord's people from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians xi. 2, 3). To all, comes the call from the Lord; "Hold that fast which thou hast."

In the third place, have we considered the honour of being in "the last hold-fast"? The enemy is making his last determined stand against that which has been the object of his hatred and attack since its inception. His way of working is to try to seduce believers from loyalty to Christ and to the truth, and to get them to surrender the citadel. To us the call comes: "Hold fast." Our precious Lord looks for and values the loyalty of "His own"—shall we fail Him? There may be nothing spectacular about holding fast; nothing that might be considered heroic; nothing that is calculated to attract numbers. We may, if we seek to hold fast, find ourselves in an insignificant minority. Paul appears to have been in a minority of one so far as "all

they which are in Asia” were concerned. We may not have the applause of the world; nor may we secure the approval of all our fellow-believers. We will be satisfied, however, will we not? if the Lord can say to us, “thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.”

This must be “the last hold-fast,” for His Word comes to us:—“Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” If nearly twenty centuries ago He said “I come quickly,” He must be just at the door; hence the activity of the enemy, and the danger to which we are all liable.

We appeal to our younger readers. How great is your opportunity! Seek not numbers, nor popularity, nor a place in the religious press. Accept it as from Him if you are cut by those from whom you did not expect it; and be assured that your compensation will be the Lord’s approval and support now, and the crown in a coming day. Is it worth it? Is He worthy of it? Let us pray to Him here and now that, in all humility, by His grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be found in

“ THE LAST HOLD-FAST ”

We append our correspondent’s sweet little hymn,

“How sweet away from self to flee,
And shelter in our Saviour;
Oh! precious grace, with Him’s our place,
In God’s eternal favour.

Jesus the goal, before our soul,
The One we know in glory;
While here on earth we'd tell His worth,
A saved one's sweetest story."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

PREPARATIONS.

I STAYED in the home of a bride-to-be. It was an interesting experience, and not interesting only, but instructive. She was a capable girl and carried out all her house duties as she had always done, but it was evident that the coming looked-for day filled her thoughts, and all her leisure was filled up in preparation for it. If she went out she did it with a purpose, either a visit to the dressmaker's establishment or to make purchases of new and needful things, and if she stayed at home she kept her needle busy. Certainly she wasted no time. She was to live in a distant town and there the happy, expectant bridegroom was just as busy as she. All the time that he could snatch from his day's work was spent in preparing the home for his bride and a daily letter reported his progress. I could not help being interested—who would not have been?—even though it is the sort of thing that is happening every day and in every land.

But the instructive part of it to me was, that two brief words of Scripture were brought forcibly

to my mind by it. The first was words that came from the Lord's own lips. Said He, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). The second is said of His bride. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. xix. 7). Preparation in heaven and preparation on earth!

We have no doubt as to what lay behind these words of the Lord. It was that love of His that will not be satisfied until the marriage day comes. And what a glad surprise His bride will get when she enters that eternal home. Her eyes will not rest on a single thing or scene that is not perfect, all the fruit of a perfect love: a home prepared for her joy by a love that surpasses all her thought. It seems to me that the Lord intends us to consider His words: it would be good for us to consider them every day. "I go to prepare a place for you." Will His love overlook one single thing in that home that will contribute to the joy of His bride? Not a single thing. All the preparation must be to make her absolutely and happily at home with Him. But it would not be home to her if He were not there, so those other words, "that where I am ye may be also." He, Himself will be the all-absorbing Object there, His company her supreme joy, but everything within that home will bear the eternal impress of His love for His bride and His consideration for her.

But what of the other side—"His wife hath made herself ready"? His wife is His church,

as Ephesians v. 25-32 clearly shews. What preparation is she making for the great day, and where do we see it? Of course, she could not make herself fit for heaven, or fit to be the wife of the Lamb, her fitness for that home of eternal love is Christ Himself. He is her righteousness. She did not chose Him but He chose her, and when He did so He purposed in His heart and according to God's own counsels to give Himself for her, even to death, not only that He might possess her without a rival for ever, but that He might redeem her from all iniquity and sanctify and cleanse her by the washing of water by the Word. Blood and water were both necessary if she was to be His spotless and glorious bride, and both flowed from His side when He died at Calvary.

Yet she makes herself ready for the marriage, just as the young bride of my story prepared for her wedding by her diligent stitching. "To her was granted," says our Scripture, "that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." The word, as is well known, should be in the plural. It is righteousnesses and not righteousness. What are righteousnesses?

First of all, and what lies behind them, and without which there could be none of them, is the thought, "What will please Him?" How would He who is my Lord as well as the coming Bridegroom have me to appear? And such a question could only arise in the heart that loves Him.

We must begin there. That "first love" which the church at Ephesus lost must be revived in the heart of the bride if she is to make herself ready for the marriage day. It is as this "first love" controls her that she will cry with earnest expectation, "Come, Lord Jesus," but along with that will be the diligent preparation that she be not found wanting in that day.

This fine linen, clean and white, is of imperishable beauty and the threads of it are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, faith, meekness, temperance;" it is the life of Jesus reproduced in His saints on earth by the Holy Spirit that dwells in them, and every thread of it is a wonderful triumph for God. He will be able to shew on that marriage day the reality of His work in His saints, and that Christ was enough for their hearts in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil.

It is evident that the thoughts of the Lord are upon His church on earth. "I go to prepare a place for you," proves that, and the thoughts of His church must be upon Him if she is preparing for the hour of meeting and union with Him. We know that all is perfect on His side; on ours there is fickleness and failure, and yet we love Him and desire His approval. May God's Holy Spirit deepen this love for Him and increase our desires to be just what He would have us to be, that we may have a large part in this preparation for the marriage day.

EPAPHRODITUS.

WE want the reader to turn with us for a few moments to Philippians ii., and study the brief sketch of the interesting character of Epaphroditus. There is great moral beauty in it. We are not told very much about him, but in what we are told we see a great deal of what is truly lovely and pleasant—much that makes us long for men of the same stamp in this our day. We cannot do better than quote the inspired record concerning him; and may the blessed Spirit apply it to our hearts, and lead us to cultivate the same lovely grace which shone so brightly in that dear and honoured servant of Christ.

“ I supposed it necessary,” says the blessed Apostle, “ to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because **for the work of Christ** he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Phil. ii. 25-30).

Now it is quite possible that some of us, on reading the above, may feel disposed to inquire if Epaphroditus was a great evangelist, or teacher, or some highly-gifted servant of Christ, seeing that the inspired Apostle bestows upon him so many high and honourable titles, styling him his "brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier."

Well, we are not told that he was a great preacher, or a great traveller, or a profound teacher in the Church of God. All that we are told about him, in the above touching narrative, is that he came forward in a time of real need to supply a missing link—to "stop a gap," as we say. The beloved Philippians had it upon their hearts to send help to the revered and aged Apostle in his prison at Rome. He was in need, and they longed to supply his need. They loved him, and God had laid it upon their loving hearts to communicate with his necessities. They thought of him, though he was far away from them; and they longed to minister to him of their substance.

How lovely was this! How grateful to the heart of Christ! Harken to the glowing terms in which the dear old prisoner speaks of their precious ministry. "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity . . . Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I

departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But **I have all, and abound; I am full**, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."

Here we see the place which Epaphroditus filled in this blessed business. There lay the beloved Apostle in his prison at Rome, and there lay the loving offering of the saints at Philippi. But how was it to be conveyed to him? These were not the days of bank cheques and post-office orders. No, nor of railway travelling. It was no easy matter to get from Philippi to Rome in those days. But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ, presented himself to supply the missing link; to do just the very thing that was needed, and nothing more; to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the Apostle at Rome. Deep and real as was the Apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together; and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need, and he met it—a positive blank, and he filled it. He did not aim at doing some great showy thing, something which would make him very prominent, and cause his name to be blazed abroad as some wonderful person. Ah! no; Epaphroditus was not

one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man, who is content just to fill an empty niche; to render the needed service, whatever it is; to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.

There are some who are not content unless they are at the head and tail of everything. They seem to think that no work can be rightly done unless they have a hand in it. They are not satisfied to supply a missing link. How repulsive are all such! Self-confident, self-sufficient, ever pushing themselves into prominence. They have never measured themselves in the presence of God, never been broken down before Him, never taken their true place of self-abasement.

Epaphroditus was not of this class at all. He put his life in his hand to serve other people; and when at death's door, instead of being occupied with himself or his ailments, he was thinking of others. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness"—not because he was sick, but—"because ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was true love. He knew what his beloved brethren at Philippi would be feeling when informed of his serious illness—an illness brought on by his willing-hearted service to them.

All this is morally lovely. It does the heart good to contemplate this exquisite picture. Epaph-

roditus had evidently studied in the school of Christ. He had sat at the Master's feet, and drunk deeply into His Spirit. In no other way could he have learnt such holy lessons of self-surrender and thoughtful love for others. The world knows nothing of such things; nature cannot teach such lessons. They are altogether heavenly, spiritual, divine. Would that we knew more of them! They are rare amongst us, with all our high profession. There is a most humiliating amount of selfishness in all of us, and it does look so hideous in connection with the name of Jesus. Its inconsistency with Christianity is terribly glaring.

But we must close; and, ere we do so, we shall just notice the very touching manner in which the inspired Apostle commends Epaphroditus to the assembly at Philippi. It seems as if he could not make enough of him, to speak after the manner of men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." How deeply affecting! What a tide of divine affection and sympathy rolled in upon that unpretending, self-sacrificing servant of Christ! The whole assembly at Philippi, the blessed Apostle, and, above all, God Himself, all engaged in thinking about a man who did not think about himself. Had Epaphroditus been a self-seeker, had he been occupied about himself or his interests, or even his work, his name would

never have shone on the page of inspiration. But no; he thought of others, not of himself, and therefore God, and His apostle, and His Church, thought of him.

Thus it will ever be. A man who thinks much of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him; but the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptying, who think of, and live for, others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honoured, as they ever will be, by God and His people.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully," says the beloved apostle, "that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and **hold such in reputation**: Because for **the work of Christ** he was nigh unto death, **not regarding his life**, to supply your lack of service toward me."

Thus it was with this most dear and honoured servant of Christ. He did not regard his life, but laid it at his Master's feet, just to supply the missing link between the Church of God at Philippi and the suffering and needy Apostle at Rome. And hence the Apostle calls upon the Church to hold him in reputation, and the honoured name of Epaphroditus has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded, and the record of it read by un-

told millions, while the name and the doings of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious of every age, are sunk—and deservedly so—in eternal oblivion.

C.H.M.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(2 JOHN).

BEFORE we come to the details of this short Epistle we may point out several features of a more general nature.

The Author's name is not mentioned. This feature characterizes also the first and third Epistles, yet in each case there can be no doubt that John is the writer. The style is identical, agreeing also with the Gospel that bears his name. It is quite remarkable that not once does John mention his own name in his writings, save in the Revelation. Yet there is something very fitting in this. His Gospel and Epistles deal with such a transcendent theme—God revealed in One, who was no less than “the Son of the Father”—that the human writer is not noticed in the glory of that light.

This second Epistle, as also the third, comes in as a kind of appendix or postscript to the first Epistle. It was evidently in the first place a communication of a private nature to a certain Christian lady and her family, but has been brought by God into permanency in the pages of

Scripture, because it supplies very needful instruction not found elsewhere. It is the only Epistle addressed to a woman, and the instruction gains force from that fact.

In verses 1 and 2 the greatest possible emphasis is laid upon **truth**. The Epistle itself gives directions as to the action necessary for the defence of the truth; and the first thing we find is that all Christian relationships and affections are founded upon truth, and are to be governed by it. The love that is proper to Christians is "**in the truth;**" since it springs forth as the fruit of our having been begotten of God, as the first Epistle has shown us. Being begotten of God we are "in Him that is true," and love according to truth springs up within our hearts. Therefore the love, that John bore toward the elect lady and her children, found a place also in the hearts of all those who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth, as begotten of God.

But that love not only found its origin in the knowledge of the truth, it also found expression "**for the truth's sake.**" The truth is of surpassing importance—since the world is filled with error and delusion—and we should be ready to suffer for the sake of it. Many have suffered, even to a martyr's death. Here, however, it is not a question of **suffering** for the sake of the truth, but **loving** for the sake of the truth. That bears in two directions: the love must be sincere and without the partiality which is so natural to the flesh; and also it must be intolerant of evil, since truth

and error can never agree together. It is the **second** of these two considerations which is stated in this Epistle. The third Epistle deals with the **first**.

The two statements as to the truth, which verse 2 contains, are very pregnant with meaning. The truth (1) "dwelleth in us," and (2) "shall be with us for ever." We connect the two thoughts with two sayings: that of the first Epistle, "the Spirit is truth," and the saying of our Lord in the Gospel, "I am the truth."

The truth "dwelleth in us," inasmuch as the Spirit indwells us, and He is truth. He is not mentioned in this short Epistle, but He is implied in these words. He is truth **subjectively**, within us; for He does not speak "of" or "from" Himself, but He glorifies Christ who is the truth, and taking of His things He ministers them to us. Hence every Spirit-indwelt believer has truth **dwelling in him**—an immense privilege and preservative in a world of error.

