

HELP AND FOOD

FOR THE

Household of Faith.

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MUCH REQUIRED—MUCH FORGIVEN.

THERE is one principle of God's ways with man which impresses itself more and more deeply the more we think of it. It is that equality of His dealings, that absolute righteousness expressed in the words, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7.) The gospel, which is the glory of God, and according to which He freely forgives the repenting sinner who believes in Jesus, so far from setting aside this principle but emphasizes it. The apostle, in Romans, is most careful to establish the harmony between God's grace and His justice, both as regards the law and in connection with the history of His past dealings and future purposes with respect to Israel. As to the law, and its inflexible claims upon man, he shows how it is established by the gospel; for did not the spotless Lamb of God take the consequences of a broken law and endure the wrath and judgment? Thus and thus only did the love of God flow out unhindered to poor guilty man. "He is just *and* the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Then too how beautifully is brought out the responsibility of Israel, their disobedience and folly and the just results of that folly, and yet the grace and mercy which, through Christ, they will receive.

No doubt with many the side of responsibility and recompense is overlooked for a time at least. The great joy of salvation so eclipses all other thought that the new born soul thinks but little if at all of the ways of God. And without doubt this is well; it is like the gracious ways of the Spirit of God so to establish the soul in the love of God first, that all

after lessons will be learned in the atmosphere of that love.

Later on, however, as the days and years go by, one finds that he is still in the body and still under the government of God. Sins long ago committed and long ago forgotten come back in one form and another. A dishonest act which caused the loss of reputation, though long ago repented of and all amends made, still lodges in the minds of some who, in enmity even, keep it fresh before the minds of others. Or the strength has been wasted in sinful pleasures; dissipations of youth, and excesses of riotous living, long ago repented of and forgiven through infinite grace, come back now in the form of bodily weakness, lassitude, and feebleness, to remind one of the solemn truth we have been considering.

And is it not well that this is so? Does it not deepen in the soul the sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and make us realize the ruin which has come into the whole world, upon every child of Adam, because of sin? Every form of sickness, every death, is a solemn reminder of the sway of sin in this world. Grace has not set this aside, and the mortal bodies in which we live must one day crumble into dust because of the presence of sin—*unless*, blessed be God, our soon-coming Lord call us hence before that time: for “we shall not all sleep.”

Under the solemnizing effect of this thought let us follow further its leadings. We have been speaking of positive sin and its results. But apart from any trespass, we have all been entrusted with opportunities, abilities and much else of which we were to make proper use. We belong to God by the three-fold right of creation, preservation and redemption.

As His, all that we are and have is to be used for Him. So we find, in Luke xvi., the parable of stewardship and responsibility following the lovely unfoldings of grace in the fifteenth chapter. We are stewards only; our own things are not here; *our* portion and inheritance are where Christ has gone. The present time, with all that goes with it, is God's. So our Lord reminds us, and presses it home upon conscience and heart; "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Bearing in mind that this responsibility begins with life and only closes when we pass out of this scene, what a catalogue of failure confronts us! Let us dwell upon it a little, particularly in the light of another passage: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke xi. 48). We will be very simple, enumerating a few things which have been committed to us, and giving, in some sense, an account of our stewardship.

First of all, we have had entrusted to us the privilege of having been born where the light of God's truth shines and all the abundant blessings connected with that. With many of us it was also true that we were from childhood under the influence of that truth. This was committed to us: what use did we make of it? In immediate connection with the verse already quoted, we are told "he that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes." The heathen, without all these privileges is respon-

sible, surely, to God; but what shall we say of those equally disobedient with the heathen, but with God's light shining about them? Every saved man feels the loss of every day he lived without God, when he might have known Him.

Look a little at the bodily and mental faculties entrusted to us. Even after these centuries of moral separation from God, it can be said of us both bodily and mentally that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. What endowments, what capacity for acquiring knowledge, for training the mind, and making it the master of the body. It is no trifle to think how much has thus been committed to us. How did we use it?

The same can be said of our time and opportunities. How many golden hours—of youth and later years—have slipped through our fingers unused, or worse? Every day and hour should have been happily filled, with diligence turning over every occasion and making it an opportunity for doing the will of God and gaining the strength that comes from faithful labor. Wasted days! who can contemplate them without a solemnizing sense of how much has been committed to us in that way?

Passing now into the sphere of the Christian life, we find a fresh commitment of trusts with a knowledge of the love and grace of God, the gift of the Spirit, a new nature, and the precious word of God now luminous and vital; what a world of new responsibilities is opened up. Every original responsibility is now as it were intensified; time and strength, wealth and position; talents and opportunities now have a new meaning. It is not exactly that a new responsibility has displaced the old, as we shall pres-

ently see, but everything has a new sanction, and a new standard of valuation.

Where shall we begin to speak of Christian responsibilities? They are personal, mutual, and universal. Whatever there is in our lives, and wherever those lives come in contact with others, there is a commitment. Surely *much* has been committed to us. Look briefly at a few examples.

The believer is sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has the word of God in his hand, and mind and heart capable of enjoying it. Words fail to express the inestimable value of this trust. Will not much be required of those who are so endowed? If Enoch, Abraham, and Daniel were holy men, with the privileges they enjoyed, what manner of men, personally, ought we to be? What communion, what spiritual growth, what love and fervor should mark the increased light and knowledge that are ours. We need not specify; to do so would be to enumerate all the blessings of Christianity and all the fruits of the Christian graces. But here is food for meditation. The heritage is all ours, how much of the land have we taken possession of?

Here are our Bibles. They have not been committed to any one class of saints. The entire word of God is ours, to read, to live, to live *by*. What a responsibility goes with this. Beloved Christian reader, what are you doing with your Bible? Rest assured that *much* will be required from such a trust.

Then there are all the varied openings for service—seeking to build one another up, to help and encourage one another, to admonish and care for one another. There is but one answer to the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?” There is not a mem-

ber of the body of Christ so weak and obscure who can escape this responsibility, while the greater the endowments the greater the weight.

If they are anything, God's saints are an evangelizing people. So Scripture declares them—"lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Winning souls, telling out the glad tidings—these things are to characterize Christians. A spiritually dumb saint is, in the sight of angels, a greater wonder than a physically dumb man. Oh, to awaken to these things.

Ere closing this side of our subject, let us mark the connection between responsibility and the judgment seat of Christ. We have been forever delivered from personal judgment, by Him who bore it for us. But now He is to be the judge of our life-work. If responsibility begins with early life and continues on to the end, then every portion of that life, both before and after conversion must come under the eye of the Saviour-judge. How solemnizing the thought—the record of the entire life is to be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. But knowing grace as we do, could we wish it otherwise?

Pausing now, as we review the subject of responsibility—much given, much required—what can we say? Must we not own that we are unfaithful stewards? Much is required, but we have it not;—and as we stand with well nigh empty hands what can we say?

But God does not leave us with the mere sense of responsibility as a motive. True, much is required of us, and this should spur us on to gather up the fragments of time still remaining. But this is not *the* motive.

"Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke vii. 47). Here is a wrecked life:

family lost, good name, doubtless health—had been wasted in riotous living. There could be no comfort for her in the thought of responsibility, only shame and sorrow. Nor can the future, in this life, look very bright to one who must reap what she has sowed. And yet grace has freely forgiven her—and she realizes how great the debt was. Now she has a motive to control her whole being—"she loved much." The ointment in its alabaster box is a feeble expression of the mighty love that now controls her. What will her future be; what can it be with a love like that? Ah, brethren, here is a motive.

So Paul, chief of sinners and much forgiven, expresses it, "The love of Christ constraineth us." He realized the depth of his guilt, and the wonder of that grace which had saved him. He understood what it cost for the Lord to redeem him, and he says, "I must live for Him who died and rose again for me." How blessed it is that we have here a motive stronger even than the sense of our failure.

Love does where even duty would fail, and how lovely it is to see a wrecked life, a shattered body, taken possession of by this new principle and transfigured.

"Oh for grace our hearts to soften;
Teach us Lord at length to *love*."

"NOT THIS MAN, BUT BARABBAS."

(John xviii. 40.)

THE blessed Lord and Master had just said unto Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world; if my Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but *now* My Kingdom is not from hence."

He had already been rejected as an earthly King, the heir of David, and was now about entering into and bringing in His heavenly Kingdom; and hence He could so clearly and strongly set this truth forth. By the way of the cross He was just then entering into His heavenly Kingdom, and opening up that new and living way into the holiest which He has now made for us; and hence He could truthfully say, "My Kingdom is not *now* of this world." He is now reigning in His heavenly Kingdom, and all power in heaven and on earth is given into His hands. All His saints, to faith, are also there with Him and hence they too are not of this world and cannot fight, or vote, or hold office. Voting implies office holding, and fighting too, and this, true Christians in the light cannot with a good conscience do. They dwell with Him, where He is, in His heavenly Kingdom, and their fellowship, social relations, are with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ! "He died to deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father;" the Father of the saints. "They are not of the world, even as I am not," says our Saviour-God. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." It is clear, therefore, that *now* He is reigning in His heavenly Kingdom, and is gathering *out of the world* a company of redeemed ones for an eternity of fellowship with Himself there.

This company is not of the world, even as He is not; and hence they cannot take part in the worldly things. They cannot vote, hold office, or fight, be-

cause they are not citizens. Their citizenship is in heaven, and their allegiance is to their own heavenly King and Master. Citizenship on earth is treason (even if unconscious disloyalty) to our true Sovereign. Voting and office holding carry with them the obligation to fight, which is in direct antagonism to every thing Christian. There is no such thing on the earth as a Christian government, or a Christian nation, or a righteous war, in a divine sense, and necessarily there cannot be, because Christian principles in practical operation in the world would destroy all human organizations, all nations, and all human government. All would be brought into allegiance to God as Father, and all men brethren. The true world's leaders are Barabbases, like Alexander, Cæsar, and Bonaparte. Man has chosen Barabbas and rejected Jesus and he will follow him to the end. A man to make war and kill his fellowmen by the wholesale cannot be a Christian in the light of God. He may profess Christianity and be even a Churchman, and possibly "born again," but still be in the darkness of infancy in Christianity if he can make or prosecute war. "War is hell;" it is of the devil, and only a Barabbas can prosecute it successfully.

A true Christian can never, if he have any light, any knowledge of the word of God, prosecute war successfully. Conscience will intervene, a sense of obligation to God will cause him to hesitate, to temporize, and delays bring failure. Ah, if the Lord's people but knew it, the grace which has fitted us for Christ's Kingdom, has spoiled us for this. We are strangers here.

A true Barabbas would not hesitate, but press onward to the end without fear, favor, or conscience.

A Christian man is out of his place as a ruler in this world. "Not this man, but Barabbas," is the world's deliberate choice, and also the world's necessity as at present organized. The god and prince of this world is Satan, as we are specially taught by the word of God, and through his efforts man has been brought to reject Jesus and enthrone Barabbas.

J. S. P.

JESUS AT PRAYER.

As seen in the Gospel of Luke.

THE Gospel of Luke, as is well known, differs from the others particularly in that it presents our blessed Lord as the perfect Man. In Matthew we see Him as King; in Mark, as Servant; while John shows us the Only Begotten. But in Luke His glories are neither official nor, if we may use such language, supernatural: He is "the Man Christ Jesus." There is special attractiveness in each of the Gospels, so that we choose none to the exclusion of another; but the peculiar charm in Luke is the simple, human character of its contents. It is our desire at this time to follow one of these human features through this Gospel.

But why should prayer be, as it is, more prominent in Luke than in Mark, the Gospel of service? Without doubt the Lord as Servant was much engaged in prayer—surely we all need to remember that we can do nothing without the help afforded from above. But there is a sort of official position even in service. It is what we *do* rather than what we *are*. Hence in Luke, the Gospel of the Manhood—and such a Manhood—where service is not the prominent theme, we have prayer emphasized, to show

that it is to be the *habit* of our life. It is to be the

“vital breath, and native air,”

apart entirely from the special emergencies we may encounter in our labor or testimony. This is what we learn from the example of our Lord.

The whole introduction, in the first two chapters of this Gospel, is fragrant with the incense of prayer and praise. Zacharias is offering incense within, and the people are praying without, when the angel announces the birth of John, as answer to the father's prayers. Praise bursts out from the lips and hearts of Elizabeth and of Mary when they meet, and a full measure from Zacharias when his lips are unsealed after John's birth. Simeon and Anna but reecho the joy of the angels of heaven who hovered about those holy scenes—all is fragrant with the incense of prayer and praise, fitting introduction to His life which was ever the fragrant incense to God.

Let us now, depending upon the Spirit of God, watch our Lord at prayer, noting, not the matter, for that is not what is given us, but the circumstances in connection with which we are told that Jesus prayed.

“Now when the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him” (Luke iii. 21, 22). At His baptism, our Lord was, as we know, identifying Himself with the repentant remnant. He had come as the Saviour, and His first public act was to take His place with those who confessed their sins. But there was more than the grace of lowliness with man; there was the public acknowledgement of dependence upon God. Our Lord en-

gages in prayer. How beautifully this accords with His baptism.

He opens His public ministry with prayer. That prayer seems to connect the thirty years of private, with His public testimony. The life of habitual communion was to be uninterrupted by the activities of service. With us, too often we forget, in the excitement of publicity, that we are to be ever dependent. Then too our Lord was about to be publicly owned by the anointing of the Spirit;—a fitting prelude to that is prayer. It is striking that we have a similar thought in the baptism by the Spirit of the disciples at Pentecost, that they were with one accord engaged in prayer. With us who have received the Spirit—as all Christians have—let the fact be marked by the same state of soul, dependence upon our God.

“And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke v. 16). Our Lord had just performed the miracle of cleansing the leper by a word, and, as a result, multitudes had flocked to Him with all manner of sickness to be healed. Who of us, endowed with such power, would have turned from such work, with all the attendant applause, into the wilderness, for solitary communion with God? And yet, what is more necessary for the successful worker? We pray when discouraged, but often times there is an exhilaration about success that unfits for prayer. Just here we need the greatest care. Satan can turn our success into bitterest humiliation if we neglect prayer. Let us learn from our Lord; He prized communion above popularity, and laid at His Father's feet the results of the power He, as Man, received from Him.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke vi. 12). How long shall we pray? as if prayer were something to be measured by the time spent in it. But what holy absorption, what living faith, what perfect communion is suggested in this night of prayer. There is nothing to sustain nature, and nothing to foster pride. He is alone, at night, and on a distant mountain. What real dependence He had! Verily He lived “by the Father”! Is there not a suggestion of what formed part, at least, of the burden of these prayers? It has often been noticed that He selected His apostles after this sleepless night of prayer. What momentous issues were involved in that selection. These were to be the men who were to company with Him, and after His departure, to carry on the work.

Surely it is not imagination to think of Him canvassing the various names of His disciples, that out of them He might select the twelve. As He weighed their characteristics and spread out all before God, we can think of special prayer for each one. Thinking of Peter’s impulsive self-confidence—foreseeing, doubtless, his denial—here began that intercession of which He spoke when the need came: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

And Judas, known from the beginning to be “a devil,” with a heart estranged from Christ, though he had taken his place with the disciples,—may we not think of the agony of anticipation which this knowledge of our Lord suggested, making a part of that night resemble Gethsemane, in little measure?