This fact leads us to the conclusion that the detection and refusal of evil doctrine is not for the believer primarily a matter of intellect or brain-power. It is primarily a matter of what we may call spiritual instinct. Mere intellect again and again leads even true believers astray. All the errors, that have afflicted the church during her nineteen centuries of history, have been in the first place launched by men of intellectual prowess. And on the other hand, very unlettered believers, when false teaching has been pressed upon

them, have been heard to say, "Well, I can't help feeling it is all wrong, though I don't understand their ideas and cannot criticize them." This fact justifies the Apostle in writing the instructions of this Epistle to even a lady and her children.

It is also a fact, thank God, that the truth "shall be **with us for ever**," inasmuch as Christ is the truth **objectively**, and we are never to be separated from Him. Truth as well as grace fully arrived on the scene when the Lord Jesus came. In Him all that God is stands fully disclosed. In Him light and truth shine about everything, and the darkness, the error, the unrealities disappear. As we turn our eyes upon Jesus we contemplate the One in whom truth is personified. The truth is "with us," to be considered and adoringly admired, and by which, as a standard, everything may be tested.

This is of deep importance to us at the present time, while Satan the deceiver is still at large. Yet we shall **ever** need the truth personified before our eyes, and He is to be with us for ever. Let us not forget for present emergencies that He as the truth is the test for everything that may be presented to us in the way of doctrine, and that the Spirit who indwells us, forming our instincts, is truth likewise.

Since Christ is the truth objectively before our eyes all the error of which Satan is the originator is aimed, whether directly or indirectly, at Him.

Not without reason therefore is His glory so fully unfolded in verse 3. Jesus is stated to be not only Lord and Christ but also "the Son of the Father." This is the only place where this exact expression occurs, though He is frequently called the Son of God. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has many families both in heaven and earth, as we are told in Ephesians iii. 14, 15, yet He is the only One who has the supreme place of **the** Son of the Father—the supreme Object of His love. That is **who He is**: a little later in the Epistle we shall see **what He became**.

The Apostle had much joy because he had found some of the children of the elect lady walking in truth. They were not merely confessing the truth and holding it, but they were walking in it—that is, their ways and activities were governed by it. The Father Himself has commanded this: His truth has reached us in order that we may be controlled by it. Nothing less than this is pleasing to Him. And now, turning to the elect lady herself, the Apostle beseeches her to proceed on just those lines; having in view the instruction he is about to give her as to those who propagate not truth but error.

First of all however, in verse 5, he enforces the great commandment that we love one another—the commandment with which we are already very familiar, as having read the first Epistle. He repeats here that this is not a new commandment, something only now issued. It is the commandment which we have had from the beginning, from

the very first moment that the true light began to shine in Christ. The love of God was manifested in Christ, and it demanded and produced love in those who were the recipients of it.

But then love manifests itself practically in obedience to the will of God. There may be love on the lips without obedience in the life; but love in the heart must produce obedience in the life. And in particular the commandment of love is that we should walk, and continue to walk, in all that which from the outset has been made known to us in Christ. The danger now threatening was that under various specious pretexts some should be moved away to follow and obey ideas which were foreign to that which had been from the beginning.

In verse 7 John speaks very plainly. Many had "entered" or "gone out" into the world who were nothing but deceivers. He does not say, you notice, "gone out into the church," but "into the world." He alludes apparently to the same kind of people as those that he warned us against in chapter ii. of his first Epistle. Those, he said, "went out from us," giving up all pretence of being connected with the church. They turned their backs, it appears, upon the church of God, and they went forth into the world as missionaries of greater "light" than any which the church had possessed. Influenced by the powers of darkness they became heralds of notions which were a skilful blend of heathen philosophies and Christian terms. They still

talked about Christ, but their "Christ" was not the Christ of God.

All through the nineteen centuries notions of this deadly kind have been advanced, but the earliest form of them was that which is alluded to here—the denial of Jesus Christ come in flesh. This particular point is mentioned also in the opening of chapter iv. of the first Epistle. When considering that passage we saw that the denial covers both His Deity and His Manhood; for the fact that He came "in flesh" shows that He was indeed a Man, and the fact that He existed so as to "come" in that way shows that He was more than Man, even God. The non-confession of the truth as to Christ stamped these propagandists as deceivers and antichrists.

Verse 8 contains a salutary word for all who labour in the word and doctrine. If saints to whom they minister are turned aside from the truth they cannot expect a full reward in the coming day. Their reward is bound up with the faithfulness and prosperity of the saints. In this note of warning sounded by John there is something which reminds us of the notable words uttered by Paul, as recorded in Acts xx. 31.

Verse 8, however, is parenthetical, and verse 9 picks up the thread from verse 7. These anti-christian deceivers were not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. They were transgressing or going forward, as they thought, to newer and better things. We have this kind of thing quite full-blown to-day in what is known as "Modernism." The

Modernist believes that religion or theology is a human science, and that like all sciences it must not stand still but advance with the times and with the increase of all human knowledge. Hence he goes forward with much confidence to what he conceives to be greater light. No doctrine is sacred to the out-and-out Modernist. There is hardly one doctrine of the Scripture which he leaves intact.

And there are forms of modernism which would hardly be classified as "Modernist" in the religious world. They are not the less mischievous on that account. They may as yet only "transgress" or "go forward" in certain particulars. But it is the whole idea of "going forward" that is wrong. If there may be development as to **some** details of the faith, why not as to **all**?

There should indeed be growth in our apprehension of the truth. That is another thing entirely, and it is quite clearly stated and enforced in chapter ii. of the first Epistle. The babe should become the young man, and the young man in due time become the father. That is increasing apprehension of that which has been made known from the beginning. The faith of Christ is divine. It has come from God, and consequently cannot be improved upon or developed. Let us lay hold upon that fact very firmly.

It is possible of course to hold that the truth has come from God, and yet not to abide in the doctrine of Christ, because simple faith becomes

swamped in intellectualism and reasoning. This danger specially threatens those who think more of **talking of** truth than **walking in** truth. It may in effect lead to just the same departure from the doctrine of Christ.

Now such departure means that the transgressor has not God. He has neither the Father nor the Son, for it is impossible to have One without the Other. He who abides in the doctrine—that is, in the truth—has Both.

In order that there may be obedience to the commandment, "That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it," (ver. 6), there must be a clear-cut refusal of all that denies or does not confess the truth as to Christ; and verse 10 makes this very plain. The refusal of evil and error is not inconsistent with love of a Divine sort, it is rather an expression of it. Even amongst men if the parent has genuine love for the child, that love will be as much expressed in the refusal of all that would imperil it as in feeding it with all that is good.

So even this lady and her children were to have nothing to do with the man who came to the house not bringing the true doctrine of Christ. They were not to give him entrance into the house, not even to bid him God speed. They were to meet him with the completest possible refusal. It is very striking that action such as this should be incumbent upon a lady and her children. Such as these would ordinarily be esteemed as having

less responsibility in such matters than any other saints. The inference then is obvious: it is a responsibility then which rests upon **all of us as individuals**, and which we cannot shelve with impunity.

We are not asked to judge as to his spiritual state, we have only to judge as to the doctrine he brings. The point is not as to whether or not he is well instructed as to details, dispensational, prophetic, and the like. It is just this: does he, or does he not, bring the doctrine of Christ. A Christian woman or her children are assumed to be capable of discerning this, and acting rightly.

Notice too that the man who comes is a **propagandist**, a travelling preacher. He comes to your door as the herald of something better than that which you have known. The case contemplated is not that of a believer of weak understanding, who gets entangled in what is false as to Christ. All too often in these days, when a multiplicity of errors are propagated, true saints get confused and waver and fall under the influence of what is false. Such should be treated differently, as indicated in Galatians vi. 1, Jude 22, 23, and elsewhere.

When the man who preaches a false Christ comes to your door the refusal of him and his doctrine cannot be too complete. Even to bid him God speed is to partake of his evil. We are not to lend ourselves to the smallest or slightest association with such a thing.

This should teach us how exceedingly precious and valuable a thing is the doctrine of Christ! It is the corner stone of our most holy faith, and if that be shaken all will collapse in ruin. It must be guarded at all cost.

Verse 12 also indicates this. There were many other things that the Apostle had to say to the elect lady and her children—things, no doubt, of spiritual importance. He looked forward a little and saw a time not far distant when he would be able to convey these things by word of mouth—a much more joyful method. This matter about which he wrote however brooked no delay. Paper and ink might be a poorer medium, but it was an urgent matter to put them on their guard in defence of the truth.

Lastly notice that though John does not mention his name he speaks of himself as “the elder.” The Epistle furnishes us with an example of the kind of service which was rendered by the elders, or presbyters, of Biblical days. They exercised an oversight of a spiritual sort. They gave guidance, in the way of practical directions, to those who were less instructed in the ways of the Lord. They shepherded the flock of God.

The Apostle John by this brief yet inspired letter was shepherding the souls of the elect lady and her children, and guarding them from the threatened ravages of some of Satan’s wolves.

THE BOOK AND THE SOUL.

IN the formation of the character of a successful minister of the Word of God, two ingredients are essentially necessary: first, an accurate acquaintance with the Bible; and, secondly, a due sense of the value of the soul and its necessities. To possess only one of them will leave a man a thoroughly one-sided minister. I may be deeply read in Scripture; I may have a profound acquaintance with the contents of the book, but if I forget the soul and its deep and manifold necessities, my ministry will be lamentably defective. It will lack point, pungency, and power. It will not meet the cravings of the heart, or tell upon the conscience. It will be a ministry **from** the book, but not **to** the soul. True and beautiful, no doubt, but deficient in usefulness and practical power.

On the other hand, I may have the soul and its needs distinctly before me. I may long to be useful. It may be my heart's desire to minister to the heart and conscience; but if I am not acquainted with my Bible, I shall have no material wherewith to be useful. My ministry will be barren and tiresome. Instead of teaching souls I shall tease them, and instead of edifying I shall irritate them. My exhortation, instead of urging souls on along the upward path of discipleship, will, from a lack of basis, have the effect of discouraging them.

These things are worthy of some consideration. You may listen to a person ministering the word, who possesses a great deal of the first of the above-named qualities, and very little of the second. It is evident he has the book and its moral glories before his spiritual vision. He is occupied, yea, engrossed with them—so engrossed indeed at times as almost to forget that he has souls before him. There is no pointed and powerful appeal to the heart, no fervent grappling with the conscience, no practical application of the contents of the book to the souls of the hearers. It is very beautiful, but not so useful as it might be. The minister is deficient in the second quality. He is more a minister of the book than a minister to the soul.

Then, again, you will find some who, in their ministry seem wholly occupied with the soul. They appeal, they exhort, they urge; but from lack of acquaintance and regular occupation with Scripture, souls are absolutely worn out under their ministry. True, they ostensibly make the book the basis of their ministry, but their use of it is so unskilful, and their application so palpably unintelligent, that their ministry proves as uninteresting as it is unprofitable.

Now, if we were asked, which of the two characters of ministry should we prefer? Without hesitation, we should say, the first. If the moral glories of the book are unfolded, there is something to interest and affect the heart, and if one is at all earnest and conscientious, he may get

on. Whereas, in the second case, there is nothing but tiresome appeal and scolding exhortation.

But, we need hardly say, we long to see an accurate acquaintance with the Bible, and a due sense of the value of the soul, combined and healthfully adjusted, in every one who stands up to minister to souls. Hence, let every minister study the book and its glories and think of the soul and its needs. Yes, let each one remember the link between the book and the soul.

C.H.M.

NEHEMIAH'S WALL AND GATES.

(I.)

NEWs came to Nehemiah in Shushan, the Persian palace, that the remnant of the Israelites in the land of Israel, now fallen to be a province of the great Medo-Persian Empire, was in great affliction and reproach. Moreover the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates burned with fire, a truly lamentable spectacle. Nehemiah on receipt of this distressing report sat down and wept, fasted certain days, and made confession to God of the sins of his nation—sins that had brought with them this heavy visitation of God's hand.

This then was the man God choose to rebuild the wall and set up its gates. Nehemiah showed

his sadness in his face so markedly that King Artaxerxes, whose cupbearer he was, asked him the reason of his grief. Learning why it was he granted him leave of absence, and gave him a letter of instruction to the Keeper of the King's forest to provide timber for the rebuilding of the wall, etc. Furnished thus, Nehemiah set off on his great task.

Nehemiah iii. gives us an account of the rebuilding of the wall and the setting up of the gates. We may ask what is the teaching to be gathered from the wall and its gates for Christians in this dispensation, for it is its present application that is before us. That a wall and gates have a true and right idea connected with them is evident from the fact that the Holy City of Revelation xxi. 12 "had a wall great and high and had twelve gates."

What then is the idea of a wall? It is an erection designed to give protection to those encircled by it, and to keep out enemies and anything inimical to the interests of the city. We see it set forth in plain straightforward language in 1 Corinthians v. 12. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian saints, says, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are **without**? do not ye judge them that are **within**?" In the assembly of God there is a "**within**," where they may experience the protecting hand of God, and exclude evil, so that it may be "**without**." There should be no room in a Christian assembly for a fornicator, a covetous person, an idolater, a railer,

a drunkard, an extortioner. Such are the instructions of Scripture.