But the night is spent alone with God, and without a waver of uncertainty, our blessed Master

chooses the twelve, and begins that discourse to the people, in which He unfolds the principles of His Kingdom.

We have next two occurrences which may be considered together. "And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him; and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?" (Luke ix. 18.) "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening" (vers. 28, 29).

Only a few times are we permitted to know what passed between our Lord and His Father in prayer, —Gethsemane, and the intercession of John xvii, and the two outbursts of thanksgiving in Matt. xi, and John xi, seeming to be the exception;—but may we not gather something of the matter, from the result? "Whom say the people that I am?" Judging from the fact that He had just been engaged in that which suggested need and dependence, we might not be surprised at such as, "a holy Man," "a Man of God," "a Man of prayer," even when it was the opinion of the people, and not of His disciples that our Lord had asked for. But faith has beheld the glory veiled in the tabernacle of flesh, and Peter confesses His own proper Person, "the Christ of God."

In communion with His Father, without doubt the joy of this relationship was ever before Him, and no doubt His heart yearned to have from His disciples a distinct confession of His person, which would be a confirmation of their faith. His rejection by the nation was almost an accomplished fact. Even now

He was well nigh outside the borders of the land—at Cesarea Philippi (Matt. xiv. 13). How important that they who were to be the confessors of His Person and the apostles of His Church take clear ground at once. What was He to *them*—a prophet, John the Baptist?

Perhaps He had been asking that this faith might be found now in them, and in answer He receives Peter's simple confession. How it must have refreshed His soul, for *this* was the work of His Father in heaven. Flesh and blood could not have revealed it to him. There was no outward show, nothing beyond the ordinary that induced this confession. The daily works and words of our Lord had, by the power of God, wrought this conviction in Peter. What a blessed answer to prayer. And as we see Him thus at prayer, we trace the perfectly *human* character of His walk and ways upon earth, does not the same confession leap from our hearts?

But we look on in the same chapter to the transfiguration. His disciples had confessed Him in His humiliation; they were now to have a glimpse of Him in His glory. We may notice that, if we may use such language, there was nothing preconcerted about this wondrous scene. It was simply an incident, flashed into the ordinary routine of His lowly life. But the habitual routine, what was that?—a life of prayer. It seems that just as the Spirit descended upon Him while engaged in prayer, so now the glory rests upon Him, in the same attitude. It is as though God not only expressed His delight in His whole life, public and private, but particularly in the lowly dependence which was the mainspring of it all, and which was expressed in prayer.

As usual, we hear none of His petitions here, but from what had just preceded and what followed, as well as the theme of Moses and Elias, we may well gather that the cross, and "the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem," engaged some at least of His thoughts, as He poured out His soul to the Father. Our blessed Lord was not surprised at the turn of things, the change from popularity to rejection. All had been foreseen by Him, and doubtless all had been gone over in prayer—in holy and uninterrupted communion with the Father. In that presence, the glories of the Mount and the cross of shame were all weighed at their true value, and He passed calmly on. May we learn of Him, and may the mountain tops of joy and delight, as well as the valley, with the fellowship of His cross, find us in the communion of prayer.

This habitual attitude of prayer seems at last to have stirred the disciples to more than their ordinary anxiety to follow in His steps. "Lord, teach us to pray," they ask (Luke xi, 1, etc.). The patient, constant, unstudied walk with God had penetrated their consciences. So will it ever be; there is nothing to move men like the power of example. They may resist it, oppose or ridicule it for a time, but eventually they must acknowledge its force. Let this be remembered especially in the households of the saints. Why are there so many worldly, godless families where the parents are professedly followers of the Lord Jesus? May we not truly say it is most frequently because of the lack of example? There may be precept and prohibition in unstinted measure, but if the child sees no example of what the Christian should be, we need not be surprised if it

follows, not the teaching but the example. A worldly minded, irritable, careless father and mother will have, as a rule, children of like sort. On the other hand, a life of prayer consistently and quietly maintained will produce, with God's blessing, a suited result. It answers somewhat to the march around Jericho for seven days—finally the walls fell flat.

We do not enter here into the substance of this prayer—surely not a verbal model to be said as by rote—save to note how the main characteristics of it are, giving God His true place, and we keeping ours: "Hallowed be *Thy* name;" "Give us day by day our daily bread." Here is the spirit of true prayer, a lowly dependence upon Him whom it is our chief desire to see exalted.

It has been often noticed how this desire for prayer follows the narrative of Martha and Mary. There the good part was to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word. Where this is done, prayer will surely follow. "The word of God and prayer" are associated together. That word is the vehicle of the Spirit of God, which He uses to search us out. By that we learn our need, and God's desires for us, we are established in His love, and thus have confidence for prayer. Neglecting the word of God our prayers would become either empty forms, or a mass of unintelligent petitions. Neglecting prayer, the study of the word of God would be apt to become a mere intellectual pursuit, leaving the heart empty and barren, and the conscience unexercised. But both together sanctify the whole man and all his surroundings.

Of the holy scene in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 40-46), we will say but little. It should be read upon

our knees. Oh, the wonder of it ! the holiness of it ! The Son of God in anguish, the blood drops as sweat, falling down to the ground.

"He is speaking to His Father,
Tasting deep that bitter cup."

We are permitted to hear His words, to see His struggles and to witness the calm peace with which cross He meets His enemies. The anticipation of the and wrath-bearing there, were what filled his holy soul with all that anguish. But what perfect resignation, what lowly subjection to the Father ! He came to do His will, and nothing should come between Him and the accomplishment of that will. Surely, as we see and hear Him in the garden, we will heed His own exhortation, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

One last word of prayer we hear from Him, almost the closing words of a life of prayer. As they nail Him to the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). When human malice was doing its utmost, when every earthly prospect was fading, Jesus prays for those who are putting Him to death ! Well do we know that His death rendered forgiveness possible for all sinners, even those who crucified Him.

"The very spear that pierced Thy side
Drew forth the blood to save."

And so our blessed Master, after a life of prayer, seals His love with His blood. After His resurrection, as He is about to ascend, He blesses His beloved disciples. He raises His hands calling down God's blessing upon His people. Fitting conclusion to a life of prayer; fitting beginning to the life of glory on high, where "He ever liveth to make in-

tercession for us." In these uplifted hands of blessing, we see the prayers of earth merged into the intercessions of heaven, from whence all our succor comes.

Meanwhile has He not taught us to pray, and left us an example that we should follow in His steps? "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

SHADOW CURE.

(Acts v. 15, 16.)

WHEN God works, it is a small matter what instrumentality He uses or *how* He may employ it. There was most certainly no virtue in the shadow of Peter, and it is just as true that there was no virtue in the hand of Peter or in himself at all. This he himself realized most fully. "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk. . . . The God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus" (Acts iii. 12, 13). All the power and all the glory were ascribed to their proper source. It was the power of the name of Christ that availed for the faith of those who would put the beds of the sick where the shadow of Peter might fall upon them.

But most certainly this was a remarkable occurrence. There can be no question that God honored the faith of these people, and that the healing in the sixteenth verse was due to the power of God making use, in some cases at least, of the strange instrumentality. One thing impresses us—the power of God was operating marvelously and unhinderedly. What an amazing thing for simple men to be used in this

way; and how humble and dependent they must have been. An emptied vessel is what the Lord delights to use.

We have learned to look at the manner as well as the results of God's working, and to find instruction in details apparently unimportant or unmeaning. Leaving aside the miraculous power bestowed on the apostle, for performing wonders on the bodies of the sick—a power which had its special uses at that time, and which is not the highest form of blessing—let us ask if there is any meaning for us, any lesson of profit in this occurrence.

A shadow is caused by the sun falling upon an object. No object in the shade can cast a shadow. It must be open to the unobstructed action of the sun; it must be "in the light."

We are each in our measure to be not merely recipients of mercy but transmitters of it to others. In this way we are entrusted with the gospel, and, as imitators of God, are to represent Him in a world that knows Him not. But the power for all such work is not in ourselves, but in Christ our Lord. If we are to cast a shadow, we must abide in the light, we must let the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" shine unobstructedly upon us.

The reason why so many of the Lord's people are of no use in the world, of no blessing to others, is because they are in the shade. Something has come in between themselves and the source of all light and power. Oftentimes it may be comparatively a harmless, or even a useful thing that thus eclipses for us the direct light of the sun. A man's business, a woman's household duties and cares, may

be thus permitted to come between them and the Lord. The result is they cast no shadow, exert no influence for Him.

Now all this opens up a very interesting and profitable line of thought of a practical character. Let us seek to trace it out in a way simple enough, but perhaps suggestive to each of us to make application to ourselves personally.

Home is the place where first impressions are received and given. It is the place of God's establishment—"He setteth the solitary in families." None can estimate the value of godly influence in the home, of the elders upon one another, and upon the children. We are speaking, of course, of Christian households, where the Lord is loved and His name honored. This home life is largely made up of small details, each in itself comparatively insignificant, and each too small to command our attention. How life is largely, in this way made up of actions of which we are scarcely conscious,—little bits of conversation, little acts of love,—example without knowing it.

Here is the place for the shadows of divine love to be cast. Take, for instance, the guidance and control of the children; they need instruction, "line upon line;" they need correction and, at times, chastening. But how often are all these administered apart from God. The parent is not "in the light," and no shadow falls upon the weak and erring little one. Instead, there may be endless talk, constant forbidding, frequent scolding, until the child longs perhaps to be out of the house, at school or with companions. Does not the taste for worldly associates oftentimes begin in this way? Home is the

place for unpleasant reproofs, constant occupation with the evil, and the child is, as it were, driven elsewhere for its pleasure.

Far be the thought for a moment to disparage godly care and the exercise of a firm government in the home. Unquestionably much of the wreck in home, assembly, and in the world about us, has come through letting the reins of family-government fall from the hands. But there is only one way to exercise that government, and that is in the power of God's love.

"But," says the weary and overworked mother, "I have failed so often. I begin each day determined not to give way to temper, not to correct needlessly or to scold, and before the day has well advanced I have broken all my resolutions." Is not this an experience all too common among the saints of God? And yet how simple is the remedy. We are to abide in the presence of God, in the holy light of that love which can never be measured. We live in the sunshine. No effort to cast a shadow—who by trying could cast a shadow?—but our one care is to abide in the light, and the light makes the shadow possible.

There is exercise no doubt to be in the light. Many a thing inconsistent with that holy calm has to be judged—above all the word of God must be fed upon daily, accompanied by the spirit of constant prayer. Once in the light and there is no question about the shadow—the influence. Now, instruction is given in the wisdom of love, and there will be less need for spoken prohibition as the eye is quick to detect the power of a soul with God. Even the restless little ones feel this power, and are helped and corrected when the parent is least conscious of it.

There is little need to amplify; we all see and crave this power—how many of us lack it. Think, beloved brethren, of casting this shadow wherever we go: of it falling upon the salesman who waits upon you at the store, so that without effort a word is spoken for Christ our Lord, or a tract given. Think in the busy whirl of “the street,” of casting this shadow. Do we covet it? Let us live in the light. Let us give the Lord the joy of our fellowship, let us see that the Holy Spirit is ungrieved, and we too will cast a shadow wherever we may go.

GRACE AND STEWARDSHIP.

(From the Numerical Bible, on Luke xvi.)

THIS leads on, however, to the next parable, in which, not the outside multitudes but *disciples* are taught how *they* may use even earthly things (even the mammon of unrighteousness) in such a way as that, when this fails, the “friends” they have made by it, may receive them into the eternal tabernacles. But here, notice, there is no parade of the righteousness of the one who acts after this manner. No, it is the very opposite: we have an unjust steward accused of wasting his master’s goods, a thing which recalls to us the younger son of the parable before given, rather than the elder. And here is where we all begin naturally, although the Lord has something else to say of this before He closes.

But to begin with, all are stewards of God in the matter of those things with which we have been entrusted; and not one of us can stand before God on the ground of righteousness in our stewardship. Death—and this is brought out in fullest emphasis by the law of Moses—is the turning of man out of the place for which he was originally created, as having failed in it: and who is not turned out? Self-righteousness is thus impossible if we will listen to the teaching of nature itself, and above all of that law under which the Pharisee so securely sheltered himself. The “publican,” or tax-gatherer, become a disciple, had owned his sinnership before God, while the Pharisee had refused to recognize it: and thus in

the only way possible for man, the repenting sinner had become comparatively righteous.

The parable here is not however of the reception of a penitent, but of stewardship: of one under sentence of dismissal for unrighteousness, and of what he can still do in view of the future.

He does not hope for reversal of his sentence, but seeks how best he may subserve his interest when this has taken effect. If death be this dismissal, as it most evidently is, then in the application this refers to what comes after death; and so the Lord Himself applies it.

The steward is a child of this age, and his wisdom is that of his generation. It is not commended for its righteousness, but for its adaptation to the end in view; and in this respect the children of this age are *wiser* than the children of light. They pursue their end with more clearsighted consistency, while the children of light are often how strangely *inconsistent*. The unrighteous steward is unrighteous to the last, and no plea to the contrary is ever made for him; but his wisdom as to the future is set before us for our imitation, the unrighteousness of it being distinctly reprobated and set aside in the words that follow the parable: "for, if ye have not been *faithful* in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

His master's goods are still in the steward's hands; and these are all the means that he has, as his words plainly show. Yet his authority over them seems only now to extend so far as concerns the rendering that final account that has been required of him. He is no doubt under jealous oversight now, as to any further "waste," such as has been charged against him; but, of course, if he is to render an account, he has authority to *call in* the accounts. Here he can do no harm.

So he calls in his lord's debtors to see how every one stands, and remits to each a portion of his debt, a thing which Edersheim remarks, was within his rights, though his motive in it was unrighteous. In mercy, and in his master's interests even, he might have done so; he did it in his own.* But the wisdom with which he made capital out of what was not in his hands is clear enough. The moral for disciples is, "Make yourselves friends of the mam-

* Van Oosterzee concludes that it was his own overcharge that he remitted, and thus that he made his account right with his master, while he gained credit with the tenants. But this introduces much that is conjectural; and it does not seem that he had hope of setting his account right.

mon of unrighteousness, that, when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles."

Certainly it is not meant that we can buy ourselves thus admission into heaven, or that God's grace is shown in permitting us to buy cheap. He gives, but does not sell; unless it be "without money and without price." And even as to rewards, love can reward only what is done from love. Yet love itself may desire, and must, the approval of Him towards whom it is felt, and so may covet the rewards of love; while grace permits us out of what is not our own to make "friends" that shall in this way welcome us in the habitations of eternity.

Thus to use what is so commonly, as to be characteristically, the "mammon of unrighteousness" is not unrighteous, but faithfulness in that which is Another's; and although it be in "that which is least," as such earthly things must be, yet even as that it may test and manifest the character with regard to what is the "true riches." A man's piety cannot be measured by his charities; but on the other hand it cannot exist without them, for "faith without works is dead." And he who seeks to satisfy himself with that which is not his own, but of which he is merely steward, will find the things that are his own proportionately unsatisfying. Even an Abraham, with his face toward Egypt, will find a famine in the land which God has promised and brought him into.