Moreover if a person comes, bringing false doctrines, subversive of the foundations of the Christian faith, he should not be allowed an entrance. See the insistent injunctions in 2 John, given to a Christian lady and her children in such a case. Such an one must not be received even into their private house, nor bidden God speed, else they become "partakers of his evil deeds."

But what of the gates? They afford entrance, and illustrate how there should be means by which a true soul may find a home in the assembly. Now Nehemiah's gates afford some real teaching in an allegorical way as to what should find entrance to the assembly and what should characterize those who find a place there. Nay more, these gates by their names favour an orderly application that is profitable. Let us then look at them briefly.

"THE SHEEP GATE."

"Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it and set up the doors of it" (Nehemiah iii. 1).

What relation this gate had with sheep beyond its name, we are not informed. But we know that the word, **sheep**, is used in symbolic language of the believer in Christ. It is so used to show the loving care the Lord Jesus, "that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews xiii. 20), has for His own.

That He cares for His own is seen in the commission given to the once straying but restored Peter, "Feed My lambs . . . feed My sheep . . . feed My sheep" (John xxi. 15, 16, 17).

It is true that our Lord led His sheep out of the fold in John x., never again to re-enter it, and that the protection and gathering power of Christianity lies in a Person, and not in rules and regulations as set forth in the fold, symbolic of Judaism. Whilst this is true and still blessedly true, and true as long as the Church is here on earth, it is likewise true there is an assembly of God's people on earth with a "within" and a "without," where God's people should find a spiritual home and where the discipline and holiness of God's house is to be maintained. For all this teaching we go principally to the Pauline epistles.

Now it is a basic feeling natural to the renewed mind of the believer to receive all believers and every believer to the privileges of the assembly. And within the limitations of Scripture this is right. Surely every believer, sound in the faith and godly in walk, should find a place in that hallowed circle of God's assembly on earth. Alas! that it is not so. Churches, sects, denominations, parties, divisions are rampant. But it is well to have God's idea before us that we may avoid that sectarianism which means subscribing to a peculiar doctrine, or the prominence of a special man, or of some particular form of church government, or of association with the world. We should like the sheep of Christ to carry through the sheep

gate the **WHOLE** word of God without subtraction on the one hand, or on the other adding rules and regulations, whether written or unwritten, not found in the Word of God. Would that the sheep gate were freely used by the sheep!

It is significant that the high priest and his brethren, the priests, built this gate. Does not this remind us that our great High Priest as the Good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep, and became the **Great Foundation** of His assembly (1 Corinthians iii. 11). Then this foundation having been laid in His death, believers are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians ii. 20). We see this in their labours on the day of Pentecost and on, and formulated in their inspired writings for all time.

" THE FISH GATE "

" **The fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build**" (verse 3). And right substantially did they perform their task, for they laid the beams, and set up the doors and locks and bars thereof. Again we are not told what relation fish had to this gate beyond its name. But the connection between fish (the word being used in a symbolic way) and evangelism is very clear in Scripture. Our Lord walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brethren, Simon and Andrew, casting a net into the sea. He called them, saying, " Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men " (Matthew iv. 19). They straightway left their nets and followed Him. Such was the power of His word.

And surely it is the echo of that call throughout the ages that has been heard in ten thousand hearts, and has proved the urge for world-wide evangelism. It called forth Andrew and Peter, Paul, Timothy, the early Fathers, Calvin, Farel, Luther, Zwingli, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, and a list too long to enumerate. It led Carey and Marshman to India; Moffatt and Livingstone and Arnott to Africa; Hudson Taylor to China; Judson to Burmah; Martyn to Persia, Brainerd to the Red Indians roaming over the prairies of America; Gardner to inclement Patagonia; Paton to the New Hebrides. It has called forth the indomitable labours of hundreds of missionaries in producing the Scriptures in whole or in part in over seven hundred languages and dialects, so that the Word of God is a veritable tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

This all sets forth that it is a vital part of the ministry of God's servants that the Gospel should be preached. If the church ceases to be an evangelical body it ceases to grow or even maintain its footing. Extinguish that spirit and you have no birth rate. Extinguish that spirit and believers degenerate into mere doctrinaires; with no power to reach others, and fade and wither themselves in their own standing. If an assembly, as it were, has no fish gate, it is a fatal and irremediable loss. May it send us to our knees again and again if we find the fish gate has fallen into disuse.

(TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT MONTH, D.V.)

HOW TO SPEAK OF CHRIST'S SERVANTS.

"**I**T is because I agree with you so fully on evil-speaking that I write again so soon. Lamentable instances of false reports—and even slanderous ones—have been brought before me again and again of late ; and I truly believe that the readiness with which these are received and circulated is fast becoming a crying iniquity, and one which the Lord will be compelled to step in and judge unless we repent. For a long time past I have been driven to refuse to believe a report unless I have verified it for myself. Exodus xxiii. 1—*marginal reading*—binds this responsibility upon us."

To the letter containing this extract the following reply was given:—It is by upholding the good name of the ministering brethren that fellowship is promoted. I wish there were more "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." I wish sincerely that all labouring brethren would learn of the Lord and His holy apostles to think affectionately, and write and speak appreciatingly, of one another, and thus show their superiority to everything affecting self, and their supreme occupation with the Lord, and the Word and work the Spirit is carrying on for His glory. I am sure we have been sadly lacking in this—the servant coming before us in his personality as a man, and not in his connection with

the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has glorified with Himself in the heavens—maintaining His good Name there against a world of blasphemers and detractors. Every time I turn my eyes to the Son of God upon the Father's throne I see, for one thing, God's determination to clear His Name—"Of righteousness because I go to the Father"—and, knowing how near and dear His ambassadors of the heavenly legation of reconciliation are to Him, it must be peculiarly offensive to Him when the success of their ministry is hindered by raising against them an undercurrent of private calumny; and it must be gratifying to His heart when His ministers are so bent upon the advancement of His glory and so full of regard for one another, because they belong to Christ, that they are sensitively careful on all occasions to uphold their character, and discountenance all tale-bearers, insinulators, and evil-speakers.

It must have a very evil influence among the saints when a servant acts so as to set himself up by putting others down, while all the time he is preaching in the highest strain of Christ-exaltation. I am sure that the private intercourse of labourers of this sort with the saints, when contrasted with the ministry of the highest things of the Christian system which they hear from them in public, must have a most ruinous effect; for the high things are neutralized by the low things, and the mind of the believer is set a-questioning whether there can be any reality in heavenly things when those who are the ministers of

them are so very earthly—if not worse. The moral discrepancy between the public ministry of heavenly things and the private absorption in reporting and listening to evil and calumnious things must be very stumbling to souls who are tremendously sensitive for the honour of Christ's "worthy Name," and the good name of His servants.

The Lord's way of speaking of His servants is seen in the notable instance of John the Baptist—"He was a burning and shining light, more than a prophet . . . Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." He had been the witness of "the true Light," and now the Lord becomes a witness to him. The greatest preacher of his day, who was now in prison, has the Lord assuring him by means of his disciples, and witnessing to him before the people as the greatest born of women. "He must increase, but I must decrease," and when "that Light" was shining in meridian splendour Jesus began to say unto the multitude concerning John, "He was a burning and shining light." He increased, not by depreciating John, but by His own intrinsic excellence and wonderful works witnessed to from heaven, earth and hell!

He did not leave the world until He restored His fallen disciple, Peter, and expressed His confidence in him before them all by the work He gave him; and openly gave him the keys of the

kingdom of heaven on the day of Pentecost, and maintained him in his primacy among the twelve, notwithstanding his terrible fall. He did not set him aside because of it as one who could not be trusted because he had so grievously failed. And this same Peter, forgetting the smart of Paul's open rebuke given him at Antioch, writes of him as "our beloved brother Paul." This is the Christian style of a true servant formed on the model of the Lord.

Then Paul is a grand pattern. Time would fail to notice all the instances in which he speaks kindly and affectionately of others, and commends his fellow-labourers. One thinks of such lists as in Rom. xvi.; 1 Cor. xvi.; Col. iv. But to select a few examples. Think of his confidential and private communications to younger brethren in the letters to Timothy and Titus, and the courteous epistle to Philemon. These show the father in Christ, and the true Christian gentleman. "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you, or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ." Of Timothy he writes, "I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 17); again, in the close of the letter he adds, "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do. Let no man, therefore, despise him, but conduct him forth in peace that he may come unto me; for I look for

him with the brethren. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren, but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time" (1 Cor. xvi. 10-12). He does not add: "Apollos is an impracticable man, always angular; I am sorry I called upon him at all." No, Apollos was the Lord's servant and was not serving under Paul, but under the Lord; and Paul recognized this, and owned his liberty to go or stay. If there was will in Apollos that was his matter, but there was neither will nor temper on Paul's part.

Paul has such confidence in Timothy that he couples him with himself in writing six of his epistles, (2 Cor. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; Philemon 1). Writing to the Philippians he says, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, for I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state; but ye know the proof of him that as a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel." And to the Thessalonians he writes: "And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and comfort you, concerning your faith." When he writes to himself he addresses him, "Timothy, my own son in the faith. . . . To Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2). Such is the gracious, affectionate way the Spirit teaches us, by example, in His Word, to think,

speak and write of the Lord's servants. They are dear to Him, and it must give Him peculiar pleasure to hear them well spoken of. As a domestic servant may be ruined by giving her a bad character, so a true servant of Christ may have his moral reputation and good character and ministry destroyed by detraction and slander. How sad, and how unchristian! If the wells of Christian integrity are poisoned, moral death is inevitable.

I believe that it is just here, and in this very thing, that any recovery we may expect of the condition of the Church must begin. "Know them that labour among you . . . and esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake" (1 Thess. v. 12-13). Let every labourer think kindly and lovingly, and speak and write favourably of his fellow-labourers, and thereby unity will be promoted at its source, which is the ministry of the Word. If instead of proclaiming faults, making grave accusations, receiving and propagating baseless or venomous reports, every one carried with him the mantle of charity that covers a multitude of sins, and he were to receive no evil tales regarding the Lord's servants, but, on the contrary, discourage all tale-bearers and evil-speakers, and cultivate a generous Christian love and care for his brethren's good name, there would soon be a revival of grace in the ministry and moral recovery in the Church.

It is told of the mother of a blessed servant in the Lord's work in Scotland, within this century,

that when any person, on calling, came out with some evil tale about a neighbour she said, "Hand down my bonnet, and we will go together to the person about whom you have told me this, and we shall see about it, and find out if it be true." By this faithful dealing she so frightened all the evil-speakers that she was not long troubled with their defaming stories! Her son's life was characterized by the truthful nobleness of his mother, and when by God's grace he knew the truth of Christianity, he became the centre of that great spiritual movement which led not merely to the accomplishment of a great ecclesiastical event, but to the salvation of an untold multitude of souls. Let truth in the inward parts have such commanding effect as in this truth-loving mother and truth-commanded son, and this would work a moral revolution: for the labourers being set free from the supposed necessity of calumniating one another, and self-righteously bemoaning the course of this one and that one, would have their whole mind, time, and tongues in readiness to be entirely occupied with Christ and good, and not with the failings, or supposed moral delinquencies, of one another. All evil-speaking among the Lord's labourers would soon cease if the effectual cure of making the accuser meet the accused were adopted. But this might produce only an outward cessation from fear of exposure; **the radical cure must be inward, and in the spirit**—practical righteousness and practical love to the brethren, and the Spirit producing these, are the divine proofs of being born of God in 1 John iii.

It is sad to think that there should be a necessity for writing a word on this subject; but have we not been all guilty, more or less, of this unkind and destructive conduct which the Spirit has emphatically condemned? I remember a quaint old Puritan book I used to hear my mother reading aloud in the family circle on the Lord's Day afternoons, called "Dyer's Golden Chain," and though I was very young (only thirteen when she died), and could not take in the teaching of it, there was one singular expression that has stuck to me all my life, and acted as a beacon. It is this remarkable one; when speaking of the "angel of the Church," he says in his quaint, but striking way, "Ministers are called angels because of their dignity: but when angels fall they become devils" (1 John iii. 8-10). "Wherefore putting away lying, speak truth every one with his neighbour, because we are members one of another . . . Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth, but if there be any good one for needful edification, that it may give grace to those that hear it. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 25-32).

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OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(3 JOHN)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

IN certain features the third Epistle of John is very like his second, yet in its main theme it is the converse, and at the same time the complement, of the second, as we shall see.

Like the second it is an epistle of a private nature, yet containing in its brief verses instruction of such an important kind that the Spirit of God has seen it needful to give it a permanent niche in the inspired Word. We cannot say with any certainty whether Gaius, to whom it was written, is to be identified with one of the others bearing that name, of whom we read. The Gaius of Acts xix. 29, was a man of Macedonia. The Gaius of Acts xx. 4, was "of Derbe," a city in Asia Minor. The Gaius of 1 Corinthians i. 14, was a Corinthian, and he was almost certainly the Gaius of Romans xvi. 23, who was host to the Apostle Paul. This Gaius may very well have lived on to old age, and still exercised his hospitality when John wrote. If so, he presents us with a very delightful picture of one who did not grow weary in well-doing.