Thus the Lord deals with the side of righteousness; and He rules with a firm and steady hand. Grace does not relax the lines of government; and the throne of grace is a true and absolute throne. A servant may not be a son, but every son is a servant; and "no servant can serve two masters." God and Mammon are incompatible as that.

But that cuts deep; for the Pharisees are among His audience; and they, the zealous maintainers of law, are at the same time money-lovers. They deride Him therefore: for had not the law promised all temporal good to the man that kept it? From this it was easy for one that had never felt the hopelessness of man's condition upon that footing, to make the fruit of a man's own covetousness the token of his acceptance with God. They thus, as the Lord told them, justified themselves before men; but justification is not man's work, but God's: what human law allows one to judge his own case? when, alas, also, the world is in complete opposition to God, and what is esteemed most highly by it is with Him an abomination.

There was another thing. The dispensation of law was passing away. The law and the prophets were until John, and then the Kingdom of God was preached. Now every one had to force his way into that, through the opposition of those like these Pharisees who neither believed John, nor the One to whom he testified.

The passing of the dispensation did not mean that the law had failed. It could not fail: heaven and earth might pass rather than one tittle of it fail. It did not fail, when that to which it pointed came; nor when that was remedied which Moses for the hardness of their hearts had permitted, and the new dispensation perfected what the law was unable to enforce.

He gives them an example, which the former Gospels have insisted on more fully. Pharisaism had taken advantage of the permission of divorce to give sanction to a license against which the whole spirit of the law bore witness. Now all this was to be remedied. He that should put away his wife and marry another would now commit adultery; and he likewise who should marry a divorced woman. The exception given in Matthew with regard to this, and which is found neither in Mark nor Luke, is not really an exception: for the divorce only affirms the breach of the law of marriage which sin had already made in the case excepted.

Thus the law had not failed, but was only perfected in the Kingdom of God.

The Lord goes back now to illustrate the fundamental mistake that they were making by the contrast of two men, perfect opposites of one another in life and after death, but in either case with the reversal after death of the condition in life.

He pictures a rich man, so rich as that if the Pharisaic idea were right, he should have been in fullest favor with God. He is clothed in purple and fine linen, and passes each day in uninterrupted enjoyment.

There is a poor man at his gate, so poor as to be in beggary and starvation. He longs for the crumbs (the broken pieces) from the rich man's table; and the dogs—unclean animals for the Jew—come and lick his sores.

No evil is recorded of the rich man further than this, that he enjoyed himself to the full. Even neglect of Lazarus is not urged against him. Perhaps Lazarus may have got the broken pieces. That he remained a beggar is true: but is it supposed that a rich man is to feed and care for every beggar at his door-step? Nor do we read of anything to the credit of this Lazarus. Providence

seems to have decided against him, and the law to have condemned him: for where are the good things the law has promised to those that keep it?

The beggar dies, and there is a marvelous change. Without any means by which to make friends for himself to receive him into the everlasting tabernacles, he is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. A beggar, with everything against him as that, according to the law, gets a place that the best Jew in the world might envy him for. What has caused this? Not law, we may be sure. Not any need of making up for that pitiable life on earth by the after condition. The testimony of the law settles this fully, and would settle it as well for any child of man. Nay, his name, Lazarus, Eleazar, "the Mighty One the Helper" gives us the only key to the explanation here. Spite of all else against him, God the Mighty One, acting apart from law, and so in grace, has lifted him from that degradation in which he was, to the place in which now we find him. He who has chosen Jerusalem, Jacob, Abraham, any other name in this line that you please to name, has chosen to do this—to display Himself in it: and who shall say Him nay?

The rich man also dies, and is buried. Again a marvelous, but now dreadful change! In hades—it is not hell, gehenna—he lifts up his eyes being in torment, and sees Abraham from afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "And he called and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame."

The language is, of course, as figurative here as on the other side is Abraham's bosom. All representations of what is beyond the present life seem to partake of the same figurative character, which is, however, all the more adapted to appeal strongly to the imagination. The final judgment is not yet come; the once rich man has, as we presently see, brothers upon earth who may be warned to escape that place of torment. Resurrection, therefore, has not come any more than judgment, but the wrath of God is already realized in suffering which can be most suitably conveyed to us in terms like this. The hope of relief,—of such slight relief as is requested here, is presently declared to be in vain, an impassable gulf (or chasm) unalterably fixed between the lost and saved, no crossing or mingling to be, even for a moment; no hope of condition changing after death, such as many entertain to-day, for a moment to be thought of.

But the reason for the rich man's coming into that awful doom is what is evidently intended to be pressed upon us. The Lord has already declared to his disciples that whosoever loseth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal; and that, if a man come to Him, and hate not his own life, he cannot be His disciple. This, it is plain, the rich man had not done. This only it is that is affirmed against him: "Child, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"—not "good things" simply, but "*thy* good things." He had chosen life on the wrong side of death, and lost it.

This loss is not merely that: for God cannot be simply passive with regard to sin, and the tormenting flame is the wrath of God upon it. Death is not extinction; nor, therefore, is the second death. All that we find in this picture is the very opposite of this: it is intense realization. And if the pang of remorse is the soul's judgment of itself, (such judgment as the lost may be capable of,) the judgment of God is other than this, and more.

Oh, then, for a voice to warn men! So thinks the poor sinner here. Companionship is no alleviation of this hopeless anguish. "I pray thee then, father," he says, "that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; so that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Even this hope fails: "They have Moses and the Prophets," Abraham answers; "let them hear them." But he urges further: "Nay, father Abraham; but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent." But he said to him, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead."

No fear that Moses should not receive due honor from the lips of Christ. These Pharisees with their strenuous seeking of a sign from heaven: these are they that dishonor Moses. "Take up, and read," disdainful Pharisee, and thou shalt see how Moses accuses thee of unbelief of all the signs that he has given, and which are fulfilled in Him that speaks to thee. Yet our hearts ache so often for something more, even with Scripture completed in our hands, and a greater than Moses speaking to us from it. Yet "all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink;" and out of all the host that did so, two men of those that came out of Egypt entered the land to which God was bringing them! So with the men that wanted a sign now, did they dream that when He whom they had devoted to death should come back from the dead, they would be found giving large money to the keepers of His tomb, to have it believed a lie that He was risen? So still, with their eyes tight shut, men cry for light.

“I FORCED MYSELF.”

1 Sam. xiii. 12.

KING Saul was a young man of great promise. He completely won the heart of Samuel, who never ceased to mourn for him long after his rejection by God. He was, humanly speaking, the man of all others throughout the tribes of Israel suited to be their king. Samuel could ask with absolute confidence as he brought him forward, “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king” (1 Sam. x. 24). God had chosen the very best man in Israel, according to the flesh, one to meet the desires of the people who had asked “a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. viii. 5). We notice it was not the craving for the king after God’s heart, but in order that they might be like the rest of the nations. We may be assured that the desire to imitate the ways and expedients of the world, whether in the individual or in the Church at large will result in spiritual disaster. The jealous eye of divine love detected the departure of heart, and said, “They have rejected Me that I should not reign over them” (ver. 7). It is not very difficult to see the link between these two phrases—“like all the nations,” and “I forced myself.”

But Saul begins brightly and well, and with all the help that the providence of God and the moral support of Samuel could give. We may rest assured that neither in the case of Saul, nor of any other man, did God ever put obstacles in his way, but quite the reverse. But God will test every man.

In fact, to please God he *must* walk by faith, and this is ever a test. It cannot be otherwise. Further, faith is found only in the path of obedience—is really shown by that; and obedience to God, we need hardly say, often runs counter to, and is always independent of, the opinions and desires of the natural man. Therefore we see the necessity of the occurrence which brought out what was always in Saul.

The occurrence, too, was simple enough. When Samuel had first anointed him, he provided that after Saul had, as it were, taken the first steps of kingship (see 1 Sam. x. 7, 8), he should go to Gilgal and there await Samuel who would come and offer peace- and burnt-offerings, and tell him what he should do. Everything was simple and suggestive here. The very place of meeting—Gilgal—would remind him of the days of Israel's victories under Joshua, when no enemy could stand before them. Its spiritual meaning is, of course, deeper, but most suggestive to us. "No confidence in the flesh," is its lesson, impressed by the circumcision of those who had heretofore neglected it in the wilderness. There is no power against the enemy save as Gilgal, the application of the cross to ourselves, is entered into practically.

Then Saul was to wait seven days for Samuel, as priest and prophet, to come. As priest he would offer the sacrifices which are always the basis of our fellowship with God. As prophet he would bring the word of God to Saul, tell him what he should do. How simple and essential was all this. The very need of waiting would test the faith and obedience of the new king, and check that restless spirit so common to vigorous minds.

All this was simple and clear enough; but there were two uncertain factors in connection with it which made the result doubtful. These were the people and Saul himself. The people had already shown a spirit of unbelief and departure from God in desiring a king, which boded ill for any faithfulness on their part. Saul was yet to be proved.

Everything was in confusion. The Philistines, who had been quiet enough during the judgeship of Samuel were making incursions, and threatening the nation with more determination than for many years. The people were scattered everywhere. A little handful followed Saul and Jonathan with trembling reluctance. There was nothing encouraging to *sight*. But this was the very opportunity for faith to shine out brighter, as it did shortly after in Jonathan and his armor bearer. But Saul had no faith.

When the seventh day was reached, and still Samuel had not appeared, the people melting away and the encroachments of the Philistines were too much for the flesh, something must be done. Ah! how often is that made the plea for the restlessness of unbelief. Something must be done; and we forget, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

Conscience, however, made itself heard. Saul knew what was the path of obedience. *He* knew there was but one thing, and that was to obey, to wait until Samuel came, and receive guidance through the word of God, on the basis of priestly sacrifice and intercession. This was the path of obedience—of faith. But what about the people? Ah! faith never consults "the people." What will the people say or do, is ever the question of unbelief. The

people would gather as quickly as they scattered; this had been proven again and again, notably in the history of Gideon. But whether they returned or not, faith never questions. It *must* obey at all costs. Saul knew this, and it was evidently with the greatest reluctance that he disobeyed the word of God.

But oh! dear brethren, he *did* disobey that holy Word. Of what avail was his reluctance, his forcing himself? Did not this but witness the more strongly against him? Had he done it carelessly, unthinkingly, he might have pleaded forgetfulness. But his own confession, "I forced myself," tells of disobedience in the face of God's known will. He feared man rather than God; he had no faith.

He is tried and found wanting, and as soon as his disobedience had been clearly proven, Samuel appears. Oh! some one says, if he had but waited that one hour! Rather, if he had only obeyed God. It was not the one hour, but the unbelief that lay back of it, the whole time, and which the one hour but manifested to view. It was not the fatal hour when Judas made his hellish bargain with the priests, but the heart capable of such a thing. *That* but proved what he was.

Saul had been tested. He could not lead God's people, for he had no faith. So Samuel thus early is compelled to announce his rejection. How solemn and how searching! "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Surely we should not seek to take the edge off such an exhortation, nor lose the lesson of this solemn example. Let us seek, with the Lord's help, to make some applications.

Saul himself is the typical professor, enjoying privileges far beyond most. He was above all in direct contact with the word of God through the prophet Samuel. What limit was there to his attainment of the highest degree of excellence? But one thing was needful and that one he lacked. He was without a living faith. So with all professors: they may say "We have eaten and drunken in Thy presence and Thou hast taught in our streets:" nay, they may ask, "Have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils?" But of what avail if they knew not Christ? But what an awfully hardened heart that must be which remains in the darkness though surrounded by light.

The professor has a conscience and knows too much to sin without conviction. When he is allured into sinful paths, he cannot go without a struggle. But will it do for him to plead as excuse, "I forced myself"! Ah no, "out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," will be said to such. But here the application is obvious, and we pass to consider the subject in relation to the believer.

Too often has the individual saint yielded to pressure from without, and been compelled to force himself into paths which he well knew were contrary to God's will. Let the reader pause here and ask himself whether at this very time conscience may not be pleading against this forcing. Some indulgence to the flesh, some association with the ungodly, or some yielding to the ways of the world. Surely the truth of God is sufficiently known, and His Spirit is ever faithful. There must be a fearful amount of this forcing, if we are to judge by the walk and testimony of the saints of God.

But will it do to excuse one's self by saying, "I forced myself," I did it reluctantly? Suppose many of God's dear people have been led away into the world, are we to follow them reluctantly? Will not that reluctance witness to us of the pleading of the Spirit of God, to which we would not hearken?

Let us turn to the assembly of God, the gatherings of His people. If there is one truth more precious and more important than another in this connection, it is the presence and control of the Holy Spirit. When the people of God come together they have, according to Scripture, no human leader to preside and direct the conduct of the meeting. All is to be subject to the Holy Spirit. Of the precious reality of this we need not speak to those who enjoy the privilege of so meeting. But special dangers lurk here, just because of the apparent freedom from restraint. A verse is often quoted, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and under the plea of this, it has been argued that much greater freedom should prevail than where this truth is not known.

Unquestionably there should be greater freedom for the Spirit of God, but not for self-will. The restraint upon nature is not a human, but a divine one, and therefore all the greater. How sad, under the plea of liberty, to see careless participation in the meeting, lack of reality in worship, and a restless, busy state of activity, the farthest opposite of that quiet repose or resistless energy, which ever marks the presence of the Holy Spirit.

But let us specify a little. If for any reason worldliness or carelessness have come in, it is natural to expect that the Spirit of God will be grieved, and by His silence, as it were, witness to the conscience of

the saints that all is not as it should be. Well do we know this silence, this sense of helplessness which marks not the quietness of rest, but of reproof.

Just here is the danger. If we bow to the reproof and judge ourselves confessing our helplessness, the blessed Spirit is only too ready to lift our hearts again; but if instead of that an effort is made to go on as though all were well, sad indeed is the result. There may be abundant participation; hymns may be sung, scriptures read, and a general activity prevail, and yet all be empty and unprofitable. It is no use to say, "I forced myself," in order to lift the meeting. God is ever worshiped in truth. We do not assemble to "have a meeting," but to realize His presence. If we are in a low state, let us not try to ignore it, but own it, each of us secretly and individually at first, and if the blessed Spirit lay it on us, confess for the whole gathering the feebleness and dullness.*

Let us repeat, God must have reality, and our own souls crave the same. Let us not fear a season of

* It need hardly be said that the Lord's table is not the place for specific confessions, save in some glaring evil which obtrudes itself upon the attention of all. On the other hand how much room is there for self-judgment, in connection with the Lord's table. Have I wronged a brother? I am to go to him at the first opportunity, and own my fault. Without doubt much, very much of the dullness in meetings is to be attributed to this and similar causes. We have fed on the husks of this world; we have neglected the word of God, have allowed envy or malice a place in our hearts, and the Spirit is quenched and grieved. He will not go on with worship until we purge ourselves. Surely we are to avoid a merely legal state, but when we have wronged a brother in any way the Scripture is plain "first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift" (Matt.

quiet, which may at times be just what is needed for individual souls to be fitted for further worship. There are, to be sure, seasons of holy calm and quiet which are the most delightful, and farthest from the silence of which we have just been speaking. We should be slow indeed to break such, unless manifestly led by the Spirit.