Be that as it may, the Gaius of our Epistle is presented to us as a saint characterized by spiritual prosperity. John bears witness, in the second verse, to the fact that his soul prospered to such an extent that he could only desire that his bodily

health might equal the health of his soul. There are seasons when we express our wishes and desires the one for the other. How often we are able truthfully to indulge in a wish like that? Not often, we fear! With the most of us the health of the body exceeds the health of the soul. We meet one another and enquire, How are you? Taking it for granted that the enquiry refers to the body, we say cheerfully (as a rule) Quite well, thank you. If the enquiry were, How is it with your soul?—what should we say?

The assurance that John had as the spiritual prosperity of Gaius was not gained by personal contact, for he was at a distance and communicating by letter. It was gained through testimony borne by others. Certain brethren had arrived in John's locality and they spoke of him; and what they had to say bore witness to the fact that the truth was dwelling in him and that it found expression in his life, for he walked in truth. That which is **in** us comes **out** in our activities.

The Lord Himself laid down as a principle that, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). Here we find another principle of life which is a companion to it—**that which dwells in us characterizes our walk**. If Satan's lie dwells in us we are bound to walk in falsity and crookedness in regard to God. When truth is in us by the Spirit of God (as we saw when considering verse 2 of the second Epistle) we shall walk in the truth, even though we walk in the midst of this crooked world. The walk of

a Christian is to be light in the midst of darkness, and truth in the midst of error.

In the second Epistle John tells us that he rejoiced **greatly** in finding the children of the elect lady walking in truth. Here he goes even a step further, in saying that **no greater** joy was his than this. Gaius appears to come under the term, "my children." If this means that he was a convert of John, it would mean that he was not one of the others named Gaius, who are mentioned in Scripture. However John probably uses the term in a pastoral way here, as he evidently does in his first Epistle (ii. 1; iii. 7; etc.). He had a fatherly interest in all the saints who came within the sphere of his ministry. Peter warns the elders not to act as "**lords** over God's heritage." By his example John shows us that the true attitude for an elder is that of a **father** filled with love and solicitude for his children. It would have been well if all who have exercised rule amongst the saints had followed his steps.

In verses 5, 6 and 7 we discover what it was that moved the Apostle to write in this strain. The brethren who had come and testified of the truth that was in Gaius, were evidently these humble labourers in the Lord's service, to whom he had shown hospitality and whom he had helped forward on their journey. The love he had shown them and the service which he had rendered to them, just because they served the Lord and went forth in His Name, was a clear proof of the truth that was in him; and the more so because they were strangers to him.

The end of verse 5 might lead us to suppose that there were two classes in question: (1) the brethren, and (2) strangers. The better attested reading however appears to be, "the brethren, and that strangers." It was right to serve the brethren who were well known to him; but to serve brethren who were complete strangers just because they served the common Master, was indeed to act "faithfully." The truth is that the saints are one, and that the Name of the Lord Jesus binds all who serve in that Name together, and that love is the cementing power in the Christian circle. To this truth Gaius was faithful. It was in him, and he walked in it.

Not only did these brethren go forth for the sake of the Name, but they took also the place of dependence upon their Master. They did not take anything of the Gentiles, or nations; though they moved among the nations and preached the Word in their hearing. They made it very plain that they were not seeking any gain of a material sort for themselves, but seeking to give to their hearers that which would be gain of a spiritual sort. In this they were followers of the Apostle Paul, who himself was a follower of the Lord, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 33—35).

These were the people whom Gaius had received into his house, showing them loving hospitality, although on arrival they were strangers to him. Not only did he entertain them but he set them forward on their journey "after a godly sort," or

“worthily of God.” That being so, he must have treated them with no mean kindness! Had he set them forward in a way that was worthy of a prince, it would have been something great; but he did it in a way that was worthy of God! He evidently viewed them in the true light. However insignificant in themselves, they were servants of Christ, identified with the Name that is above every name. As being such, Gaius received them. He saw them, not in the light of his own personal likes or dislikes, but in the light of what they were as the little servants of an illustrious Master; and so Gaius walked in the truth and proved that the truth was in him.

The example of Gaius is placed permanently before us in the Scriptures not merely that we may admire it, but that we may follow it. Moreover, it is not merely something which we **may** do; something which is within our rights, and permissible, and which no Diotrophes can rightly object to our doing. It is something which we **must** do if we would be walking in the truth. Note that in verse 8 the word “ought” is used. It is not, “We therefore may receive such,” but, “We therefore OUGHT to receive such.” Now “ought” is a word which expresses obligation and not what is optional. It is “such” that we ought to receive; that is, those who truly come in His Name. If we do not receive SUCH, we are not walking in the truth.

On the other hand by receiving such we become “fellow-helpers to the truth.” This is a very en-

couraging statement, especially to those of us who may not be possessed of any shining gift. There is the ever-present danger for the man of one talent that he should hide it in the earth and do nothing. Now though we may not have the gift that would qualify us to be preachers of the truth, or even to be active propagators of the truth in other and lesser ways, we may take our share and become helpers with the truth by identifying ourselves with those who do more actively labour, and helping them by caring for their needs.

It is frequently the case that our true convictions and attitude are most effectually seen **in quite small details**. In the days of long ago Rahab showed that she really did believe in the God of Israel and cast in her lot with Him by receiving the spies in peace. At the judgment of the living nations, which is yet to come, according to Matthew xxv., those who are the sheep and blessed of God, reveal the state of their hearts by receiving the messengers of the Son of Man, whom He owns as His brethren. And these to-day, who go forth with the truth, are to be received, if we too are of the truth and fellow-workers with it.

This is the converse of the instruction contained in the second Epistle. There, he who does not bring the truth is to be refused access to the believer's house, and there is to be not the least identification with him. Here the brother, even though a stranger, who is diligently carrying the truth for the sake of the Name, is to be received, and we are glad to be identified with him because

of the truth he brings. In either case the truth is the test, and all merely personal considerations are ruled out of the question.

In verses 9 and 10 we find an exposure of the sad state of things in a certain church, which made it needful for the Apostle to write in this way. Nothing is said as to the locality of "the church" in question. It was elsewhere probably than where Gaius lived. Diotrephes was a prominent man in it, and very possibly Demetrius, mentioned in verse 12, was in it too. Diotrephes would by no means receive these brethren. He took a very strong line against them, forbidding others to receive them and even casting out of the church. Also he would receive no directions from the Apostle, seeking to overthrow the apostolic authority by malicious talk.

It would seem to have been a case of the local elder or bishop lording it over God's heritage, the assembly, just as is forbidden in Peter's Epistle; and he who would do a thing of that kind must of necessity take up an insubordinate position as regards apostolic authority. The one who would fly in the face of what Peter had written years before, would not now be likely to bow to what is written by John.

Why did Diotrephes act in this way? The excuse very probably was that these travelling brethren were unauthorized men, and that he was standing for what was orderly and official. But the underlying motive of his attitude and action is

unmasked in the words, "who loveth to have the preeminence." The work of these men was in some way a challenge to the place that Diotrephes held, and loved to hold. Hence he could not tolerate them.

Again and again the Spirit of God has worked outside of officialism, and we do well to note it. It was so with the prophets that God raised up in the midst of Israel. It was so in supreme measure in the case of our Lord Himself. He was regarded as an unofficial upstart by the religious leaders of His day, and His authority was strongly challenged (see Matt. xxi. 23). Paul too, entered upon his career in an unofficial way, as Galatians i. 15-23 bears witness. The fact is that the Lord raises up servants according to His sovereign pleasure, and asks neither permission nor counsel of any man. Every distinct awakening or revival in these later days has been marked by this same feature. Officialism has not helped, even if it has not opposed.

It is worthy of remark that, whether in this epistle or the previous one, the only test proposed in regard to professed servants of the Lord is that of the truth. Did they bring it or did they not? If the Apostles had undertaken to authorize and send forth preachers of the Word, or if they had appointed a committee to do it, the presence or absence of the authorization would have been the test. We live in a day in which human authorization of that kind abounds, and the results of it are obvious. Men abound who have the author-

ization right enough, but they do **not** bring the truth. They use the authorization to accredit the **error** they propagate, which is a fearful evil.

It is quite a common idea that **the man should accredit the message**—So-and-so is duly ordained, so what he says must be right. Or it may take this form: So-and-so is such a good man, so earnest, so gifted, so spiritual, therefore he cannot be wrong. The whole principle however, is a false one. The true principle is just the reverse. **The message accredits the man.** The Lord's words in Luke ix. 49, 50, virtually enunciate this principle; and it is clearly stamped on both 2 John and 3 John. The man is not the test of the truth: the truth is the test of the man. How important then that we should be so established in the truth that we can use it as a test.

The action of Diotrephes did not lack anything as regards vigour. He did not receive these stranger brethren, and hindered others doing so. He would not have them in the assembly. And further he would not receive the Apostle, as regards his authority at least, and spoke against him with malice. Very possibly he regarded his vigour as a proof of his being faithful to what was orderly and dignified. The root from which it sprang, however was the old Pharisaic one of the love of place and preeminence. It was Gaius who was faithful and not he (see verse 5).

The casting of these brethren out of the church may not have been full excommunication, as it was his personal doing and not assembly action; but

evidently he would allow them no place or liberty in the assembly. In the same way "receiveth us not" hardly means that he did not receive John to break bread, for John was at a distance. It does mean that he would not receive his authority as an Apostle, and did his best by malicious talk to undermine his authority in the minds of others.

Now all this was but "evil," as verse 11 indicates; and we are not to follow it. We solemnly believe that this "prating against" the servants of the Lord "with malicious words" is a very sore evil to-day. To blacken a man's character because you cannot refute his arguments is a well-known controversial trick, but it is doubly despicable when indulged in amongst those who have to contend as to the truth. Let us eschew it as an evil, and follow what is good. In the latter part of verse 11 we have another instance of how John reasons in the abstract, as to good and evil, but we do well to allow its full force in our consciences. How do we stand as to it? Are we of God, or have we not seen Him?

Demetrius is brought before us as an example we may well follow. All knew that he was a follower of the good, and John himself could bear witness to that effect. But above all this the truth itself bore witness to him. The truth presents us with an unerring standard of what is good, and if the course of Demetrius were examined in the light of the truth, the truth itself gave a good report in his favour. We shall all of us be ultimately examined in the light of the truth when we stand

before the judgment seat of Christ. What is our report going to be? Good or bad?

Our little Epistle closes in very similar fashion to the second. As with the elect lady, so with Gaius, the face to face conversation was far better than the letter. But as it was an urgent thing, brooking no delay, to fortify the one against the subtle approaches of evil, so it was urgent to confirm the other in his reception and support of those who were good and true, even when others refused them.

In the closing sentences the Apostle speaks of the brethren who were with him and those with Gaius as "the friends." This carries our minds back to chapter xv. of his Gospel, where we find the Lord saying, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;" and again, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." The obedient saint is the one to be brought into this wonderful **intimacy**, and therefore to be acknowledged as a **friend** of Christ.

In contrast with the wilful and disobedient Diotrophes there were those who were indeed the friends of Christ, and such were acknowledged as friends by the Apostle and all those who walked in truth.

We each may well ask ourselves in closing this question—If the Apostle John were amongst us to-day, would he acknowledge me as a **FRIEND**?

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

Would you insert in your next issue some thoughts on "The God of glory," in Acts vii? Do you think that emphasis is to be laid on "glory," or on the God who appeared?—GATESHEAD.

A RATHER difficult question! Emphasis indeed needs to be laid upon both; and we rather think that the emphasis might vary as from time to time we read the words. Sometimes the Spirit of God might emphasize the one in our minds, and sometimes the other.

We certainly must lay emphasis upon GOD. Man was beginning to make a name for himself in the day when Abraham lived. The business of making himself a name began very soon after the flood, as we see in Genesis xi. 4. In a day when **man** was large in people's thoughts GOD revealed Himself to Abraham.

But he revealed Himself as the GOD of GLORY. Just because man was becoming big in his own thoughts, his own glory (such as it was) was before him. So God presented Himself to Abraham as the true Fountain-head and Centre of all true glory—a God who lived in His own glorious realm, lifted far above man's petty little world.

Ur of the Chaldees must have been a very fine city, as recent excavations have been showing. But the knowledge of the GOD of GLORY lifted him in his spirit clean outside it all. If we apprehend God in this light it will do for us what it did for him.

MEET FOR THE INHERITANCE. MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians i. 12).

"A vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" (2 Timothy ii. 21).

"MEET for the inheritance of the saints in light!" "A vessel . . meet for the Master's use!" Happy is he who is thus doubly meet!

The inheritance of the saints in light! What is the meaning of that expression? We read elsewhere of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter i. 4). Is this the same thing?

Yes, it means all that, and more. It is an all-embracing term. Heaven, glory, the presence of God, everything which the future holds in its hand for us, when Jesus comes and glory dawns, is comprehended in that great phrase: "The inheritance of the saints in light."

And we are made meet for that blest home and place and portion! Observe the words, "Giving thanks unto the Father, Who **hath** made us meet." Not who is making us meet, or we might suppose it to be a sanctifying process covering the whole of our Christian life. But that is not what the

Apostle says. His words are, "who **hath** made us meet"—it is a thing already done.

"Are we to understand," replies some incredulous reader, "that all of us are fit for heaven and for all that heaven will mean to those who enter there? Surely you are wrong in believing that your text teaches anything so startling. How can we be fit for that holy place so long as there is so much sin about us? The utmost any of us should say is that we hope Almighty God may of His mercy deem us fit when our last hour is come. Anything more seems dangerously presumptuous. And if you insist that we must take the words of your text as they stand, then they can only be true of very superior Christians who live much nearer to God than most of us who have to mix with the world every day of our lives."

Yes, I know that what you say is the view of many. But let me ask who are the **us** of whom you speak? This epistle to the Colossians was not written to everybody living in the city of Colosse. For the most part its inhabitants were heathens. Christian epistles are addressed to Christians. And what is a Christian? A Christian is one whose sins are forgiven, who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who was once in darkness and under its authority, but who is now delivered from it and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. He is one who has been made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light and who can take the hallowed name of Father upon his lips when speaking to God in

prayer and praise (see Colossians i. 12-14). When you say **us**, are you speaking of Christians of that sort ?

You may think that to be very high ground, at all events higher than **you** can honestly take. You feel, perhaps, that were you different from what you are—holier, more devoted to God and able to take greater pleasure in religious exercises, you might then be entitled to say as much. But you cannot now, and to pretend to more than you feel would only be acting a lie.

We can only answer that were you everything you could wish to be, were your life marked by holiness, devotedness to God, and by an ever-growing care for His things and His service, yet Faith does not and should not rest herself there. Experiences are not always at the same level, and our spiritual life may sometimes languish and show but little vigorous growth. Were our confidence to rest on anything of that kind it would be often shaken, and we should never be wholly free from doubts and fears. **Faith rests on Christ**—on His perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice for sins, and on the sure and immovable foundation of God's holy Word. Here we have a solid resting-place which nothing can possibly shake.

When the returning prodigal of Luke xv. crossed the threshold of his father's house, was he not fit to go in ? The best robe had been brought forth with the ring and the shoes, and in

these he was arrayed. But there was more. Repentance had been wrought in his soul. When afar off his father had run to meet him and covered him with kisses. And then with a broken humbled heart, he confessed his sins. Forgiven, reconciled, clothed with change of raiment and owned as a son, the young man entered in to share in the feast that was being kept, with music and dancing, to celebrate his return. Was he not in every way made meet for **that** inheritance? And is there not in the history of every true Christian the counterpart of all these things? Is he not forgiven, reconciled, clothed with a robe of righteousness, and owned as one of the many sons? To such questions there is but one answer.

If any reader should require that the subject be dealt with in a still simpler way, then, I take up one of the first things to be faced in our spiritual life—the forgiveness of sins. Are you quite sure that your sins are forgiven? Do you know, if I may so speak, that God has written the word **forgiven** across the long, dark catalogue of your sins, and that He will remember them no more? (Heb. x. 17). This, when known, is enough to give the greatest relief. Nor is it only of His mercy that we are forgiven. Mercy, indeed, is a thing in which God delights (Micah vii. 18). But not at the expense of His righteousness. It is here that the expiatory sufferings of Christ on the Cross come in—the eternal witness of God's hatred of sin and of His unspeakable love towards sinful men.

And the forgiveness of sins is not intended to be a matter of uncertain hope. The Word of God speaks of it with authority and in no doubtful terms. I will quote one of the plainest passages: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). Could anything be plainer? And every word of it comes from God's mouth. If in my inmost soul I believe in the once crucified but now risen Saviour, am I not entitled to say that my sins are forgiven? Is it presumptuous to say so? Is it the vain confidence of a deceived man?

Do you say, "But I have so much sin in me still"? It is true you still have sin in you. The old sinful nature is there with its evil tendencies unchanged. But, thank God, something else is there too. A Christian is not only forgiven, but he is born again, born of God as John i. 13 tells us, or, to use a fuller expression of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians v. 17, he is a **new creation** in Christ. Now this does not mean that the old is made better, but that in being born again there has been implanted within us a new life which is as holy as the other is evil. And this new life, to which must be added the gift of the Holy Spirit, is the source of new desires and new aspirations, for its nature is to love holiness and hate sin. Now God views us in relation to this last, and when so viewed the old life—"the flesh"—does not come into the reckoning at all. This explains a passage in the First Epistle of John, which some find it

hard to understand: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [practise] sin, for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (chap. iii. 9). This is true of the believer, looked at simply in reference to the new life which he has received as born of God, and which, as we have already said, loves holiness and hates sin. It is its nature so to do.

But if every believer is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light it is not everyone who is "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" (2 Timothy ii. 21). Nor indeed could he be if he did not purge himself from the vessels to dishonour—men holding and teaching doctrines subversive of the Christian faith. The Apostle had just named two of them—Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had erred from the truth in saying that the resurrection was already past and had overthrown the faith of some. Such were vessels to dishonour from whom Timothy and all others were to separate themselves if they would be vessels meet for the Master's use. And the same call needs to be loudly sounded in this lax and easy day. There are plenty of men who would fain pass as Christians who by mouth and pen are overthrowing the faith of many. Some are bold enough to call themselves "**Pastors**"—shepherds of the sheep—who yet deny the deity of the Son of God, His atoning sacrifice and the reality of His glorious resurrection! These are not pastors but "grievous wolves"—vessels to dishonour, whose books should be burned and from

whom every loyal-hearted follower of Christ will turn away. Any fellowship with such is fatal. Reader, would you be a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use? Then you must keep clear of doctrines that undermine the faith and of those who hold and teach them. On this point we speak with decision. We say your bounden duty is to refuse all association with men of the stamp of Hymenaeus and Philetus. Be loyal to Christ and to His word. You must be if you would receive your Master's approbation both now and when you stand at His judgment-seat.

But this is not all. Timothy was to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." We are to do the same. We follow **righteousness** in things Godward and manward, rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. We follow **faith**—that whole-hearted confidence in the living God which we shall find to be a source of strength at all times. We follow **charity**—that divine and heavenly quality without which a man is nothing, though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels, understand all mysteries and give his goods to feed the poor. We follow **peace** and things which make for peace. If there are others who do the same we are one with them, for all who follow these things do assuredly call on the Lord out of a pure heart. These are our companions in days both dark and bright whether they be near or far away.

But we stop. May every believer who reads these lines know that he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and may he earnestly endeavour to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use (2 Timothy ii. 21).

W.B.

NEHEMIAH'S WALL AND GATES.

(II.)

(CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH)

“ THE OLD GATE ”

“Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodiah ” (iii. 6). They, too, did their work well, laying the beams and setting up the doors and the locks. Does not this warn Christians against novelties? One has only to look at Christendom to-day, and one sees with sorrow truth given up and error being run after, even in circles where once it was maintained. One thing is certain. No truth is new. It may be new **to me**, but it cannot to be new. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah viii. 20).

It is striking how the apostle John emphasizes “**the beginning.**” It was said to the fathers—that portion of the family of God that had arrived

at maturity in the things of God, men that were settled in their minds concerning Christianity, linking it up with Christ, as the full and final revelation of God—"I write unto you fathers, because ye have known Him that is **from the beginning**" (I John ii. 13). There can be no addition to that revelation. Nothing can be added to the Person of Christ.

And what was enough for the fathers in the family of God, was enough for the little children, the most immature in God's family, the most open to the assaults of the enemy. So it is said to them, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard **from the beginning**. If that which ye have heard **from the beginning** shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father" (I John ii. 24).

We find the modernist and higher critic battering at the doors of the old gate, causing immense havoc in the church of God, as they seek to undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith. Yet the truth will prevail for "we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians xiii. 8). Yet it is a solemn thing to be wrong ourselves, and lead others into error. Let us see to it that we repair "**the old gate**;" and refuse novelties that would lead us astray.

"THE VALLEY GATE"

"The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah" (verse 13). Not only are

we told about the doors and locks and bars, but that they built of the wall one thousand cubits in length. What do we learn by the term, valley gate? A valley in Scripture is evidently a symbol of lowliness and humility. The voice of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord, was lifted up, echoing the prophetic words of Isaiah, uttered over seven centuries before, "**Every valley** shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low . . . and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke iii. 5, 6). And the intense mourning in Israel as the result of their awakening to their sin in rejecting their Messiah is likened to "the mourning of Hadadrimmon in **the valley** of Megiddon" (Zechariah xii. 11). Is this not a beautiful picture of the lowliness of mind that ought to characterize Christians in their intercourse one with the other?

If only Diotrophes had passed through that gate his name would not have been handed down for all time as one, who loved the pre-eminence; and to secure his position he acted in the flesh, removing every rival out of his way by violence and force. And can a Christian have this spirit if he walks with his Master, who said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls"? (Matthew xi. 29). Impossible! May we know how to enter by the valley gate, and that often.

"THE DUNG GATE."

"The dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of

Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem" (verse 14). Dung is not a pleasant subject. It is only filth and corruption, to be got rid of as soon as possible. This is the one gate, we take it, in which it is a question, not of entrance into the city as with all the other gates, but of using it to get rid of something objectionable.

The Apostle Paul knew how to use that gate. He had everything to give confidence in the flesh, birth, parentage, circumcision, education, religiousness. But he met Christ on the highway to Damascus, and thence his values completely changed. Things that were gain to him he counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord, nay he counted them but **dung** that he might win Christ (see Philippians iii. 4—9).

The apostle Peter advises the use of the dung gate when he exhorts his readers to lay aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (1 Peter ii. 1).

The apostle Paul also exhorts his readers, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Ephesians iv. 31). Nine-tenths of all trouble among saints can be traced to an unwise and sinful use of the tongue. Each one knows what wrong thoughts we cherish, what unwise words we speak, what ungracious actions we do. May we know how to use the dung gate, and be happier and cleaner by so doing.

“ THE GATE OF THE FOUNTAIN ”

“ **The gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Coz-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah**” (verse 15). In Numbers xxi. after the children of Israel had the experience of the brazen serpent, typical of the judgment of the flesh, opening up the way for the energy of a new life, we read, “ Spring up, O well ; sing ye unto it ” (verse 17). So in John iv. 14 our Lord said, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” So may this gate not set forth the happy portion of the believer, who has made way for the full enjoyment of heavenly things by honest self-judgment as set forth by the dung gate, and who finds the immense spiritual gain of so doing?

“ THE WATER GATE ”

“ **Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate** ” (verse 26). Here is it a case of dwelling. No lack of water. No lack of refreshment. And has not the Christian received that which answers to this? Is there not the refreshment of the whole of God's Word by the Spirit as his portion ?

“ THE HORSE GATE ”

“ **From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house** ” (verse 28). The horse is a symbol of power. Read the

graphic description of the horse by the Lord in Job xxxix. 19-25. We quote part of it. "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? . . . he paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men." Now the Holy Spirit is given that the believer may have **power**. The disciples were bidden by our Lord to wait for the promise of the Father — "Until ye be endued with **power** from on high." Why are Christians so little marked by **power**? We are afraid the valley and dung gates are not enough in use, and the way not made plain for the gate of the fountain and the water gate—in other words, on the one side to judge the flesh on the other to walk in the Spirit. There then will be power.

"THE EAST GATE"

"After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate" (verse 29). We have already referred to Numbers xxi. It is interesting that after the brazen serpent incident, type of the judgment of the flesh making way for an inflow of spiritual life, we read that the children of Israel "journeyed . . . toward the **sunrising**" (verse 11). The sun rises in the east. Does it not set forth the Christian, whose heart is bent on heavenly things, with his face towards the glory, recognising that all his hopes are in heaven, waiting for the summoning shout that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, will land him there?

" THE GATE MIPHKAD "

" After him repaired Malchaiah . . . over against the gate Miphkad " (verse 31). Miphkad means the place of meeting. How happy it is that God gives His people a place of meeting—an assembly on earth, where our Lord is in the midst of those gathered to His name. " Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion ; for there the Lord commanded the blessing; even life for evermore " (Psalm cxxxiii).

How happy to have a taste of this on earth by the earnest of the Spirit, how blessed to reach the meeting place in the glory, all God's people in happy accord. Then there shall be

" No stain within; no foes, or snares around;
No jarring notes shall there discordant sound;
All pure without, all pure within the breast;
No thorns to wound, no toil to mar our rest."

The circuit of the wall accomplished, we reach, where we began, the sheep gate. How good it is to know that all shall be gathered home in our Lord's presence, with Him and like Him and that for ever.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(Jude 1—11)

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

THE Epistle of Jude bears a very strong resemblance to 2 Peter ii. 1—iii. 14, which lies upon the surface and must be apparent to every reader. Both refer to very evil men, who come in amongst the saints, and both unmask their true character. Both quote Old Testament examples by way of illustration and warning; and amongst the examples both mention the angels that sinned, and Sodom and Gomorrah. Both remind us that even holy angels would not assume authority as these men do. Both quote the case of Balaam. Both use a succession of very vigorous and graphic similes to impress us with their terrible evil and sin. And both turn to account what they have to say about the evil, by using it to urge the saints on to that which is good.