We leave this part of our subject, with the prayer that our God will deepen in all our souls the sense of His holiness. the reality of the Spirit's guidance, and a true brokenness of heart which will offer no hindrance to that blessed One as He leads out our praises to Christ and the Father. May we be kept from both legalism and carelessness, either of which is a direct dishonor to the grace of God. Do we realize, dear brethren, that we have been entrusted with a truth of peculiar and priceless value? What use are we making of the Spirit's presence? Is it a doctrine or a reality?

So also we might apply this teaching to the general administration of assembly matters. Oftentimes it is considered a mark of spirituality to force ourselves. Special meetings are held, not as a *result* of interest, but to awaken it. Affairs are conducted with the celerity of business. Even discipline, and cases that need to be approached with the greatest caution, are handled without the sense of dependence upon, and obedience to God. Need we wonder that souls are driven off instead of helped, and that even divisions are precipitated through this forcing?

v. 23, 24). If no injury has been done, but the evil is detected in the heart, it must be judged none the less sparingly, because no one but God and ourselves know of it.

Let us remember, too, that there are other consciences, and be very tender; we are not to force them any more than our own. How much care, patience, lowliness all this involves, we need not say. In the things of God the flesh must never be reckoned with. May we learn the lesson and ever say to ourselves, even when most sorely tempted to act without God, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say on the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 14).

"REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE."

"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts xi. 18).

"**R**EPENTANCE unto life" does not mean that repentance precedes life; "your fruit unto holiness" (Rom. vi.) does not mean that *fruit* precedes *holiness*. The fruit is holiness; they go together—so repentance and life go together.

God *grants* repentance, therefore it is His work, just as He *gives* life. Repentance is a manifestation of life that occurs at once when the new birth takes place, as the track of a foot shows there has been a footpath as some one has said. It cannot be said that one precedes the other. They come together; the one occurs and the other exists necessarily at the same moment.

The moment I repent, I believe; and the moment I believe, I repent. I bow to God's testimony as to myself a sinner and as to Christ a Saviour of sinners, though there may be a space between believing, between repenting and the soul finding rest by appropriating to myself what Christ has done for me.

I am born again, I believe, I repent, I am saved, I have eternal life, I am converted—what are these but different expressions of what occurs at the same moment in the soul of the believer?

Repentance is a most excellent fruit of divine life wrought by the Spirit, and deepened in after experience to the end. "Repent and believe the gospel" is simply that I repent and believe at the same moment: that is the two go together.

The prodigal "coming to himself," suggests the beginning of life working in the soul. His first thought is of grace, "how many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare." Then he adds: "I will arise and go to my father,"—this is grace and faith; "and I will say to him, father I have sinned,"—this the expression of repentance. Surely grace was apprehended; *faith* was working and repentance had place at once and together, the soul was born again and accepted of God, whatever time might elapse before all was realized in his soul, as suggested by the father's kiss and welcome. How beautiful and becoming to the sinner is repentance, and how beautiful the joy of welcome! "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

Repentance is an acceptable sign of life—a work of God like that when it was said, "Let there be light." The word of truth by which we are begotten of God, goes forth to men "to open their eyes" that they might see themselves in His presence, and by that word in the Spirit's power, repent.

How blessed is a "broken spirit," instead of the hardness of a proud heart! The Christian who will not repent, who will not humble himself to say, "I was wrong, I have sinned" has become for the time

being, a "captive" to Satan (2 Tim. ii. 25); he is a wanderer, exposed on every side to further dishonor. He has become a hindrance and not a help to his brethren, no longer able to "keep rank." The men who could "keep rank" were those who "came with a perfect heart to Hebron to make David king over all Israel" (1 Chron. xii. 38). There is a divine harmony in a broken spirit, "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." All hearts are touched, and held in awe, by the utterance of a broken spirit.

Every heart reposes confidence in such, and the state of soul of the repentant one is the far opposite to that which exists when the Holy Spirit of God is grieved. Now the heart is filled with an inexpressible sense of the tender love of God. The skies are no longer as brass; and the heart, no longer hard, goes out in joy to God and to all those who are His; the soul is girded afresh with strength for the battle and is sanctified, and furnished to go forth, and help those who are in need, and to rejoice in fellowship with those who rejoice and worship God.

Confession, repentance, is the door of escape out of every prison-house of Satan. Our God is glorified, the soul is set free, and God's people rejoice with the joy of the Lord.

E. S. L.

[It will be remembered that the writer is speaking of repentance *unto life*. There is a sorrow of the world that worketh death (2 Cor. vii. 10). Such was the remorse of Judas, and such the partial impressions of stony ground hearers. But a godly sorrow is far different from these, and, being the work of the Spirit of God, must abide. Various phases of divine life should be discriminated, but not separated. On the other hand, we could never *say* that a soul had passed from death to life, until there was manifest faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ed.]

PASTORAL CARE.

IT is written when our Lord ascended up on high He gave gifts unto men, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11-13), expressing thus in those love gifts to His people, His love and care as the Good and Great Shepherd of His sheep. We will dwell for a space upon one of those gifts especially, that of the pastor, and his work. These love gifts were intended by Him to be with us till the end (Eph. iv. 13).

When this dispensation runs its course, and the Church, the body of Christ, is completed, and the saints caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, service such as those gifts render now will be required no more. Yet as we look around us the great need rises up before the mind, and not one of those should we undervalue. As we move among the careless masses of the day, the cry goes up from many hearts for the Lord to raise up more evangelists, or if they are among us for the Lord to lay upon their hearts as a heavy burden their work, and send them forth among men to awaken the careless, set free the anxious, and win precious souls for the Lord Jesus. This truly is blessed work to be engaged in, work that is well pleasing to the Lord of life and glory.

But again, as we move among the various classes of the redeemed of the Lord, the desire also goes up to the throne of grace to see developed among His people the pastoral gift. Many of the people of

God are destroyed for lack of knowledge and care. The gift of pastor is mainly for the people of God, though he may possibly also possess that of preacher and teacher. His work therefore as a necessity is more a hidden work and one that the public are less cognizant of, and therefore recognized mainly by the people of God among whom he labors. This in itself requires faith of another order from that of an evangelist; the fruit also is of another kind, and, as in all work, the heart needs patience in it and to wait upon the great Head of the Church till that day to see the fruit. We know the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, will pass nothing by done in His name. The work of each is before Him and as under His eye each is to serve, in that part of the field where the work of each lies. To one He entrusts the work of saving, to another cultivating and tilling and watering at times, and to others that of reaping, etc. Yet this matters not with the laborers, it is all the Master's planning. A careful reading of Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. xii. and Eph. iv. clears up these things for all who follow the word of truth.

The pastor now we will seek to follow. We believe the Lord, ever true in His care for His own, does not fail here. He gives the gifts, yet there seems everywhere the need and the lack of pastors. What is the reason, we might well ask, beloved. May it lead us to more serious inquiry. Is it not true that the gifts are still here? Yet lack of exercise of heart, and care for His interests keeps many from exercising this gift, and doing the work, and thus meet the crying need of the day. Let none think that it is only those who are wholly given up to the service of the Lord that can be termed pastors.

And may there not be a reason among the people of God themselves, in their lack of appreciation of such a blessed work? We believe such a work ought to be followed with the prayers and sympathies and also fellowship of God's people as much as that of the evangelist who occupies perhaps a more prominent place, especially before the public. We repeat, beloved, the crying need among the people of God, is the pastoral work, and that of teaching. The spirit of the day, if we are not kept in grace, lays hold upon the people of God and it is then very easy to depart from the spirit of Philadelphia to that of Laodicea "rich and increased in goods with need of nothing."

The Lord give His people exercise everywhere as to the great need of pastors and pastoral work, and cause the cry to rise from many hearts, Are we exercising the true pastoral care we ought? Such passages as Jer. iii. 15; xxiii. 1-4; Ezek. xxxiv. 1-23, are profitable to study in this connection.

Now we will turn and trace out that pastoral care as seen in the model pastor of the apostolic age—Paul. He had the care of all the churches lying as a heavy burden upon his heart. In this connection it could be truly said, he was "a man after God's own heart."

An apostle he was, a preacher, and teacher also, yet he was nothing behind in his pastoral care and labor, as his labor in the Acts and Epistles fully demonstrates. We believe his first great missionary journey from Antioch (Acts xiii. 14, 26) was as an evangelist, yet after the dispute was settled at Jerusalem (chap. xv.) which tended to hinder this blessed work of grace, see the pastoral care of the apostle,

“Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” This desire was prompted by a heart that loved the people of God and because they were such—loved to see them, and know of their welfare; and this love of Christ, the Head of the Church, which filled the apostle’s heart, found its delight in moving among them and serving them for Christ’s sake.

Next, we will turn to his written ministry under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, and see how at every stage of the journey in his service as teacher, the pastoral heart is manifest, and his care for the true spiritual welfare of what was to the Lord as dear as the apple of His eye, His redeemed and beloved people.

The first in order is, “To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called saints” (Gk.). “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” The apostle had never as yet visited the capital of the great Roman Empire, had never been privileged to sit with the saints in that city around the Lord’s table, never privileged to bow in prayer nor minister the precious things of Christ, nor to sound out the gospel of glory within their hearing. Individuals among them he had seen in other places, and knew them. Yet he thought of them all, he loved them, they were dear to him, because dear to Christ, whom Paul knew so well, loved, and served with true devotion. From this first chapter also we learn he bore them upon his heart continually in prayer (ver. 9). Is not this where all true pastoral care begins,—to pray for the saints? Let us all lay this part of the pastoral exercise and service more to heart, to pray for the people of God.

Again he adds, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (ver. 11). This is a true pastoral desire; he longed to see their faces, to minister to them of the rich bounty bestowed upon him by the great Head of the Church, and to feed them with knowledge and understanding, a true pastoral desire (Jer. iii. 15).

In this epistle (chap. xv. 14) we learn the true condition of the saints at Rome. There was the need of the various lines of teaching as developed in the epistle in chaps. i-xi. and the exhortations and care enjoined in chaps. xii-xvi. Yet he could add, "I myself also am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Yet the apostle longed to see them, and also preach the gospel, and so have fruit to show there as among other Gentiles also.

The next in order are his epistles to the Corinthians. In this place (in sad contrast to those at Rome), serious evils had developed among them unchecked and unjudged, and the whole epistle expresses the pastoral care for that assembly, formed through the apostle's labors. To visit them under those circumstances would be no joy nor pleasure, yet we see his care for them. He wrote this letter calculated to set them right before God, and he adds here, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." "What will ye? shall I come to you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness" (chap. iv. 19-21). How changed his language! how different! Yet from the same pen and prompted by the same pastoral heart, with a love many waters could not quench.

Why this change? were they not the people of God as well as those to whom he wrote in the former epistle? Surely they were, as the second verse informs us, yet their condition, their walk, and practice were far different; hence they needed to be dealt with in a different way, he needed to pen an epistle with different words, a different line of ministry. Yet it was love and the care the apostle had for the people of God which led him to write both. Note the epistle well; the various evils which were manifest there and yet unjudged, all those things were too serious for the apostle to pass over lightly; he points them all out most carefully, and while he said he would come to them he desired one thing before he came, repentance and self-judgment.

Titus was sent to relieve the apostle's mind (2 Cor. viii. 16, 17; xii. 18), for day and night he labored in prayer for their deliverance. Titus, no doubt, was kept longer than the apostle had anticipated. He had great suspense at Troas insomuch that he could not pursue his gospel work, because there he met not Titus, and so he leaves this open gospel door behind him, and sails across the water to meet Titus in Macedonia (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13; the map is a help here, to follow the journey of the apostle as well as that of Titus). In Macedonia he finds Titus, and good tidings are communicated concerning the saints at Corinth, and Paul is relieved and comforted. The model pastor's spirit is refreshed and strengthened.

If Paul had been compelled to go to Corinth with those evils still unjudged, he would have had to use the rod. This would have been a great grief for him. But now they having cleared themselves, he would go in love and minister the precious things of Christ

so as to lead them on in the ways of the Lord. Two prominent lessons we glean from these two epistles to the Corinthians. In the first epistle, faithfulness and righteousness in dealing with the evils mentioned, love prompting him to act. These evils were not simply hearsay, they were well known. The apostle had full proof and they were not yet judged by them. For all this, God, in righteousness, desired brokenness, and self-judgment, and so did Paul.

Next, in the second epistle, when the apostle found there was the brokenness the Lord desired, how lovely to see the grace that reigns so supremely in his heart. Now it can flow out. This truly was grace reigning through righteousness, a principle ever true in the ways of God. The Lord keep us and hold us ever as a testimony as this model pastor was.

We would further note, in the apostle's care, he wrote the first epistle condemning the evils permitted. Next he desired Apollos to go there with other brethren, perhaps Titus, and another brother (1 Cor. xvi. 10, 12; 2 Cor. xii. 18). But, in this desire for them to go, it would be simply as servants to help to deliver the Corinthians from the evils, and in no wise to have fellowship with them while these evils were there, and unjudged. To go among evils, no matter how serious, to deliver the Lord's dear people, while refusing fellowship, might in many cases be right. This is left for the individual servant to decide. Apollos felt it a difficult work, and would not go; Titus felt free, and was helpful, and found the first epistle had been used of God. Hence, none, neither Paul, Apollos, Titus, nor any other brethren, were required to have fellowship with the Corinthians while these evils were there. Nor yet did the apos-

the desire Apollos to do so, but as a servant to minister at this critical time. This must always be distinguished. Service is one thing: fellowship is quite another. This is the lesson we would learn from the apostle's desire for others to go there; a lesson which ought to be plain to all.

A. E. B.

(To be continued.)

THE BREAKER OF BREAD.

HE was, when He arose, as when He died. The light of the rainbow of promise, which shone out from His cross, proclaiming no more judgment storm for His sheltered ones, glowed still with the light of God's everlasting love, and, although to those of *us* (Peter was of us, John was of us), who gazed, new tints of resurrection glory mingled and blended with the divine light of the past, He was still our Jesus, our Lord. At times these tints so shone before us, that as we gazed, we knew Him not; and yet they caused our hearts to burn within us, until, breaking through the cerements of glory which wrapped Him round, a turn of the Kaleidoscope of Love revealed *Him* who had walked and talked and labored and loved with us, in the days gone by, and we worshiped. And it is sweet to our hearts to think of those days, and to talk together of how He was made known unto us.

Those two, who walked the road to Emmaus, must have wondered indeed at the Wondrous Expositor of God's word, who joined Himself to them, but it was in the familiar act of breaking bread that He was made known. How this speaks to us. How it says,

This is He who once said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst." This was no *doctrine* with Him.

The longing of His heart brought Him there. He could not stay away. Before the grave, He had raised the dead, He had cleansed the lepers, He had healed the sick, but that disciple whom Jesus loved delights to proclaim Him, *God*, sitting at the table of Lazarus, or gathering His disciples within the house and at the table. Never more God than then! And yet how it melts the heart, to remember that this God, the God "over His own house," was once a stranger with nowhere to lay His head. Sin, strife, selfishness,—these are they that rend the home in pieces. Love, light, goodness,—these are the sweet bonds that unite all that know Him, and their source is in Himself. Do we wonder, then, that He was made known unto them in the breaking of the bread?

Turn to the twenty-first chapter of John and read the story written there. Notice the words closely. When the miraculous draught of fishes startles the disciples, John says to Peter, "It is the Lord," and Peter hurries to shore, but as soon as Jesus pronounces the words, "Come and dine," he who had seen, whose eyes had gazed upon, whose hands had handled of the Word of Life, breaks out into those sweet words, as if this were the climax, outshining all miracle: "And none of the disciples DURST ask Him, Who art Thou? *knowing* that it was the Lord." O blessed Early Riser and Daily Toiler and Late Retirer, Thine own resurrection hands have made the fire and spread the feast, and as we ponder it, we remember, too, that on the night of Thy deep sorrow Thou didst break the bread and hand it to us

as most powerful reminder of Thee; and portrayed in it and symbolized by it and shining through it, Thy precious body and blood whisper to us of the time, when in the midst of the elders, ever in the midst, Jesus, our God of home, (the Breaker of bread), shall gather round Himself, the Church of God, the Lamb's wife. Thus the act by which He made Himself known to the two at Emmaus, and by which we remember Him, is of such character as if, in the longing of His heart, He would say to us, "The broken body and the blood herein symbolized were all to provide you a home whither I go to meet you." Amen! F. C. G.

BEHOLD THE MANNER OF HIS LOVE.

1 John iii. 1-3; Titus ii. 11-14.

BEHOLD the manner of His love
 The Father's grace and mercy prove;
 For He has shown unto His own,
 That they who once were sin-enthralled,
 E'en now, the sons of God are called,
 Though by the world, like Him unknown.

Beloved, now are we God's sons—
 Through faith in Christ, begotten ones—
 What we shall be we do not see;
 But on that grand Redemption Morn,
 When we behold the great "First Born,"
 As He is then, so shall we be.

When we upon the Word are fed,
 And by the Holy Ghost are led,
 Then grace has wrought, and we are taught
 To look for Him who shall appear,
 To ever count His coming near,
 And with this "Hope" our lives are fraught.

G. K.

GOD'S HEART.

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. xxi. 3).

THIS is the eternal state ; the fulfilment of God's desires, and the fruit of His labors. Therefore in this we see God's heart manifested. He finds His satisfaction in the midst of His people, a people who have their all in God.

But if this is the end of God's purposes, it was in His heart from the beginning. "While as yet He had not made the earth . . . My delights were with the sons of men," are the words of God the Son. Thus in anticipation God's heart was occupied with men, the only creature made in His image—who could have communion with Him.

When the first man is formed, the Creator has such pleasure in him that He brings to Adam every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, "to see what he would call them." God seeking him in the garden at the time of man's failure, and His promise of reconciliation through the woman's Seed, reveal His purposes of love and grace.

Though man was now estranged by sin, we may trace God's pleasure in men, in such, of course, as were cleansed by virtue of the promised sacrifice. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Blessed and wonderful companionship, in days when God as yet had been so little revealed, and when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth." "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Abraham was "the friend of God," so that God said,

“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” Jacob was made “a prince with God.” “The Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Daniel was a “man greatly beloved.”

Thus God delights in His people, but only one man does He call a “man after His own heart.” And why was David this, with his glaring sins, more than Abraham the man of faith? or Joseph, that spotless character and type of Christ? or Moses, the Christ-like mediator? or Elijah, God's hand and mouth-piece among an apostate people? It was because David pre-eminently shared the desire of God's heart, that man should be for God, and God for man: as we read in the Psalms, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” And again he says, “A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand [in any other place]: I would choose rather to sit at the threshold [margin] in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Ps. lxxxiv. 10). David also was the one who brought the ark back to Jerusalem with great rejoicing, and he longed to build a house for God, who had so long dwelt within curtains. This he was not permitted to do, but he showed his love and zeal in the great stores of cedar and gold, silver and brass, which he gathered for its building. David's desires are thus so in line with God's, that when God is manifested in the flesh, he is “the Son of David,” and for the same reason, David's writings, more than any others, are prophetically the words of Christ Himself.

But God was not satisfied that a few individuals

should enter into His mind; He sought in Israel to have a people among whom He could dwell. "If therefore ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." He even desired them to build Him a tabernacle, that He might dwell in the midst of them. He labored through Moses and the prophets to bind the people to Himself, but man's perverseness compelled Him to say, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

But we come to the perfect expression of God's heart, and what do we see? God and man are no longer separated. The Son of God is the Man Christ Jesus. As man, He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." As Saviour-God He came to seek and save that which was lost; and transform them into worshipers, who worship in spirit and in truth. But the most striking and wonderful proof of God's love for men is the Cross of Christ. In order to reconcile sinners to Himself He gave His Son, His only Son, whom He loved. Oh, what a shame that our hearts do not always glow in full return for such love !

But though Christ must return to the Father, (to prepare a place for His own) the companionship of God with man has not been broken. At one of the last meetings with His apostles, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And after He had gone up, a true Man, to the right hand of the Majesty on High, the Holy Spirit descends to dwell in every true disciple. What an evidence of the value and power of Christ's work, when God the Spirit can dwell in failing men by

virtue of that washing which has made us clean every whit! In this way God has already accomplished, in a spiritual from, the purposes of His heart. "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Cor. vi. 16).

May we fear to grieve this holy Guest, by whom we are sealed, and who would lead us on to better acquaintance with Christ.

But though the Spirit is with us now, we are not home as yet; but we look on to the time when, with our own eyes, we shall see His face; when, free from sin within us, we shall gather round the throne of God, and spend the long eternal day praising and serving Him. Then shall the purpose of God be accomplished, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

A.

BEING HUMBLE AND BEING HUMBLLED.

BEING humble before God is one thing; being humbled before God is altogether another thing. We are humbled before God because we have not been humble. We are humbled on account of sin; but had we been humble, we should have received grace to prevent it. "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

The only humble place is in the presence of God. It is only out of His presence that we are in danger of being lifted up. People indeed say that it is dan-

gerous to be too often on the mount. But the danger is not in being on the mount, but in coming down from the mount. When we come down, we begin to think we have been there, and then pride comes in. Paul did not need a thorn when he was in the third heavens. But after his return, he was in danger of being exalted above measure by the thought that he had been where no one else had been.

True humility does not consist in thinking badly about ourselves, but in never thinking about ourselves at all. This is the place which is hard to reach—to get done with the constant repetition of I, I, I. People must be talking of themselves, and their pride is nourished by telling how evil they are, if this suits their theology; just as much as telling of their holiness and conquests, when that suits their theology. It is sadly curious to see some men change their tone as they change their views; just as in the world men make a boast of their vices or of their virtues, as the one or the other may attract notice or admiration. But in either case, it is I, I, I. Some one has said, "If you begin a sentence with I, there is nothing that a person will not put after it." It is wonderful to hear how men will indulge in the use of that letter, under the plea of relating their experience; perhaps the boasting Pharisee called it relating his experience to the praise of God. At any rate, he showed how self-exaltation may be prefaced by, "God, I thank Thee;" as sometimes we find it in assemblies where Christ should be the theme.—*Extract.*

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 1.—Please explain Luke xxii. 44, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood." Is it meant it was blood, or only like blood?

ANS.—There could be little meaning in saying the sweat resembled blood, and was not really that. If we read with the emphasis upon the blood, the meaning is clear: "His sweat was as great drops of *blood*," instead of like drops of water, as in ordinary cases. This gives meaning to the passage, solemn and tender. From a toiling man the sweat pours like water, from the Lord, like blood. This seems to be a sort of anticipation of His death. He was to give up His life, and even in anticipation of it, the anguish is so intense that the blood oozes out. Was there ever sorrow like His?

QUES. 2.—How can we reconcile Job's saying, "In my flesh I shall see God, and 2 Cor. v. 1, 2, our house which is from heaven"? Is our resurrection body the same body we have now, except the mortality and all marks of sin withdrawn, or is it another body, as the plant of wheat is different from the grain that was sown?

ANS.—While the passage quoted from Job is frequently used to prove the resurrection of the body, it does not necessarily refer to that. Indeed the connection would seem to show that Job was looking for vindication on the earth, in his "latter day." Our Lord's resurrection is clearly foretold, as in Ps. xvi., but it is hardly the custom of Scripture to speak so definitely in the Old Testament of the resurrection of the body, as this would be. But even did it so refer, there would be no contradiction with the passage in 2 Corinthians. There it is the body suitable for a heavenly habitation, as contrasted with the earthly. It is the spiritual, as contrasted with the natural, in 1 Cor. xv. The important fact connected with the resurrection of the body is that its identity is preserved. Its powers, beauty, and all else will as much transcend those of our present bodies as the blossoming field exceeds in beauty the "bare grain" that was planted. But the identity is preserved, so that there will be recognition and all that we are taught to crave, as connected with that.

QUES. 3.—Please explain 1 Pet. iv. 6, "Judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit."

ANS.—The two preceding verses are the key. The world thinks it strange that saints do not live in the sinful pleasures to which it is devoted; but it is for this reason that the gospel was preached, to those who are now past all the employments of this life. They believed the gospel, and lived accordingly. Though men might judge them in a carnal way, they live to God, and in that day, soon to come, all will see who was wise, the saints, or the world that condemned them.

QUES. 4.—In Luke xxii. 36, Did our Lord really mean His disciples to buy swords, or was it intended to teach them a spiritual lesson?

ANS.—Most certainly the latter. How could He say two swords were enough, if they were to defend themselves? Then, too, had He not told them not to resist evil, and did He not heal Malchus' ear? The meaning seems very clear: He was about to leave them and, humanly speaking, they would be thrown upon their own resources. But surely the only sword for them to use was the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

QUES. 5.—Has the Bride of Christ, each member of which has a tangible body, also a visible and glorious dwelling-place?

ANS.—It is a great mistake to spiritualize everything so that nothing visible is left. Thus while the descriptions of the New Jerusalem are doubtless symbolic, they are real, and are meant to convey as far as possible, an idea of the visible glories that await us. In that happy home there will be no conflict between the seen and the unseen, so that the visible will be a fitting expression of the spiritual.

QUES. 6.—Are the principalities and powers, in Eph. iii. 10, the chief of the elect angels?

ANS.—The term seems to include all, both evil and good potentates. It would seem that as Satan has not yet been cast out of heaven, he has still his rank. Thus Michael the archangel does not rail against him (Jude 9). We are not told a great deal about the angelic beings, and doubtless are not well acquainted with what has been revealed.

ELDERSHIP AS NOW AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH.

(1 Peter v. 1-5.)

FROM the passage before us, it has been reasonably inferred that eldership among the Jewish Christians at the beginning was different from that found among the Gentile assemblies (as, for instance, shown us in Acts xiv. 23) in regard to its unofficial character. This, which at first sight would seem improbable, has strong support in the fact that elders are put here in contrast with the "younger," who certainly were not an official class, and also in the fact that the apostle claims himself to be one of them. It could hardly be thought that he meant that he was discharging the duties of what was so evidently a local office, inconsistent as that would be with the larger and more important ones involved in his apostolate.

We do not need this for the argument of this paper. It is evident and need scarcely be argued out, for those to whom I am addressing myself, that the days of *official* eldership have long passed away. We have neither apostles nor apostolic delegates, such as Timothy and Titus were, to appoint them to-day; and the very fact of *their* commission to do so shows that the assemblies themselves could not. To those who recognize the ruin into which the Church so early fell, it will be plain that the passing away of the primitive external order was designed of God, not merely to mark the ruin, but as a moral necessity in view of it, to prevent the shameful result now so unblushingly maintained, that "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the

good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God and in receiving of the sacraments." A better device for the perpetuation of evil and the dulling of conscience as to it could hardly be imagined. We may well thank God that He has not condemned us—as by the holiness of His nature He could not—to such iniquity as this. "Come out from among them and touch not the unclean thing" is the wholly opposite teaching of the only authority for the conscience before God.

Thank God, then, that there is now no such commission—that none can be shown that have the seal and signature of Christ upon them. To purge oneself from vessels to dishonor and "follow righteousness, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"—here is our safe and sufficient rule for a day of mixture and confusion, such as assuredly the present is.

The Church is broken and scattered—let any serious person say if it is not—and yet the love and care of Christ for His own are not abated, and the full means for the edification of His people cannot therefore be wanting. The gifts of His grace do not need any endorsement from men; and the truth of God requires no other authority than the fact that it is truth. "If I say the truth," was the Lord's own appeal, "why do ye not believe Me?"

Just on account of all this, we have been rightly afraid of all pretension to authoritative eldership to-

day, however plausible the plea for it. There is another kind of authority, however, than that based upon commission, and which every one right with God will recognize, as where the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians "to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." The men in the front, as the idea is here, approved by their work, deserve and require recognition; the more that they have no appointment—have, perhaps, no very prominent gift, while yet they may have the treasures of experience, of hearts exercised in divine things, and filled with desire for the people of God, things that outweigh much gift when these are absent. And these are the qualities that are requisite for eldership—for the practical oversight of the people of God. Oversight is the elders' work—a thing for which manifestly a certain maturity of age is necessary, though the qualifications may be wanting where years may be many. It is plain that a very young man cannot attain them in a moment, whatever his zeal or gravity—that they must be *grown into*, in short; and that every year that passes, if one be only with God, must add to one's efficiency. Are they not just the qualities which to be lacking in the elderly implies of necessity a spiritual lack—a not having gone on with God? Does not the lack mean the absence of true experience—of the wisdom which it is their very aim to teach?

It follows, then—and this is my aim to emphasize in what I am now saying—that in every assembly, as the years pass on, there will of necessity be, if there be godliness in it, the growing up in it of a body of

men educated in the school of God, the divinely provided, divinely appointed eldership—a body characterized not so much by gift as by grace, and from which *no senior can be excluded*, except as he is self-excluded.

After all, a very evident, and therefore simple thing to say; and why, then, say it? Because there is in fact a lamentable confusion in the minds of many, as if in the assembly grace scarcely counted in comparison of gift; whereas, in the whole order of God's house (because it is a moral, spiritual order) *grace counts above it*. This is seen—as I think, cannot be too much pressed—in the apostle's preference of prophesying to tongues, a gift which, at any rate, all may "covet"—nay, which we are taught to covet—in which the being with God is the one necessity for speaking out His mind, and gives the distinct message from Him which constitutes the prophet.

This is to be coveted, indeed. Oh, that we knew more of it! It is a sign, surely, of our low spiritual state that it should be so little known. But eldership, too, is a work to be coveted. "He that desireth the office of an elder desireth a good work." These both are things which God has not limited to those who have a certain specific gift, but which He puts before all; and it is disastrous to make them the prerogative of a certain class, whether gifted or official. Needless, alas, for us to talk specifically about a "woman prophesying;" *she never does it*. Whatever our knowledge of divine gift, or of the body of Christ, we are prone to fall still into clerisy and officialism, and shut ourselves out from the unspeakable grace of God.

Lack of discernment there is, but, like the daughters of Zelophehad, our hearts should claim their inher-

itance, and we soon should find how God has provided for us, even as they did. How the assemblies suffer because of the many who have from the beginning of their course classified themselves as un-gifted ones for whom service in the assembly was never intended, whose voices are never heard among their brethren, who never "sit in the council of the elders," who are, as contrasted with God's thoughts for them, priests without a sacrifice, prophets for whom he never has a message, and who comfort themselves by the large company of their kin they find. Thus the little gifts drop out (and these are always the many)—the one talent is put into the napkin—the effect being, as one cannot doubt, that even larger gifts are often unknown, because of neglect and lack of development.