Yet with all these resemblances there is an underlying difference which we must endeavour to seize. In Peter the men in question are distinctly **false teachers**, who themselves are going to destruction, and who influence for evil and drag with them to destruction unstable souls who, by making a profession of Christianity, have left behind them in an outward way the corruptions of the heathen world. In Jude the evil men are not spoken of as teachers in the same definite way, but the position of antagonism they take is even more pronounced. They are marked by regular **apos-**

tasy, and in keeping with this the angels who await judgment are spoken of not merely as sinning, but as not keeping their first estate; that is, in other words, apostatizing. Jude therefore seems to contemplate a state of things just a degree worse than that which Peter contemplates.

The Apostle Paul also warns us as to the character of the last days in 2 Timothy iii. 1—iv. 5; giving instructions to the servant of God in view of that which he predicts. The words used differ very slightly. Paul, and Peter also, speak of “the last days.” Jude speaks of “the last time.” John also in his first Epistle speaks of “the last time;” only there it is more accurately, “the last hour,” and a somewhat different sense is attached to the word, for they were in the last hour when he wrote. No fresh “hour” was going to intervene between the time of his writing and the coming of the Lord, which will take place when the Antichrist has appeared. Already many lesser antichrists had appeared as forerunners of the great one to come. Each of the other inspired writers, Paul, Peter and Jude, looks on to the coming of the Lord as the final sweeping away of the evil.

Jude addresses himself to the “called” ones; that is, to those who are genuinely the called people of God, and that without distinction. He does not write to the saints composing any particular assembly nor to Jewish believers as distinct from Gentile ones: all saints are before him. He views them in a twofold way: first in relation to God the Father, and then in relation to Jesus

Christ. The word "beloved" seems to be better attested than "sanctified." They, and we, are "beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ."

How very beautiful is this note!—the first that is struck in this Epistle. The saints universally are addressed, as called out from the world. All are **beloved** in God the Father, as begotten of Him; and as under the mighty hand of Jesus Christ all are **preserved**. The true saints of God are the objects of Divine love, and in spite of all the evil which may invade the Christian circle they will be preserved to the end. Moreover, mercy and peace and love are to be multiplied to such, though evils multiply around them. What encouragement there is in all this! How assuring and how fortifying! In the strength of it we can proceed to consider the evils that are exposed and predicted.

Jude had purposed to write a treatise concerning "the common salvation," but found himself turned aside from that design to write this short Epistle exhorting rather to the defence of the faith. This is a remarkable confession and quite unique. The "common salvation," that is, the salvation in which we all participate, is indeed an inexhaustible theme, and it may well be that on another occasion Jude fulfilled his original purpose, though not in an inspired way. As a matter of fact an inspired exposition of that salvation was already available in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and in the inspired Word God does not repeat Himself.

There was however still a niche in Scripture which required to be filled, so Jude's original thought was set aside and he was honoured of God in being pressed into the service of filling it.

It was now needful that those called of God should be exhorted to **contend** for the faith. It was given only to the Apostles to authoritatively **expound** the faith, and commit it to the inspired Writings. It was given to few, comparatively speaking, to be pastors and teachers and give **instruction** in the faith. How likely then that the mass of believers should jump to the conclusion that **the defence of the faith and contention for it** was also the business of but a few. Hence the need for this word of exhortation. Is it not extraordinary and reprehensible that with this exhortation before us there should to-day be so many who consider that contending for the faith is no concern of theirs, and would like to relegate it to a few who have high scholastic qualifications or some kind of official status?

The faith is unspeakably precious. It embodies all we know of God in Christ. If it goes, everything goes, as far as we are concerned. Hence it must be held in its integrity at all costs, and not only held passively but contended for actively. The faith has been "once delivered unto the saints." There are three things in that statement which need to be carefully noted.

First, the faith has been **delivered**, not discovered. It is not something which has been worked out by men and added to bit by bit, as the

“sciences” have been, but something handed over by God through His Holy Spirit. The sciences have been built up by observation and experiment and reasoning. The faith has been revealed of God that our faith may receive it.

Second, the faith has been **once** delivered; that is, once for all. The delivery of it took some little time. It “began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.” However, by the time that Jude wrote, the delivery of it was finished: the circle of revealed truth had been completed in the Apostolic writings. The men of science are always awaiting fresh discoveries: they have very little that is certain, and settled beyond all question. We have a faith delivered once for all. God has spoken. His Word has been committed to writing, and we await no further revelation. It cannot be amended, though it may be rejected. We receive it, desiring help of God that we may increasingly understand it.

Third, it has been delivered **to the saints**. It was not delivered **to** the Apostles and prophets, but delivered **through** them **to** the saints. The saints consequently are its custodians, and not merely prominent or gifted men amongst the saints. This is a fact of deep importance. The faith addresses itself to the faith of every one of us. Each of us is to receive it and understand it, and each of us is to be set for its maintenance and to contend for it as may be necessary. In the light of this one can see how disastrous has been

the idea that it was right to have in the church a special class of men officially appointed, whether as priests or ministers, to whom all such things belong. It has been a master-stroke of the adversary, for where that idea has prevailed the great mass of saints have been put out of action in the conflict of faith, and kept in a state of spiritual infancy.

Every true believer then should contend for the faith, and contend **earnestly** as having a vital interest in it. Details of how we should contend are not stated by Jude in this short Epistle. Elsewhere we find that we must avoid all carnal weapons, and that our spirit should be that of the meek and lowly Jesus whom we serve (see 2 Cor. x. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25). Jude does give us instruction as to how we should fortify ourselves in the faith which must be preliminary to contending for it. But that comes toward the end of the Epistle.

With verse 4 there begins his exposure of the state of things that was developing, which made his message so urgent. Men of a very depraved type had crept in unawares—ungodly, turning the grace of God into utter license, and denying the great Master whom they professed to serve. In reading John's first Epistle we saw how there were antichrists who "went out," whilst the men of whom Jude speaks "crept in." The former were apparently men of a high class type, intelligent and philosophic, who took their departure when their notions were refused. The latter were

anything but high class, men of a dissolute type, who used the grace of God as a cloke to cover up their sin.

We sometimes hear people to-day objecting to the doctrines of grace on the ground that they may be abused. The answer to that is that they have been abused, and the abuse was in full swing before the first century had reached its end; and that the Scriptures tell us of the way they were abused, but that, instead of recommending us to drop the doctrines of grace, they urge us to contend for them!

In verses 5—7, we have three cases cited, which show how the irrevocable judgment of God lies upon the kind of evil that these ungodly men were committing. In the case of Israel it was plain and thorough **unbelief**, and the unbelievers were destroyed in spite of the fact that at the outset they participated in many privileges. In the case of the angels, their sin was in one word, **apostasy**. They totally abandoned their original place and state. That is apostasy: and for any creature to do that, whether angel or man, is to be hopelessly doomed. Sodom and her sister cities gave themselves up to utter **license**, breaking through boundaries that God had set, and their judgment is eternal. Three awful warnings!

Now the men that Jude was denouncing were marked by similar things. They defiled themselves by fleshly sins, and at the same time were characterized by an arrogant refusal of authority. This leads up to the remarkable verse about the con-

tention between Michael the archangel and the devil. What Jude cites is quite unrecorded in the Old Testament. The devil, though now fallen, was once a high dignity in the angelic realm, and until he is finally dispossessed by God his dignity is to be respected. Even so high an angelic dignity as Michael respected it. He did not take it upon himself to rebuke him, but left the Lord to do it.

In passing let us learn from this not to do ourselves what even Michael shrank from doing. How often we may hear people speak of Satan in a very light and mocking way, and we may have done it ourselves. Let us not do it again. Satan is a spirit being, who once held a leading place, if not the leading place, in the angelic hierarchy. Though fallen, he still wields immense power, which we cannot afford to despise. Yet, under the sheltering power of our Lord we need not fear him.

Verse 10 contains a very trenchant indictment. Men who are ignorant as well as arrogant usually fall to abusing what they do not understand. These men not only did this but they also corrupted themselves in things of nature which they did understand. The New Translation is rather striking here, "But what even, as the irrational animals, they understand by mere nature, in these things they corrupt themselves." Things spiritual they rail at: in things natural they corrupt themselves. Truly a terrible indictment!

Now the course of these men, and more particularly perhaps of the evil that characterized

them, and which would be perpetuated in their successors, is graphically sketched in verse 11. Again three cases are cited from the Old Testament, which exactly set the position before us. In this matter there is nothing new under the sun. Again and again evil takes the same forms, runs the same course, and comes to the same end. Jude does not mince his words. These men and their successors have nothing but woe before them.

The beginning of their course is a going in the way of Cain. This is a way of **self-will in the things of God**. Cain was the first to take that way, and his name is left upon it. He would approach God, and this in itself was good: but he would do it in his own way, and not in God's way. Now, by His action in clothing our first parents with coats of skins, God had indicated that death was His way, and Abel's faith had seized this. Cain had no faith, only his own thoughts. Why should not God be satisfied with the way that seemed right to Cain? He would take his own way in self-will.

These men trod the way of Cain, and it is still immensely popular. Multitudes there are who prefer their own thoughts to God's Word. Why should not God be pleased with their efforts and their approach? As long as they recognize Him, may they not draw near and worship Him as they please? At any rate that is what they intend to do. Alas, still they go in the way of Cain; and there is a woe at the end of it.

To "run greedily after the error of Balaam for

reward" is the next step. This is sheer **self-seeking in the things of God**. Religion of a sort is indulged in, and it becomes a profitable business. Balaam was a spiritist medium, who adopted so much as was profitable to him of the true knowledge of God. That was the error that Balaam practised. The error that he taught, and by which he ensnared many of Israel and brought them under the judgment of God, was that of sinful alliance with the idolatrous world. And in all that he practised and taught the one thing before him was money-making—the love of reward.

Our Epistle speaks of "the way of Cain" and "the error of Balaam;" it is in 2 Peter that we read of "the way of Balaam." But in both Epistles the thought connected with him is the same, for in Peter we find him described as loving "the wages of unrighteousness." His course there is described as "madness." Alas! his madness has had many followers from the day in which Jude wrote to our own. The evil men that Jude was exposing "ran greedily" after his error, and we believe those two words are still applicable to very many. It is a striking fact that Balaam and his evil teaching appear in the Lord's address to the church at Pergamos (Revelation ii.), inasmuch as that church sets forth prophetically the epoch when the church accepted the patronage of the world, and the corruptions of the Roman system began.

In that system we see religion as a money-making power carried to its highest pitch. Years

ago in Spain we saw a paper in which it was pointed out that all the supposed benefits which Rome offered from birth to death cost money ; that in fact there was nothing without it. Moreover after death it was still money, money, for there was purgatory to be shortened. The title of the paper, translated into English, was "**The religion of money.**" The history of Rome through the ages furnishes us also with many and terrible examples of men who have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, just as Jude says. Many other forms of error have a strong strain of money-making in them, though not perhaps to the same extent.

Finally there is the gainsaying of Korah, the details of which are given to us in Numbers xvi. Korah's sin was **self-assertion in the things of God**, and it brought upon him swift destruction. Cain lived many a year after he took his self-willed way. Balaam lived for sufficient time to do much havoc in Israel by his error, and for a time at least his self-seeking seemed to be profitable. But the self-assertion of Korah was met by rapid and drastic judgment.

This is the third and final stage in the progress of the evil that fills Christendom to-day. We believe that we speak soberly when we say that terrible examples of it abound on every hand. Never were men more confident of themselves and of their powers in matters of religion. Korah asserted himself as against Moses and Aaron: to-day men who call themselves Christians are quite

prepared to assert themselves against Christ. "Jesus Christ" say they, "thought this and said that. But we know better now as belonging to this enlightened age." A very sinister sign! Judgment cannot now be long delayed.

Let us, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, see to it that in everything we are subject to **His will**, that we seek **His glory** and not our own, and that instead of asserting ourselves we assert **His rights**. Thus we shall be pleasing to Him.

F. B. HOLE.

"PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED."

IT was our mournful privilege to be present at the funeral of a young Christian man, not thirty years of age. On the Saturday, with his wife and two little children, he had been at a Sunday School picnic in the Paramatta Park, near Sydney, Australia.

Returning home on a cycle he collided with a trap, driven by an intoxicated man. His injuries were great. This was on Saturday. On Monday he died, and on Wednesday we buried him in a beautiful country cemetery beneath a blazing sun.

Speaking to his young widow after the funeral the writer quoted the verse: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,

and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James i. 27).

This verse should be a great comfort to the fatherless and widows, as it shows they are God's special care. Even under the Mosaic Law this was so. We read, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands" (Deut. xxiv. 19). And this is only one verse of many framed on these lines.

But to return to our verse, which well bears inspection. First there is the invocation—"Before God and the Father." Does this not show how "pure religion and undefiled" is noted by God our Father Himself? Then further it seems on first sight **to us** that the exhortation "to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction" should come **after** that enjoined in the words, "To keep himself unspotted from the world." We should have thought that the latter should have come first, if at all. There are so many good things the Christian can do that **we** wonder why this particular form of Christian activity should have this prominence.

What then is the answer? It is that God, our Father, has a **special** care for the fatherless and the widow, and therefore puts this exhortation first; and further, may not the reason be that we are slow to care for the fatherless and the widow?

Anyhow, here is a very powerful and potent exhortation—and we do well to pay heed to it.

And, further, to visit "the fatherless and the widow in their affliction" does not limit our activity to comforting words. James, the writer of the epistle is very practical. He says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James ii. 15, 16).