May God awaken us all!—first of all, to be nearer to Him, that His interests may become our real ones, His assembly our sphere of active employment; that the experiences and discipline of our lives may translate themselves into acquisitions for the common gain, and our lives may be freed from their narrowness of outlook, and brought out under the bright, broad heavens, to gather in freshness from their fellowship with God.

F. W. G.

"IF we did but know a little more of the comfort and joy of drinking into the fulness of God's love, we should feel present circumstances to be as nothing."

J. N. D.

PASTORAL CARE.

Continued from page 47.

WE will briefly pass over the other epistles and note here and there where the pastoral heart and care of the apostle shows itself.

To the Galatians his introduction is very brief. He enters upon his subject with a seeming abruptness, because there was the need. The work was important; it was a field he had labored in, and they were, as the Corinthians, his work in the Lord. But during his absence they had listened to other voices. He writes: "I marvel ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another" (v. 6, 7). Those voices had swerved the Galatians from the sweets, that characterize the grace of the gospel, over to the bondage and bitterness of the law. They had also introduced into Christianity the works of law, and really sought to overthrow the foundation. Hence, while they were foolishly following the instruction of strange voices, he writes with a pastoral care: "I desire to be present with you now and change my voice" (ch. iv. 20). What a pang this must have brought to the apostle's heart to be compelled to write thus to his own children in the faith—"to change my voice!" They had heard Paul in grace and love. They felt the power of the gospel of God's grace; the words, as fire, burned down to their hearts and they were won, by this preaching, to Christ, the Lord of life and glory. If present now it would be the same Paul, but not in grace winning sinners as before. Paul's voice would be changed. How blessed to behold such a man on earth set for a de-

fence of the true gospel, caring only and wholly for the glory of that peerless name of Jesus Christ! When he thought of them thus entangled with what pleased the flesh so well, all was dark; they were "bewitched," and needed the epistle to deliver them from law and Judaism and her law teachers. "I stand in doubt of you," were his words for a moment; yet when his heart and face turned up to Him whose servant he was, faith shines out through the dark cloud, and he adds: "I have confidence in you through the Lord." Again, when he thought of the enemies, he adds, because of the government of God, ever true and ever sure: "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be."

The Corinthians needed deliverance from a life of laxity in many ways, which brought reproach upon the cause of Christ. The Galatians needed deliverance from an opposite extreme, a whole system of doctrine which affected the very gospel and tended to undervalue the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as well as rob the believer of the true liberty which the Son of God had brought and desired His people to enjoy. Hence the apostle wrote: "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The other left them simply with forms, rigid rules, ordinances, but no love, no enjoyment of the grace of Christ. To get souls delivered from either of those evils was a work the apostle prized and desired so earnestly for the glory of Christ and the continuance of the gospel, as well as the profit, progress and true welfare of God's people.

There is again another change when we turn to the epistle addressed to Ephesus. The atmosphere now is spiritual and heavenly. There he breathes out to

them so freely and fully the precious things of Christ, a rich unfolding of the counsels of God, carrying the hearts of the redeemed in spirit on and up to the heavenlies and showing them their true place in Christ, where God beholds them, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

In chapters i., ii. and iii. he sets forth their position and relationship with God the Father, with Christ, and with one another, and in chapters iv., v. and vi. he marks out a life and walk through this world consistent with such a position and relationship; concluding his exhortations (ch. vi. 14) with: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth," etc. Such was Paul's care for the saints at Ephesus. He closes with "Peace be to the brethren." Yet there is a solemn lesson for us to be learned from this very assembly. Not many years after, the Lord by His servant John (Rev. ii. 1-5) sent this message: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Truly, in view of this fact, we need, one and all, the exhortation: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

His letter to the Philippians comes next, the first place in which the apostle had labored in Europe. The sixteenth chapter of the Acts shows us the way the Lord guided His servants in that work and what the accompanying circumstances were. Now being absent from them, yet as a shepherd he bore those lambs of Christ upon his heart, and from the prison, where he was when he wrote, he unfolds instruction for them expressive of a true pastoral heart.

They had not forgotten the agent used in their conversion. Although a long distance separated them,

they had sent a gift to him "once and again," and expressed their "fellowship in the gospel from the first day till now." Beautiful thus to see that the word of God, which they had received through the apostle, had an abiding influence, and their practical and continued fellowship with him in the new fields and the interests of Christ was an abundant proof. He desired to see them united in love and exercising a due care for each other. He exhorts them to this unity in the gospel (ch. i.).

To be lowly in heart and humble in life, as was their Lord, is the burden of chapter ii.

To keep the *goal* before them and the glorious likeness of their Lord, into which they would be changed at His coming, this filling the heart with zeal along the path through life (ch. iii.).

They also, in view of the end, were to be yielding, prayerful, thankful. Such was the pastoral desire of the apostle for his children in the truth.

His letter to the Colossians comes next. The apostle had never as yet seen them, never labored among them, nor at Laodicea; yet he rejoiced in what the labors of others had accomplished. There was no envy, no jealousy; the whole work was God's, whether the instrument was Paul or others. Epaphras was the honored servant used at Colosse. He was now with the apostle. He had informed the apostle concerning the work there and "declared their love in the Spirit." Yet those saints were not only dear to Christ and Epaphras, but to Paul also. Oh, that this spirit were cultivated by us all more fully, to look upon the work of others with the same eagerness, same longing and prayers as our own! The prayer of the apostle in chapter i. is very beautiful, as well

as the personal touches of chapter iv., "*Christ is all*" seems the burden of the epistle.

The epistles also to Thessalonica are full of the same pastoral love and care.

In the first epistle (ch. i.) the apostle refers to his evangelistic labors, which had been so fruitful in their midst, but in chapter ii. he adds that he had also been "a nurse" and "father." Through persecution (Acts xvii.) he had to leave them, yet his love and care continued, and he sent Timothy to comfort and care for them, and now he having returned and brought Paul good tidings concerning those young believers, the apostle's spirit was relieved, and he could pour forth praise and thanksgiving to God on their behalf (ch. iii.).

In every chapter of these two epistles he refers to the blessed hope of the believer, "the second coming of Christ."

Next come his letters to individuals—Timothy, Titus and Philemon. In each of these, in a marked way, the apostle's care is fully demonstrated. Timothy he addresses as "my son in the faith," and in it is expressed the love and care Paul had for a young laborer. The personal touches are tender and affecting, as well as faithful. Warnings and exhortations abound, each suited in its place. In the first epistle instruction for the Church is given; and in the second, when the Church as a testimony had failed, the path for godly souls is marked out with great care and caution. In the last chapter Timothy's thoughts are drawn to what was before the apostle—the executioner's ax and death; yet beyond that the sun never shone so brightly as now for Paul. The crown, the glory, and the blessed Lord he had served so well—

these all lay before the heart and mind of the apostle as the bloody ax outside of Rome did its awful work.

But ages have rolled on, and both Paul and Timothy are on the other side of death; but where is the emperor who pronounced judgment? Where are those executioners, and where are those who demanded his judgment? All—all have passed off the stage of action. But Paul and Timothy shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

In the epistle to Titus we see his pastoral care for the people of God upon the isle of Crete.

Philemon is a pastoral letter concerning a servant now returned who had run away from his master.

A word upon that to the Hebrews, and we are done. Peter's sphere was more to the circumcision, as Paul's to the uncircumcision, and all his earlier epistles were written to those who had been Gentiles. Yet his love and care would not pass the Hebrews by. This ministry of Paul to the Hebrews Peter recognizes as among "the Scriptures." Thirteen chapters are given in this one letter to them. They were the sheep of Christ if born of God, and Paul sought to feed them with the pure grain from the heavenly storehouse. Judaism as a system served well as a shadow, but now they need something different, the "strong meat," and hence the apostle labors faithfully to lead those Jewish converts from shadow to substance, from type to antitype, from the milk to the meat, the work of a true pastor who cared for and loved the true and permanent welfare of the sheep and lambs of Christ's pasture.

We will now take our leave of him, with the earnest desire that the Lord may awaken in us all the pastoral love and care, and send forth others with hearts

true to the interests of Christ, in searching out and caring for His sheep in those dark days, before the Morning Star appears and the flock be forevermore with Himself.

A. E. B.

FRET NOT.

Ps. xxxvii. 1-11.

“**F**RET NOT,” for joy and fretting ne’er abide
Together in one breast.
’Twill rob thee of thy rest,
And still the Comforter; and then, beside,
It is His own request,
And surely He knows best.
He bids thee cast on Him all fretting care,
There’s not a pang but He will help thee bear.

No heart like His can for thy sorrow feel.
His tender heart well knows
The depth of human woes,
That there are wounds no hand but His can heal.
His heart hath bled for us!
He cried upon the cross—
Behold! was ever sorrow like to Mine?
Then, surely, He can enter into thine.

Then “*trust in Him, wait*” watchfully, and pray.
And bid thy clamorous will
From henceforth to be still.
So shalt thou dwell with Him, and He shall fill
The hunger of thy heart
Completely, not in part.
Make Him thy close companion all the way,
He’ll cheer and brighten every lonely day.

“*Delight thyself in Him,*” thou shalt not want
Thine inmost heart’s desire,
For thou wilt not require
One joy His love may not deem best to grant;

And tho' thou may'st not know
Just why He dealeth so,
Thou wilt not chafe, nor murmur at His will,
But trusting in His love and grace, be still.

"*Commit thy way to Him*" all trustfully,
He surely never would—
(Who only seeks thy good),
Deny thee aught that would be best for thee,
Nor grant indulgently
What would a hindrance be ;
Then hush the vexing questions which arise,
And let not bitter tears bedim thine eyes.

Some day He'll show thee, by the light of heaven,
The path thy feet have trod,
Where thou hast walked with God, —
Thy murmurings and complainings all forgiven—
Why thus, and thus, His hand
Spoiled that which thou hadst planned,
And thou wilt say AMEN, and praise for aye
The One who would not let thee have thy way.

Then "*rest in Him, and wait all patiently,*"
"*Fret not*" because He gave
To some, what thou didst crave,—
That others seem to move so prosperously.
Nor let within thy heart
An angry thought have part;
"*Fret not,*" 'tis evil, and destroys thy rest,
'Twill gender doubts and questions in thy breast.

Have not His mercies followed thee throughout ?
'Tis but a little while,
And then, His gracious smile
Will make thee so ashamed that thou couldst doubt.
The night will not be long,
Hush not thy gladsome song,
Thy face tear stained, and eyes all dim,
And no glad heart to welcome Him!

He marketh every cloud that shades thy way,
And every bitter thing
That oft doth cut and sting,
And all thy soul endureth every day.
How hard it is to bear,
How no one seems to care,
That oft thou canst not tell thy grief
To human ear, and find relief.

And how thy faith doth often times grow dim,
And thou couldst almost say
That *He* had turned away.
Ah! 'tis because *thou*'st turned away from Him
To murmur and to fret,
And think He could forget!
Let this sweet word rise all thy doubts above,
"I've loved thee with an everlasting love."

Take His light yoke, "obedience" it is called,
'Tis that alone gives rest
To every troubled breast—
No neck that wears it ever yet was galled.
'Twill lighten every care,
Each trial help to bear;
'Twill teach thee all His meek and lowly ways,
And bring thee joy and blessing, all thy days.

Like harps, these hearts of ours, each touch awakes;
And, till God's gracious hand
Hath gained complete command,
A stranger hand sad discord often makes.
Then let *Him* sweep the strings,
Until thy spirit sings
Sweet praise alone—the new eternal song,
To Him, whose face thou shalt behold e're long.

H. McD.

January 22, 1899.

PRACTICAL DELIVERANCE.

DELIVERANCE is in no sense an attainment in mental grasp of knowledge and doctrine, though this, of course, is not absent. But the earnest soul, longing to please and glorify the Lord, is quite sure to find itself burdened and deeply exercised, under the sense of failure in Christian life, while learning *experimentally* the lessons of its sinful incorrigibility by nature, and its absolute impotence to raise a finger successfully toward remedying the evil. Deliverance is needed here; and the way of deliverance is *seen*, if not yet realized in practice, when the soul freshly discovers for itself in the word of God that each of the questions of sad fact which trouble it has been definitely anticipated by God; and holily and competently dealt with by Him in connection with our blessed Substitute on the cross. God desires each of us to make these things our own by the exploration of His word for ourselves, and not merely to find lodgment in our minds for statements of doctrine ministered by others, helpful as this last is in its place. We must realize (when the awakened sense of deep need in us has given the capacity to realize vividly) that each phase of the sin and failure, the incorrigibility and impotence, which we have experimentally detected in ourselves, has been specially provided for in the death of Christ, while God's word accordingly holds out to faith a judicial reckoning answering to the need. Thus we are strengthened and encouraged by the refreshing knowledge that God has not been taken unaware by the sad subjective discoveries which have taken us by surprise. We see, on the contrary, with full fore-

knowledge, He spared not His own Son, expressly in order that He might maintain and vindicate His holiness even while confirming His love and favor to us, and communing with us, in the full light of what we are in ourselves.

I believe that there are *three* experimental stages, and *three* aspects of the needed deliverance, and not merely two; and that 1 Cor. i. 30 presents the appropriation of Christ and His work suited to each: namely, as "righteousness," "sanctification," and "redemption." The result of these deliverances is to indelibly convict us that we have no room for glorying save as we "glory in the Lord,"—which last we may do, blessedly, to our heart's content. An aspect of deliverance from the law of God is connected with each of these deliverances.

1. In the first case we have the deliverance which every evangelist who is competent seeks to minister to souls as soon as they are found burdened under the sense of sin. The law of God, or the Scripture rules of practice, have been resorted to as a guide in producing a "righteousness," or record of law-works, to be offered to God as His ground for saving us and justifying us. But if we are earnest and sincere, the law becomes a detective, instead of a guide, uncloaking our nakedness as sinners. We find refuge in the God who "justifieth the *ungodly*." He having accepted, on our behalf, and in place of poor law-works wrought by us, the sacrificial work of Another which has satisfied Him in respect to our sins, thus atoning to Him for our guilt, and furnishing to us a covering which judicially hides all our sins from the eyes of God. Christ's "righteousness" as our Substitute, in obediently sacrificing Himself as a Sin-offering to

put away our sins, is the "righteousness" which our faith now offers to God as the sole ground upon which His mercy and grace can rest in saving and justifying us. And in thus bowing to God's "righteousness" in having judged the Substitute for us, we find the very "righteousness of God" enlisted on our side, instead of against us. Thus, to accept the "righteousness" of Christ, in His obedience unto death, as the only ground of our justification, is to make God's "righteousness" our defence, we ourselves, as justified, thus becoming "the righteousness of God in" Christ, or samples of God's righteousness. Christ risen is thus our righteousness, the measure of our standing before God.

2. In the second case, knowing ourselves to be justified saints, but discovering that an evil nature still exists alongside of that received in new birth, we again resort to the law of God as a guide. Or, as we find among those who have been better taught, we resort to the body of holy precepts in the New Testament, considered as a standard of what we ought to do and to be as Christians, which is thus a far more exacting legal requirement than Moses alone. We seek to deliver ourselves and our practical life from the incubus of the fallen nature in us and its proclivities and practices, and thus to separate ourselves (*from ourselves*, for this it amounts to) unto God and His service. It is an attempt to sanctify ourselves,—to realize holiness of character and life. But here again the law, or standard of holiness which we seek to realize, plays the detective, casting its holy light upon the subtle springs of our being, disclosing the incorrigibility and untameableness of that which we had undertaken to subdue, together with

our impotence to remedy it. Our minds consent to the law of God, or standard of holiness,—delighting in it, in fact. But we find sin lurking in our members, and dominant there, operating on a principle so perverse that, when we are seeking and desiring what is right, evil, instead, is present with us, characterizing our practice. The result of this hopeless struggle in this poor tent-house of our body is that the body,—our members,—under the bondage of this law of sin and death, becomes as a charnel-house, a house of living death, to the renewed soul and spirit which inhabit it. Our condition is one of acute torture and misery at times, or of hopeless despair, under the lash of an accusing heart and conscience and the sense of discouragement. There may be Christian joy and fruitfulness for others, but we conclude that it is beyond the reach of such poor creatures as we have found ourselves to be.

Does any reader of these lines know something of this? Dear soul! deliverance may be yours, if you will seek it. But do not attempt to walk by the mere rule of another's statement of the doctrine of deliverance. From God Himself you must get the sense of His favor in your own soul, walking by your own faith, and not another's. Thank God, indeed, for whatever helps He has put in your path, in the way of correct teaching; but if you have deep needs in your own soul, go to God in prayer about it, day and night. Under His guidance begin to search His word, prayerfully, to obtain directly from Himself, for your faith to rest upon, His own answer to the needs you have,—to the questions which trouble you. The experimental side of deliverance, which no teaching can convey, though it may point the way in

a measure, is realized as the soul turns directly to God in its distress. We must allow our needs to bring us into closer personal acquaintance with God, and He will gladly open His Word to meet the questions which trouble us. Deliverance here is obtained by faith's realization that the "sanctification," or setting apart to God in heaven, of Christ Himself, as our Représentative, is our judicial sanctification, and that which gives us boldness, in spite of what we find and confess in ourselves, to enter God's presence and bask in the sense of His favor. Faith realizes that all this evil in ourselves, which has tortured us, has been judicially dealt with by God in the judgment of Christ on the cross, and is gone forever in God's reckoning; and that, instead, the Person of the risen and exalted Christ is the new Self which God imputes to us, and sees us arrayed in, before His face in heaven. We are accepted in our risen Head and Representative, where there is no condemnation, and nothing needing condemnation. Thus we are justified by God in spite of every accusation, true or false, our only life of which God takes *judicial* cognizance being "life in Christ." And of all this, the very Presence of the indwelling Spirit of God is the Seal and Earnest, and, as well, the power and energy in us of entering into such blessings and of delighting in the sense of God's unclouded favor towards us. Mind and heart are thus lifted into communion with the Father and the Son, which opens the way for a happy and fruitful life of worship and service.

3. But I must call attention to the fact that Scripture teaches a third deliverance, though heretofore it scarcely seems to have been recognized as such amongst us. Or one should rather say that, so far

as dwelt upon at all, this third deliverance has been also brought in with that described above, taught in Rom. viii. This last is of prime importance, as alone giving their proper effect to the preceding deliverances; while I believe its recognition is a special necessity at the present time. At any rate I offer what I have laid hold of as the scriptural answer to one of the most serious needs in my own soul's experience. Though we have found holy relief from occupation with the corruption within ourselves, by resting in Christ as our "sanctification," we are yet endeavoring to run a race through a scene which is full of corruption, kindred to that in us by nature, which it constantly incites. All in the world,—the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, and the pride of life,—is not of the Father. Therefore it is an enveloping atmosphere which is most contrary to all our holy aspirations, and which Satan employs in a thousand subtle ways to stir up the little world which is in us by nature. But if our most desperate struggle could not subdue the corruption within, can we, by struggling against it, overcome the world of corruption? It is folly to think so. We must abandon this losing fight also, flee to the delivering cross, and there find the basis for a judicial reckoning which will show the world crucified and taken out of our way, as effectively as before we found evil in us disposed of. This is the theme of Galatians (i. 4; vi. 14), and the doctrine has power to work a glorious experimental deliverance in the soul.

The world, and all it contains, must disappear before our faith, so that we may no longer be occupied with vain combat with it. Nor only so, but all that in us to which the world can appeal must also finally

disappear for faith. Not alone "sin in the flesh" (which is what is seen as "condemned" in Rom. viii. 3, while it is its law of death, as working in the members, from which we are said to be set free in Rom. viii. 2), but the flesh itself, with its lusts and "affections" alike, must be seen disposed of at the cross of Christ,—*"crucified"* (Gal. v. 24). And we are delivered from the necessity of self occupation under any possible pretence, for we see *ourselves* crucified,—good and bad in us alike. So that it is no longer a question of *self* living any kind of life in us in this scene, for we only recognize Christ living in us, and therefore One whom the corruption around cannot defile. (See Gal. ii. 19, 20.) Thus, if we find the world appealing to something in us, faith at once turns from it as from a "self" and a "world" which alike have been "crucified," and which therefore have no right to detain and occupy the soul, or raise an accusing question between it and its God.

Here, too, we take final leave of the law of God, deliverance from which has a large place in Galatians. The law of God, holy as it is in itself, is here found to be, for a saint, of "the weak and beggarly elements" of the world,—a "yoke of bondage." The point is a very simple one. As we learn from 1 Tim. i. 9, "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." Hence the law is a detective and condemning judge who has been sent into the world to expose its corruption and declare God's sentence upon it. But when our faith lays hold in power of the reckoning that self and the world are both "crucified," we see at once, in respect to both things, that the detecting and condemning work of the law is not for faith a present work, but is a

past work, which culminated at the cross of Christ. Thus we dismiss the law of God, as having already done its work. Self and the world having alike disappeared for faith at the cross, nothing is left for the law to detect and expose; and while we admit the truth of all its accusations, yet we will no longer allow it to detain and horrify us with its fearful exhibits. "I, through the law, am dead to the law, *that I might live unto God*" (Gal. ii. 19). Living unto God is my present and only lawful occupation, and I refuse to be detained and distracted by defiling questions which have already been competently and holily settled for God and for faith. But with self gone and the world gone,—“crucified,”—what remains? Nothing but the “Christ” who “liveth in me:” the new “I,” or rather not “I” at all, but the “righteous” Man in me for whom, according to 1 Tim. i. 9, “the law is not made.” Nothing but the “new creation” “in Christ Jesus,” where there are neither attempts at self-improvement (“circumcision”), nor anything needing improvement (“uncircumcision”). This, briefly, is the deliverance of Galatians, the doctrine of the other two being found in Romans. This is “redemption” from the world and all its corruption,—a “redemption” by *power* for the faith which lays hold of it. Dear reader, how much experimental acquaintance have you with this precious Epistle to the Galatians,—the Exodus of the first Pauline group?

Thus we reach Ephesians, everything connected with our fallen estate, as children of wrath by nature, having judicially disappeared for us under the judgment at the cross. Hence there is now an entirely new beginning. We now identify ourselves with a

new self, risen from among the dead, where the old self has been relegated in judgment,—a self which is “made alive” with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. If any one inquire for the old, we can point to it under the waters of Jordan, held there in death and judgment, where it can trouble us no more. But as for this new self, which has been quickened and raised together with Christ and seated in heaven judicially,—this is a heavenly being from the beginning, purely from and of God as the Begetter: “His workmanship” (Eph. ii. 10), “the new Man, who after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph. iv. 24). And this being, God’s child by new birth and His son by adoption, having been made a partaker of the Divine Nature, belongs to heaven and is at home in the Divine Presence—is at rest, “seated” there. This new self is a member of the risen Christ, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone: “one Spirit with the Lord.”

This is all-important, because in Colossians we come back to earth. But we should not come back to raise again any of the questions settled in Romans and Galatians. The old self is gone for faith, and it is this new self, which we get acquainted with in Ephesians, which in Colossians is seen down here. In Ephesians this new self is seen in its home in heaven and amid its blessings and joy in the presence of the Father and the Son. In Colossians this new and heavenly self is seen coming out from the bosom of the Father and the Son, becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit in this scene, to glorify God here and serve man, in the similitude of the coming of Christ into the world from the bosom of the Father.

For if we lay hold of our judicial reckonings, as we are entitled to, we re-enter the world simply as members of, and in the moral image of, the "second Man" who "is out of heaven." As those who are in the secret of God, objects of His favor, and at home in His Presence as His beloved sons,—this in the reckoning of God and of our faith,—we have come down to earth in humiliation for a season to serve, as Christ has set us an example. To follow in our Lord's footsteps in this way is to practice as "the truth is in *Jesus*." And while we serve and suffer, the presence of the Father and the Son in heaven remains our home, our comfort, our stay, our refuge in every moment of leisure, just as the mind and heart of Christ remained in heaven with His Father, in spirit, during all His pilgrimage and marvelous service to God and man on the earth.

Such is the point of view in Colossians. Our mind is set on the things above, where the Christ (the Head and His members) is seated at God's right hand, even while we are putting to death our members which are upon the earth, or are serving one another, or poor sinners, out of bowels of mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, longsuffering. This gives power for forbearing and forgiving; doing all things in love, the bond of perfectness; for the peace of Christ presiding in our hearts, and the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, in all wisdom, enabling us to be edifying one another, and singing, with grace in the heart, to the Lord. Thus the risen heart and mind are continually exploring and possessing Canaan,—feasting upon the Old Corn of the Land, our Lord and Head in glory,—at the same time that the sweet fruits of this are being scattered

in service in this loveless vale of death where our members are, literally and physically. We are to be like spiritual giants, our head reaching, with the intelligence and the affections, into heaven itself, and there finding its portion in the presence of the Father and the Son, while the feet tread the earth. The power of the Almighty Spirit of God within us, energizing our faith, enables for this great miracle of practical Christianity.

F. A.

(To be continued.)

“God orders everything for the good of His work. He may indeed permit satan’s rage to break forth, but He never forgets His own. He can allow the apostles to be driven from Thessalonica and Berea, and then keep the enemy in check at Ephesus. But He always watched over His servants. He can hold the door open where He will, and shut it where He sees fit to do so. We can rely on Him. Only let us be directed by Him who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. When we have a ‘little strength,’ He sets before us an open door.”

J. N. D.

“REST is not to be our portion here. God’s holiness will not let us rest where there is sin; His love will not let us rest where there is sorrow. There ‘remaineth a rest’ for us, His own rest—God’s rest. There will be neither sin, nor trouble, nor sorrow, in God’s rest. There will be Himself there. And we shall rest in Him.”

J. N. D.

CORRESPONDENCE.

New York, Feb. 17th, 1899.

DEAR * * *

In answer to your question concerning the book, "What would Jesus do?" we will say at once that the author proves himself an incompetent person to put that question, for he places professed followers of our Lord in positions where the Lord Himself would never be found, and he has no right therefore to put into their mouths *there* the question, "What would Jesus do?"

The book is attractive by its enthusiastic philanthropy, but its Christianity is not that of Scripture. The only allusion to true Christianity is in an accidental stanza sung by the heroine at one of the meetings. Its whole fabric is based on the doctrine that the Church is to renovate the world, than which nothing can be more false, or productive of the worldliness which now devours the Church.

No true Christian can question our responsibility to preach the gospel to all men, everywhere. If love is operative in us it will urge us to it, but as to mingling with or partaking of the affairs of this world, political or otherwise, the word of God has settled that plainly enough.

In John xvii. where the Lord, looking at Himself as an outcast in this world, is about to leave it and return to His Father, He says of His own, "The world hath hated them because they are not of the world, *even as I* am not of the world." The Lord mingled not with politics. He came not to reform or improve the politics of this world, but to claim possession of it and rule it Himself. He was refused, and so they must now drink

the full results of fallen man's rule, till He comes in power and takes the kingdom to Himself. Christians interfering, and, Lot-like, trying to help under the plea that the good men are needed, but get themselves into trouble, and lose all their pains in the end. If Protestants, for instance, instead of trying now to beat down the encroachments of Romanism by grasping the reins of government as adulterous Romanism does, loved, and preached, and lived the blessed truth which confounds Romanism, they would find God with them, and in one hour God can do more through an obedient people (as witness Jericho) than a disobedient people can ever do by planning and combining.

In the light which Scripture gives us in this matter it seems to us plain that any admixture, though prompted as it may be by a sincere spirit of philanthropy, speaks of a corresponding lack of faith—a looking at, living in, the things which are seen. Faith lives in the things which are not seen.

Furthermore, Scripture speaks in terms which cannot be mistaken. 2 Cor. vi. 14-18 explicitly forbids an unequal yoke. Gal. vi. 14 puts the Christian and the world as crucified to each other. Col. ii. and iii. refuses even our mingling with the religious and moral rules of the world, on the plea that we are "dead with Christ," and also "risen with Christ."

We, therefore, belong now to the world where the risen belong—no more in any sense to this which is the world of the dead. What a mighty witness for Christ the Church would be if she walked according to this, her heavenly calling.

With love in Christ our Lord,

Yours in Him * * *

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 7.—Was the man who was made whole by the Lord Jesus, in the fifth of John, saved, or simply healed in body? Could more than one person get in the pool at a time? Were the ten lepers, in the seventeenth of Luke, saved, or only the one who glorified God?

ANS.—There is no indication that the man in the fifth of John received more than bodily healing. His conduct afterwards, in telling the Jews, well knowing their enmity, and our Lord's warning afterwards, do not show a heart brought to a knowledge of Himself. How great the contrast with the man in the ninth of John. He confesses Christ openly, when it meant to be put out of the synagogue, and when the Lord finds him, it is not to warn him, but to reveal Himself as the Son of God, and to receive his worship. The same may be said of the ten lepers. There is no evidence of a work of grace in their souls, save in the case of the Samaritan. They received bodily healing, but no more, as far as we can see. There seems to be meaning too in the fact that only one person could get in the pool at a time. It seems to suggest the weakness and inefficacy of the law, which the pool typifies. Only those who could get in the pool were helped, and only one of these at a time. How different from grace, which multiplies its works upon the most helpless.

There is another thing to remember in all these miracles. They were meant to teach spiritual lessons, and even where the individual may have received but bodily help, the work was a figure of something deeper. Thus while the impotent man received only bodily help, that was a figure of what grace does to every believing sinner who accepts Christ. The same is true of leprosy, and all other diseases which our Lord healed.

QUES. 8.—Do not Luke xxii. 19, 20, and 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24 refer simply to our Lord's literal body, and not to His mystical body, the Church?

ANS.—No doubt the loaf is the memorial of Christ's body given in death for us. But it will be seen that in immediate connection with this the apostle puts the fact of the oneness of the mystical body. We all partake of the one loaf, and are members of the one body. The type seems to teach the same thing. In the twelve loaves of show-bread we have Christ set before God, but none the less does the number twelve remind us of Israel's oneness and completeness, and so the loaf suggests our oneness in Christ now.