So our visiting should be practical. If we called on a widow and her children left in affluence, it might well be that a few well-chosen words said in true sympathy might convey true comfort. But suppose we visit a poor widow and destitute children, a few pious words with no material help might only harden a widow in her grief.

The writer, James, is practical, and would have had much sympathy with the Quaker Christian. A crowd gathered round a man who had sustained a big loss in the death of the animal that drew the cart with which he prosecuted his business. Loud were the exclamations of pity and sympathy on the lips of many. But the Quaker was practical. He said to the poor man, "I'm sorry half-a-crown" and slipped the coin into his hand.

Let this exhortation of the writer James have its practical effect and may it be a comfort to the fatherless and the widow as showing that they are the special care of God, our Father in heaven.

A. J. POLLOCK.

SANCTIFICATION.

THE Scriptures have a good deal to say to us as to sanctification, in the Old Testament as well as in the New; and wherever we find it the word has the fundamental meaning of a **separation, or a setting apart.** In the Old Testament the word is freely used of things as well as persons. In the New Testament it is mainly, though not exclusively, used of persons; and as applying to believers it has a double significance—a primary meaning and a secondary. The trouble with so many is that the secondary meaning has obliterated the primary in their minds. Hence the difficulties which they feel in relation to this important subject.

The sanctification of believers means to many people, perhaps to most, a process by which they are made more and more holy and pleasing to God; whereas its primary meaning is that by an act of God they have been set apart for Himself, and according to this their growth in holiness becomes a necessity.

The root idea of the word then, whether we take its Old or New Testament use, is that of setting apart for God. A sanctified person or thing is one set apart from ordinary uses to be for God's own possession and use and enjoyment. In contradistinction to sanctification stands **profanation.** The priest of Aaron's time was not to "defile himself . . . to profane himself" (Lev. xxi.

4). The priests of the coming millennial day are to "teach My people the difference between the holy and profane" (Ezek. xlv. 23). The very word used there means "common or polluted," and of course it is just when a thing is put to common use that it does get polluted. That is easily seen in connection with the ordinary affairs of life. When a piece of ground is thrown open freely to the public it becomes a "common," and at once rules must be made to keep it decent. Left to itself it would soon become more or less of a rubbish heap.

In the primary sense of the word, every believer **has been** set apart for God. It is a fact of an absolute nature. We may speak of it as **positional** sanctification.

In the secondary sense, every believer **is to be** set apart for God. It is not positional but **progressive** sanctification.

The primary is an **objective fact**: the secondary is a **subjective experience**, which must always follow and flow out of the objective fact. Things are bound to get out of place and distorted in our minds, if we allow the subjective experience to eclipse the objective fact, as so many do.

If any of our readers are inclined to doubt what we have just laid down as to the primary meaning of the word, let them consider three facts.

(1) Inanimate things—altar, laver, vessels—were sanctified under the law. There could be no

subjective change, no increase in holiness, in them. But they could be put in a separate **position**, wholly devoted to the service of God.

(2) The Lord Jesus Himself was "sanctified, and sent into the world" (John x. 36); and again leaving the world He said, "I sanctify Myself" (John xvii. 19). There could be no subjective change in Him—no sanctification in the progressive sense. Holiness of the most intense order, divine and absolute, was ever His. But He could be set apart by the Father for His mission as Revealer and Redeemer, and then sent into the world. Also, as leaving this world and entering the world of the Father's glory, He could set Himself apart in a new **position** as the pattern and power of the sanctification of His followers.

(3) The instruction comes to us, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Pet. iii. 15). Here too the only possible sense of "sanctify," is to set apart positionally. In our hearts we are to set the Lord God apart in a **position** altogether unique. He is to be exalted without a rival there.

Now as to ourselves we have to begin with this absolute and positional sanctification which is ours by the act of God. If we do not, we are sure to get defective, if not perverted, ideas of the practical and progressive sanctification which is to be ours, since the one flows out of the other. The practical sanctification expected is according to the character of the positional sanctification conferred.

The first mention of sanctification in the Bible is in connection with creation, when God sanctified the seventh day in which He rested (Gen. ii. 3); the second is in connection with redemption, when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Here persons were in question, for He said, "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exod. xiii. 2). Those who had been redeemed by blood were set apart for God positionally, and because they were, a very special manner of life became them, or rather became the Levites, who later on were substituted for them (see Numbers iii. 45; viii. 5-19).

The type, with which the book of Exodus furnishes us, is a very instructive one. In chapter xii. the children of Israel are sheltered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb, which foreshadows the forgiveness and justification which reaches us by the Gospel. In chapter xv. they are brought right out of Egypt, the power of Pharaoh being broken, which illustrates salvation. Both chapters together foreshadow redemption. But in chapter xiii. we get sanctification. The people justified by blood are set apart for God; and because He claims them for Himself, He will brook no rival claim. He made good His claim against Pharaoh's claim. He broke the might of Egypt and, delivering His people, He brought them to Himself. All their later history had to be governed by this fact.

In all this God showed very plainly that when He intended to bless a people He would set them apart for Himself, instead of allowing them to be

common, polluted, profaned. They were sanctified to Himself.

How utterly man has been profaned by sin! His mind, his heart, the whole course of nature with him, has been overrun with every kind of evil. If grace sets itself to win him, he must, in the very nature of things, be set apart for God.

We begin then by laying hold of the great fact that we have been sanctified. Scripture is very definite and plain as to this point, and perhaps the most striking example it furnishes us with is the case of the Corinthians. Of all the Christians of the apostolic age that we have any knowledge of, they stand out as the least marked by sanctification of a practical sort. Their behaviour was open to much censure, and they got it from the Apostle Paul in very plain language. Yet in his first epistle to them he calls them "saints," as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," (i. 2). Later in the same epistle, after mentioning many of the abominations that filled the heathen world, he said, "And such were some of you: but . . . ye are sanctified" (vi. 11).

Nothing could be clearer than this. We do not become God's sanctified people by attaining to a certain standard of practical holiness. We are God's sanctified ones, and because of it, holiness, or practical sanctification, is incumbent upon us. If the former were God's way it would be according to the very principle of law. The latter is God's way and it is according to the principle of grace.

This absolute sanctification reaches us in a two-fold way. In the first place it is by the work of Christ. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. x. 10). "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12). Believing in Him, we stand in the value of His offering and are thereby set apart for God just as fully as we are justified.

In the second place we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. To the Thessalonians Paul wrote in his second epistle, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (ii. 13). Peter also wrote in his first epistle, "Elect . . . through sanctification of the Spirit" (i. 2). There are the workings of the Spirit in our hearts, culminating in the new birth of which we read in John iii., when "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Then further, when the Gospel is received in faith the Spirit indwells the believer, sealing him until the day of redemption. By that seal the believer is marked off as belonging to God: he is sanctified as set apart for Him.

To the Corinthians Paul wrote in his first epistle, "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . sanctification" (i. 30). We are set apart in Him, inasmuch as His was the blood shed for us, and also we have received the Spirit as the fruit of His work. We as well as the Corinthians have been, "sanctified . . . in the name of the

Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God " (vi. 11).

When once we have laid hold of the fact that we have been sanctified in this absolute sense we are prepared to face our responsibilities as to practical sanctification, which are based upon it. One of the requests for His own, uttered by the Lord, as recorded in John xvii., was, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." Hence the importance of giving all due heed to the Word of God, for the more we really know it the more its sanctifying power is exerted in our lives.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification," is what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (iv. 3), showing that it is not something that is optional for the Christian, something to be pursued or avoided as fancy dictates. Moreover God Himself works it out for His saints, and it is all-embracing in its scope, for Paul went on to pray for them, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly " (v. 23). Everything about us is to come under the sanctifying touch of the God of peace.

But, on the other hand there is our side of the matter. There are measures which we are to take for the promotion of it. We are to "shun" certain things; we are to "depart from iniquity;" we are to "purge" ourselves from vessels unto dishonour, who teach error of a sort that overthrows faith; then we may be vessels "unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use " (2 Tim. ii. 21).

In all these ways the practical work of sanctification progresses. Indeed it is the great work which the Lord is carrying on with His church; His object being to "sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. v. 26). The work of sanctification and cleansing is taking place to-day in the individuals of whom the church is composed.

Again and again in the Scriptures we are exhorted to holiness. What is the difference between this and the sanctification we have been considering?

There is no real difference. The same Greek word is translated by both English words, and like sanctification holiness is spoken of (1) as positional and absolute, and (2) as practical and progressive. For instance, when we read, "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling . . ." (Heb. iii. 1), we are not to understand this to mean that they were far advanced in practical holiness, but that they were a people set apart for God as partaking in the heavenly calling. Chapter v. verses 11-14, indicate that they were not very far advanced, and presently we find that they are exhorted to "follow peace with all men, and holiness" (xii. 14), which infers the same thing. The **holy** brethren are **to follow holiness**. In the first epistle of Peter we find just the same thing. He says, "**Be ye holy**," (i. 15) to the very people to whom he says "**Ye are . . . an holy nation**" (ii. 9).

Because we **are** holy we **are to be** holy. The holiness, which is to characterize us practically, is

according to the holiness which is ours by the call of God.

Believers in Christ are frequently called "saints" in the New Testament. Is the popular use of this term in keeping with the Scriptural use?

By no means. A "saint" is popularly supposed to be an eminently holy person. The Romish authorities still make saints by a lengthy process called "canonization." If we lived amongst Romanists and spoke of "going to visit the saints" they would probably imagine we are going to visit some local shrine and invoke the aid from the spirit world of some of these canonized people. And many who are not Romanists have not quite shaken off these ideas. A saint is not a person of unusual piety, who after death is entitled to be represented in effigy or picture with a halo round his or her head, but the ordinary, simple believer—each one who has been set apart for God by the blood of Christ, and by the possession of the Holy Spirit.

Every true believer being a saint means that we each are responsible to pursue holiness. Perhaps one reason why the Romish idea lingers so strongly is that it leads people to feel that holiness is no particular concern of theirs, but only of a few. These special ones may pursue holiness; the rest of us can live easy-going lives in the world!

Let us be careful to maintain the scriptural thought.

Do justification and sanctification go together?

They do, as far as positional sanctification is concerned. In 1 Corinthians vi. 11, where the

work wrought "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," is in question, sanctification is mentioned even in advance of justification. The Corinthians had been cleansed and set apart for God on the same ground and by the same agency as they had been justified, and so also have we.

Seeing that they do go together, are we right in speaking of sanctification by faith, just as we speak of justification by faith?

We have in Scripture the definite statement that we are "justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1), but we do not anywhere read that we are sanctified by faith. Nevertheless, just as, having been justified, we know it by faith and not by our feelings, so too we know that we have been set apart for God by faith and not by feelings. God declares us to be justified as believers in Jesus, and we believe Him. He declares us to be sanctified to Himself as believers in Jesus, and again we believe Him.

If practical sanctification be in question is it another matter. That is progressive, and there should be increase in it to the end. We are to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1), and Paul prayed for the Thessalonians to the end that they might be sanctified "unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Holiness is not, of course, **apart from** faith, but to speak of holiness **by** faith, as though faith alone produced it, is to shut out elements of Christian living which ought by no means to be excluded.

What then are these elements? How is practical sanctification or holiness produced?

In the latter part of Romans vi. holiness is presented as being the "fruit" of our being emancipated from the slavery of sin. Now it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which makes us free from the law of sin and death " (Rom. viii. 2). The more we are under the law, or control, of the Spirit the more do we enjoy freedom from the control of sin. Evidently therefore **the control of the Holy Spirit** is a very important element in practical sanctification.

Again, when the Lord was praying for His own, as recorded in John xvii., He said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth " (verse 17). The Spirit of God and the Word of God are intimately connected. They were in creation, as the first three verses of Genesis i. show. They are together also in the new birth, and again in the matter of practical sanctification. We can speak of **holiness by the Word of truth** as well as of **holiness by the Spirit**.

We can also speak of **holiness by love** in the light of 1 Thessalonians iii. 12-13. As love increases so are our hearts established in holiness.

And yet again there is **holiness by separation from all that is unclean**, coupled with cleansing from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. 2 Corinthians vi. 14—vii. 1, tells us this. And 2 Timothy ii. 16-22, tells us the same thing, but in a somewhat different setting.

Here then are four elements in addition to faith by which holiness is produced.

We sometimes meet those who speak of being "wholly sanctified," in a way that suggests a claim to entire freedom from the presence of sin. Is there any support for this in the Bible?

There is verse 23 of 1 Thessalonians v., to which we have already referred. But the context shows that the word, "wholly" refers to the whole man in his tripartite nature—"spirit and soul and body." There is nothing partial about God's gracious work. Its sanctifying influence reaches every part of us, and is carried on "unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." When He comes the sanctification of the whole man will be carried to its completeness and perfection ; but not before.

As long as we inhabit these bodies, derived from Adam, sin is still in us; yet the more we experience God's sanctifying work the less we come under its power. There is no excuse for the believer when he sins, inasmuch as ample power is at his disposal to preserve him. Yet we **all** often offend, as James has told us in his Epistle; and we shall **all** confess it, unless our sense of what is sin is sadly blunted, or we are just deceiving ourselves.

A life of practical holiness is indeed proper and normal Christian life; but the one who most lives it talks least about his holiness. He does not live to himself nor talk about himself. The end of his living and the theme of his tongue is CHRIST.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION.

(JUDE 12 — 25).

To be of any profit this article must be read in connection with a Bible, opened at the above passage.

IF verse 11 sketches for us the development and end of the evil leading to apostasy, we come back in verses 12 and 13 to the men who embodied the evil in Jude's day, and there is a further exposure of their character in a series of graphic figures, the meaning of which we must attempt to seize.

They were "spots" in the love-feasts of these early Christians. It appears that the word translated thus has the meaning of a jagged rock especially one with the sea washing over it. So these evil men who had crept in unawares, and who now were boldly taking their place in the social life of the believers, were a terrible menace, just as is the sunken rock which endangers the ships. To feed themselves was their passion, not to feed the flock. Jude warns us of their true nature so that we may avoid them.

Then, changing the figure, they are like clouds borne along on the winds, yet without water. In the land where Jude wrote the clouds were welcome as giving promise of rain. So these men had the appearance of bringing refreshment to God's weary heritage; but they had nothing to give, being themselves impelled by Satan's power, of which the wind is a figure.

Then again they are like trees "whose fruit withereth," or, "autumnal trees." Now it is in the autumn that we expect to find fruit on the trees; but they are without fruit. These men are marked by promise without performance, for they are twice dead—first by nature and then as coming under the judgment of God. In speaking of them as rooted up, Jude no doubt views them prophetically as having come under judgment.

They are also like waves of the sea raging and foaming, for they were uncontrolled save by the power of Satan; and it was their own shame that they displayed. The word, we are told is in the plural, "shames"; and means the things which were a shame to them, and not that they felt any shame in them. Probably they did not, but gloried in them.

Fifthly, they were like wandering stars or meteors, in that their light was soon to be quenched in the blackness of darkness for ever. This again speaks of judgment, and brings us back to the point we reached at the end of verses 11 and 12. We all know the speed with which the meteor sweeps across the heavens and burns out into darkness. Thus it would be with them. They had no steady light to give.

We find then that the last words of each of the three verses (11, 12, 13) indicate judgment; and now in verses 14 and 15 Jude tells us plainly how the judgment will fall upon these apostates. It will be by direct intervention of the Lord, appear-

ing in His glory, which had been predicted even from the days of Enoch.

All the information that Scripture affords as to this remarkable man is found in very few words, yet those words are full of significance. Genesis v. tells us of the exalted character of his life, walking with God for no less than three hundred years. It tells us also of his glorious finish, translated into God's presence. Hebrews xi. tells us of his faith, the power of both his life and his translation. In Jude we discover that he was a prophet, and, as far as we know, the earliest of all the prophets.

The first prophet spoke of the closing scenes as regards man's day, when the Lord will come with myriads of His holy ones for the execution of judgment. His words make it very evident that when He does come man's iniquity will have reached its climax, and be so open and flagrant that judgment by conviction and execution is inevitable. The repetition of the word **ungodly** in verse 15 is very striking. It will be a case of ungodly men doing and saying the most ungodly things in very ungodly fashion. At His coming the Lord will convict them, bringing home their guilt to them so that they have to acknowledge it: then He will execute judgment upon them.

From the very earliest times then it has been a revealed truth that the Lord Himself will appear to deal with man's unblushing evil; though not until New Testament times did it appear that the Lord Jesus is the Jehovah who is to come. He will

not come because the Gospel has prepared the world to receive Him, as so many still think. He will come to cleanse the earth by judgment, attended by His saints. Other scriptures inform us who these saints are, and how they reach the heavens in order to come forth with Him. The Gospel will have accomplished its appointed work in gathering saints out of the world for heaven. Then judgment will take its course.

We have further description, and exposure of these men who crept in unawares, in verses 16 to 19. It is really very remarkable how the Spirit of God labours to make their character clear to us so that we may be able to identify them. They are said to be murmurers and complainers; that is, unsatisfied persons with grievances; the reason of it all lying not in those against whom they have the grievance, but in their own lusts. Their lusts so dominate them that nothing would satisfy them. They talk great things—about themselves no doubt—and they love grandiose language, while at the same time they fawn upon and flatter influential people in order to get something out of them for their own benefit. What a contemptible picture all this presents to us!

Jude also bids us remember the things that had been said by the Apostles of the Lord before he wrote this Epistle. It is in 2 Peter iii. 3 that we read about mockers coming in the last time walk-after their own lusts, but evidently the other Apostles had testified to the same effect. The men

that Jude had in view were of that stamp: they were sensual or natural men, not having the Spirit. To have the Spirit is the infallible mark of really belonging to Christ. Jude describes them also as "they who separate themselves." It is very much open to question whether the word "themselves" is really in the original, and the R.V. puts it simply "who make separations." The Holy Spirit is the power of unity. These men without the Spirit were the fomenters of disunity. With this word Jude's description of them comes to an end.

A darker picture of ungodliness it would be impossible to conceive. The description begins with the turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness, and the denying of the only Master and Lord. It ends with the making of divisions, as being utterly destitute of the Spirit of God. Yet they had crept in among the saints unawares. Still God would find them out, and as apostates they will perish.

Now Jude does not only enlighten us as to the evil; he uses it as an incentive to the diligent pursuit of what is good, as far as we are concerned. In verse 20 he again appeals to the true saints of God, and he indicates what is to mark them in the presence of all these difficulties. His instructions fall naturally under four heads.

First, we are to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. Note the wording carefully. It does not say that we are to build up the faith. We have already seen in the Epistle that the faith is committed to us as a perfect and completed thing. It needs no building up: we can add nothing to it.

It is we who need the building up. We may have received the faith, and taken our stand upon it in faith. That is the right and true beginning, but we must not stop at that point; we need to be built up on it so that it becomes our very life. We can never be too fully instructed in it or too solidly established on it. Jude speaks of it as "most holy." We have not got to-day a most holy place as Israel had of old: we have instead a most holy faith. It is not to be trespassed upon or tampered with. None shall do so with impunity. Only fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Let us recall at this point that the main burden of the Epistle is that we should earnestly contend for the faith. Our being built up on it is undoubtedly a prerequisite for this. Some folk, who love a fight for its own sake, would rush into conflict on behalf of a cause which they understand but imperfectly, if at all. But this is not to be the way of the called ones who are beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ. The faith must be the **basis** on which we are built up before it becomes the **banner** for which we fight. And the more we are really built up on it, the more we shall be morally and spiritually equipped to enter into the conflict.

In the second place there must be this "praying in the Holy Ghost." Not, "to the Holy Ghost," as though we were to conceive of Him as an Object of faith, outside ourselves. It is "in" Him that we are to pray. Now prayer is the expression of dependence upon God, who **is** outside our-

selves. We are very dependent, and we are to know it, and confess it practically in prayer. In this we shall be the very opposite of the ungodly men whom Jude has described to us. They feel themselves to be entirely sufficient unto themselves, and because of it they despise dominion and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Our prayers however are to be in the Spirit; that is, we are to pray as those who are controlled by the indwelling Spirit, and who consequently ask for the things that are according to His mind. Prayer, which springs from the Holy Spirit acting in the hearts of the saints, is sure to be both fervent and effectual.

In the third place we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. In the consciousness and warmth and power of it we are to dwell. We are persuaded of course with Paul that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 39). His love has a firm hold on us, and He will never let us go. But we are also to have a firm hold upon it in the quiet recesses of our hearts. We are to be bathed in it, just like a bucket or other vessel which has been flung into the ocean. Then it is in the ocean, and the ocean is in it. So if we keep ourselves in the love of God, the love of God will be in us, imparting its beautiful character to our lives.

Again let us remind ourselves that this is said to saints who are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith. In the warmth of contention nothing is

easier than to get irritated, and even to lose one's temper. If we keep ourselves in the love of God, our spirits are lifted above irritations that proceed from awkward or evil men and their reasonings. A believer may find himself entangled in controversy with men who are far more than a match for him on the intellectual plane, but if he is himself well built up on the faith, and if praying in the Spirit, he keeps himself in the love of God, he will not come off second best in the conflict. He may not convince his opponents, but any bystanders will be aware that they have witnessed something greater than mere intellectualism.

In the fourth place, we are to be looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. There is much that we have to-day, but there is more to follow. We are people with a prospect. The evil men may multiply around us and the full apostasy may approach, but we have a wonderful outlook and great expectations in the coming of the Lord. We look for His coming into the air, according to 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-17, when He will receive His saints to Himself. This great action of His is described as **mercy**. We do not deserve it, any more than we deserved to be forgiven or redeemed. But we are going to get it, simply on the ground of mercy. It will be an act of mercy, crowning all the other acts of mercy that have characterised His dealing with us. And it will land us into eternal life in its fullest sense. We shall then not only have the life, but also be in the scenes where that life has its home and expands to the fullest extent.

But the exhortation is that we keep actively looking for this wonderful consummation. We are not to set our expectations upon improvement either in world or church. We are not even looking for revivals—though God may in His mercy grant something of that sort, and if He does we shall rejoice and thank Him. No, we are looking for the coming of the Lord; and the more brightly that hope burns within our breasts the more shall we rightly sustain the conflict for the faith.

Jude's four exhortations, then, concern respectively, the faith, the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and the coming mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. In regard to these we are to be building up, praying, keeping ourselves, and looking. These exhortations are very personal, appealing to each who loves the Lord.

In verses 22 and 23 we get further exhortations as to our attitude towards two different classes of people; designated as "some" and "others." These are neither the evil man denounced in the Epistle, nor the God-fearing saints to whom the Epistle is addressed.

The "some" of verse 22 appear to be people who have to some extent been affected or ensnared by the evil men. Such must be carefully distinguished and treated with compassion. The "others" contemplated in verse 23, have evidently become more deeply involved in the evil and contaminated by it. Even these however are to be saved if possible, though the one who would

rescue them must set about it in a spirit far removed from self-confidence. He must fear the fire that threatens to devour them, and hate the flesh that has defiled them. Only if he goes about it in that spirit will he escape being burnt or defiled himself, and so be able to rescue them.

This is a very important word for us, for we are naturally very inclined to treat alike all who are in any way implicated in such ungodly things. We may discern the evil and feel most strongly against it, and so be very ready to lump all together, the misled with the misleaders, leaving them in their defilement with nothing before them but the fire. This must not be. We must remember the word, "making a difference."

When we come to verses 24 and 25, how delightful is the contrast with all that has preceded! We come out from the darkness of human wickedness and apostasy, and even from the contentions and efforts of true saints in the presence of the evil, into the clear light of the power and glory of God. Our eyes are lifted to "Him that is able to keep you from falling." Here, and here only, is real rest for the heart.

We are to contend for the faith, building up ourselves on it, and we are to labour to rescue others from defilement and doom, but we can find no repose in ourselves or our efforts. We may have grace to keep ourselves in the love of God, at least in some degree, yet we can only find rest in the fact that He is able to keep us

from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory.

Since He is able, we have only ourselves to blame for any tumbles we get on the way. Yet though we may tumble we shall not ultimately fall. We shall be presented in the presence of His glory when forth it shines, and not even the light of that glory shall discover a fault in us. How amazing! How excellent! What a triumph for the grace and power of God!

Nothing remains but to bow in the presence of that Saviour-God, through the Lord Jesus, and ascribe to Him glory, majesty, dominion and power, both now and to all ages. Amen.

F. B. HOLE.

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

I wonder if you could give a word as to the bearing of 2 Corinthians v. 3. Does Paul desire to be "clothed upon" **since** "being clothed we shall not be found naked"? Or is there an element of doubt conveyed in it as to what the ultimate issue may be? Or is it a note of warning to such as are warned in 1 Corinthians 10. 1-12?—NEWCASTLE.

THE verse begins, "If so be that," and that certainly does not mean "since." Had the Apostle written, "Since being clothed we shall not be found naked," he would have been simply explaining the obvious—a needless procedure. The verse as it stands has a paradoxical sound and is provocative of thought. Considering it carefully we at once see that the two words

“clothed” and “naked” must be used in different senses, or at least in different connections.

In the light of verse 2 the meaning of “clothed” is quite certain. It refers to the spiritual body of glory with which we each shall be invested at the coming of the Lord—that is of course as far as believers are concerned. But the wicked dead will be raised for judgment in bodies, though not bodies of glory. That is, they will be clothed, and yet in the searchlight of the great white throne they will be found naked—spiritually naked, that is.

But in this verse the Apostle does say, “we.” It is the “we” of Christian **profession**, and not of Christian **reality**. He speaks in just the same way in the passage in chapter x. of the first Epistle, to which you allude. It doubtless was a word for the consciences of all his readers; and as we understand it, it was tantamount to saying, “If indeed we may take it for granted that when we are raised from the dead and clothed again in our bodies we shall not be found naked and uncovered in a spiritual sense before the holy eye of God.” To be naked spiritually is to be unatoned for.

The Christian is one who, by divine teaching, knows the truth and authority and power of the Divine Word. He accepts it in the largeness and fulness in which it is given, thankful if learned enquirers, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, can give it to him as free from all human imperfections as possible, labouring that no earthly particles of mud be in the water; but the water he knows to be water, he drinks it and lives.

J.N.D.