THE CLOUD LIKE A MAN'S HAND.

(1 Kings xviii. 41-46.)

WHEN the public break with idolatry was made, the time of Israel's long famine came to an end. While there was not that penitence and self-aborrence on their part which betoken a lasting work, there was at least sufficient public acknowledgment of God to permit His ever-ready mercy to act. Judgment is His strange work, but He delighteth in mercy. Of course, this mercy is sovereign, dependent upon Himself alone for its exercise; but it is of interest and profit to see how God uses the exercises of His people as channels for His blessings.

Thus we see that Elijah's faith foresees the abundance of rain, and he can confidently predict it to the king; but ere that fall of rain comes, for the man of God there is no eating and drinking, but the loneliness of Carmel and the wrestling in prayer. May we not say that we have here a pattern of God's ways with His people? It may not be all who are aroused; perhaps only some lonely Elijah is in travail, looking and waiting and still waiting till "patience hath its perfect work." It is a Gideon, hiding the wheat from the Midianites, as he weeps in secret over Israel's shame and misery, who is the instrument of deliverance for the nation.

Look at this lonely man upon Carmel: see his intense earnestness, his whole soul absorbed. Such men *pray*, and get answers to their prayers. It is no easy thing to pray thus. Everything suggests the oneness of purpose, the denial of self and the persistence that is a pledge of the answer before it comes. This is what is meant by fasting. Surely there is no merit

in abstinence from food, nor is it even a means of grace. It is rather an indication of the state of soul, which cares for nothing till its prayer is answered. How much, dear brethren, do *we* know of this kind of prayer?

Elijah waits long for his answer, and when it comes there is nothing to indicate the mighty results that will eventually follow. After the seventh look, his servant reports "a little cloud, like a man's hand." But how inadequate such an answer to his prayer. However Elijah waits no longer, and soon the mighty rain justifies his expectations.

But does not the manner of the answer suit with all the rest, in fact an illustration of the very thing of which we have been speaking? God is going to interpose, but the cloud He sends is the size of a *man's* hand. He will suggest that His blessing are to flow through human channels, and in one sense are dependent upon them.

A man's hand is the measure of a man's capacity and therefore of his responsibility.

Its very form seems to suggest the union of spirit and matter—the four fingers controlled by the one thumb, which is also a type of that higher control of the Creator, so commonly suggested by the number five. It is suggestive thus of the exercise that comes the with sense of responsibility.

Let us now in a very simple way apply this lesson. Through their departure from Him, God's people bring upon themselves a famine, spiritually. When have we a sign that this season of drought is at an end? Does some Elijah-spirit look and wait for an answer? He will get it in the cloud the size of a *man's* hand.

We all crave the supernatural, the miraculous. It may sound like a paradox, but God does not usually work in a supernatural way,—at least He does not usually begin in that way. It is not His way to have a period of depression followed by one of feverish exhilaration and excitement. The latter is no more a sign of health than the former. In fact what are ordinarily called revivals in certain quarters are by no means signs of spiritual refreshment, but of carnal excitement, to be followed by a more death-like depression. No, the sign of the blessing is the cloud like a man's hand.

“What is that in thine hand?” the Lord asked Moses, and with the shepherd's crook He gave witness of His presence and delivering power. The lad with five barley loaves and two fishes furnished the nucleus for the supply of the need of the five thousand. They were the cloud the size of a man's hand. When we see an awakening on the part of God's people to their responsibility, the indifference exchanged for earnest desire, we see this cloud, at least faith does. As was said, the very prayer for blessing is a pledge of the blessing.

We hear an unaccustomed voice in prayer—a brother long silent is pouring out his heart's longings, and we see a cloud. It is small, only a man's hand, but it is God's sign of blessing. Other lips long mute are opened and, under the exercise and awakening, we realize God is manifestly present. That holy presence begets an awe, a reverence followed by a reality that has power which lasts.

The same is seen in real obedience. Saints long for a great work in the gospel. They expect to see rooms filled with anxious enquirers, nightly meetings

crowded, and all the accompaniments of what is considered a mighty work of grace. On the contrary, the only sign may be a parent's importunate prayer for the conversion of a child, which is answered. Or some wanderer is reclaimed, or some difference between saints is adjusted. Some sister whose quiet ministry in the distribution of tracts has seemed so long fruitless, has the joy of seeing a soul brought to Christ. One or two saints may be stirred to make special prayer for the gospel, following it with effort to get this or that acquaintance to the meeting. There is nothing special, nothing remarkable, but the small cloud is the harbinger of a sweet and gracious shower.

Oh for the sign of these small clouds. Oh for the Elijah-spirit that claims and must have them. Why, dear brethren, should there not be at this very time and through each one of us, some refreshing to the Church of God? We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves alone. There is a dreadful lack in many of us. There is great unbelief and slowness of heart in those who think they are of no special use. When once the spiritual sloth that says this is shaken off, we will see the cloud, and have the rain. The Lord awaken us all.

"WE worship God, and we have communion with God, while we dwell in spirit in heavenly places, where God Himself has given us our proper place. But if we get outside of it we can have no fellowship with Him, although He knows how to keep us by His grace and faithfulness."

J. N. D.

PRACTICAL DELIVERANCE.

Continued from page 81.

FOR one thus abiding in the holy boldness of faith, whose mind and heart rise to heaven in the unclouded sense of God's continual favor, there is no longer the necessity of combat with a world of sin down here. Of course, the members are still in this scene, and it is the place of service. The mind must necessarily be much engaged with things down here, connected with daily toil and service, in all the legitimate relationships of the Christian. But let it be our habit of life to set the mind upon the things above, the instant we are released from necessary occupation with things here. Thus seeking the companionship of the Father and the Son in our moments of leisure, the things of vanity around will have less opportunity to rush in upon us. Yet let us remember that while we may "set the mind" on the things above, we cannot always engage the heart there. In the course even of rightful and necessary occupation with temporal things, the dust of the world unconsciously settles upon us. The harp of the heart gets out of tune, and the hand of the Chief Musician must key it up into harmony with Himself before there can be melody such as He loves to hear. How many times in the day do we turn to Him, asking Him to wash the soiled feet,—to cleanse the dust-defiled mind and heart,—in order that we may have part with Him? If we besought His priestly service in this way more constantly, how many moments and hours would be redeemed from vanity, and occupied in prayer, in praise from the heart, in study of His

word in freshness, or in meditation in the word at His feet.

Moreover, in the necessary occupation of the mind in toil and service here, the judicial reckonings connected with the cross give continual deliverance, in proportion as they are kept before the soul in the power of faith. To walk by faith is to have the things which are real to faith constantly before the mind and heart. Faith engenders a kind of spiritual habit of thought, in which the eyes of the heart are fixed upon the unseen eternal things, even while the temporal things, with their stamp of corruption, assail the outward senses. Hence to walk through this scene with the judicial reckonings connected with the cross of our Lord before us, is, in a sense, to carry the cross with us as our protection and defence. The corruption around, instead of obtaining a hold upon us, but pains us, and reminds of that cross, where we were crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to us. Thus the saint has fellowship with the cross, and neither has fellowship with the world, nor pauses to engage it in combat. He has "died, with Christ, from the elements of the world" (Col. ii. 20), and as one "dead" to them, he refuses to be occupied with them or entangled by them. Instead of recognizing a world needing to be battled with, he knows of one which His Lord has already overcome for him and judged. So the cross of Christ, where the world was judged, becomes the only object connected with the world with which the saint can have fellowship; and in the protecting shadow of the cross, meeting and answering for him all questions, all accusations, he walks securely amid a system of things of which Satan is the god. The

world for him is thus a conquered world; not that *he* has waged successful warfare with it, nor needs to do so, but because "*this* is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world—our *faith*" (1 Jno. v. 4).

In Col. ii. 10-15, therefore, the cross of Christ is seen looming up over every thing here. It is the saint's Gilgal, to be constantly returned to whenever a sign of defeat warns him that its glorious triumphs are not so freshly in mind as they should be. There he beholds himself judicially circumcised by God, in the stripping off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ. If any question is raised as to "the flesh," faith gazes at the cross and there sees it transfixed. "Our old man," "the sin in the flesh," "the body of the flesh," "the flesh, with its affections and its lusts," "I,"—all are "crucified."

And there the saint's faith sees all legal requirement,—the obligation to ordinances, which was against him,—cancelled and taken out of the way, nailed to the tree. And there the world hangs in judgment, with all its corruption, through lusts and the pride of life,—the whole thing lying in the wicked one. Moreover, the principalities and powers which preside over it are spoiled; made a spectacle of, openly, and triumphed over! What a cross! Such is the testimony of Col. ii. 10-15, which is but a triumphant summary of the deliverances, or judicial reckonings, of Romans and Galatians. It is thus plain that the saint is to abide in the sense of this, maintaining these truths as the strength of his position in the face of the enemy. These glories of the cross, with the personal glories of the Head in heaven (Col. i.), are the provision for faith which the apostle sets over against the two great snares in the

world which in Colossians he calls attention to,—rationalism on the one side, fleshly religiousness on the other.

Thus is the saint fully equipped to pass through the world. He needs, further, only the energy of faith to hold to the glorified Head in heaven, in mind-and-heart occupation,—that glorious Head of Whom grace has made him a member, to Whom he is united by the Spirit of God. As holding the Head, in the energy of faith, he becomes a vessel for edifying service; for he contributes to the increase of the body of Christ, with the increase of God, in proportion as his own moral intelligence and affections are refreshed and strengthened by occupation with Christ in glory. (See Col. ii. 19.) If his attention be called to his feet, or to any thing round about, he is not overcome by it. This occupation with Christ is the very means of avoiding failures. But if we have been too long from our Gilgal, after having fed on something other than the Old Corn of the Land, and failure does overtake us, what can it do save to carry the chastened spirit back to the cross? This may not be the effect if we are legally-minded, and unbelief is at work. But if we are abiding in the sense of our judicial reckonings, even failure but serves to bow the soul in such sorrow as must direct the eyes of faith to the cross on which all contrary things are nailed—including this very failure, and the flesh in us which has wrought the sin. And to turn the saint to the cross, is to turn him also to the blessed Advocate, Who even now bears its scars in heaven. So perfect is the provision, indeed, in view of every emergency, that nothing is lacking save the *passive surrender* of ourselves to the Spirit of God. Were

this not lacking, He would lead us in triumph through this scene, the savor of the knowledge of Christ radiating from us and illuminating the darkness, while its perfume filled the air. Would to God, that both writer and reader might know something of the power of this!

The practical result of the sanctifying power of the truth in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, in Colossians is seen flowering out into Christian fruit-bearing. The introduction of the epistle indicates that fruit-bearing is its theme. In Philippians all this is seen to be a preparation for the inestimable privilege of *suffering* in various ways for Christ, and in the furtherance of His interests. For this, the mind, or animus, which was in Him, must be in His members. In Paul we see a member in which this condition was fulfilled in large measure. And if the preparatory truth has in any degree wrought experimentally, in sanctifying power, in our souls, as it did in Paul's, in that degree surely all the persecution, reproach and privation encountered will bear fruit in us as it did in him. It will not stir up the fallen nature. It will rather serve, in measure, to extract a sweet spirit of grace and love, just as was the case, in fullness, when Christ was so treated in His own Person while on earth. Blessed, indeed, is that servant who can find grace so to yield his poor body that Christ may use it thus, in some degree reproducing Himself in the world in His member! Would that Christ our Head might be permitted, now in spirit and by the Spirit, to serve in the world in this manner, in love and lowly humility, through His members,—answering all mal-treatment simply by the sweet display in us of His own gentle loveliness of mind and heart!

Beloved, that same Jesus who once so walked here below, though now personally in heaven, is still here in the Spirit's power, residing in His honored members! But how far are we yielding ourselves to have these vessels of earth,—these Gideon's pitchers,—broken, so that the moral glory of the Divine Treasure in us may shine out? How far have we the mind which was in our blessed Example, who was willing to be bruised and put to shame to the last extremity, in order that the glory of God might fully shine out from Him? And yet this is the greatest of all our privileges, in service, down here. How blessed, in our measure, to be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized! to represent Him in the world as He represented the Father! to yield ourselves as vessels for the display of the moral glory of Christ, as He yielded Himself a Vessel for the display of the moral glory of God! Shall we truly seek the deliverance and power which God desires for us? Assuredly, then, it will not be for adornment of ourselves with display of knowledge and doctrine. Rather will it be the ministration of the courage of faith, to yield our bodies—ourselves—a living sacrifice, upon the altar of service, in displaying to the world the sweetness of the mind and heart of the One whom our soul loveth! Like the beloved Paul, himself lovely in our eyes because of his grace in reflecting the Altogether Lovely One, we will be ready to be sacrificed daily in this precious service, or to be poured out as a drink-offering on the sacrifice of others!

Do we long for more capacity to enjoy Christ as our Portion? Then let us remember that the suffering Philippian is the one who worships God in the Spirit

and rejoices in Christ Jesus! whose soul pants for deeper and deeper draughts of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord, as one who hath verily fallen in love with the glorious Person of God's Beloved in glory! In the closing moments, before the coming in the air of Him whom we adore, in His marvelous grace may God every where raise up overcomers among His dear people, and teach us the power of these precious truths!

And next, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Hebrews, Timothy and Titus follow in order, the Colossian and Philippian point of view being maintained throughout. In these epistles we see, in some detail, how Paul met the condition of things found in the path of service, according to the grace given to him. We are to learn to follow him as we see he followed Christ. Paul, in the New Testament, answers to Caleb in the Old, as the latter moved in triumph through the wilderness in company with Joshua (type of the Spirit as Christ in us). Caleb went into Canaan and took possession in heart. He came back into the wilderness a heavenly man, with the sense of God's favor in his soul: "If the Lord *delight* in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Num. xiv. 8). Through the energy of his faith, Canaan ever remained the home of his heart. Therefore forty years with God's wandering people in the wilderness did not abate his strength (Josh. xiv. 11). He could identify himself with a wandering people without his own heart wandering. He could suffer with them, suffer for them, minister to them, fight for them, because he knew that, with all their failures, they were the people of his God. God's Name in testimony was linked with them. He could seek to

deliver them when they were being overcome, but without himself being overcome.

In Paul's second group, then,—the individual questions between the soul and its God having been settled, and faith's way of triumph over all opposing forces having been made known,—we have the path of service thus marked out for the man of God. He learns how to lay down his life for God's dear people, and for the lost of this world, laboring in prayer and service on their behalf. He learns how to encounter and deal with many forms of evil, yet without himself becoming entangled and overcome. Whatever may be his material circumstances, whatever his reception, he moves in his calling in the world as a dispenser of God's riches. He has a ministry of reconciliation for sinners, and he has service for the sheep and lambs of Christ, according to the measure of his gift and grace.

Moreover, he stands ready to unsheath the Spirit's sword in spiritual warfare. For, strangely enough, he who finds deliverance in refusing battle with the world,—as a system of lusts and corruption which stirs up lusts and works corruption within himself,—is the very one who, thus drawn out of himself and self-occupation, is free for a higher and more far-reaching warfare. He stands as the witness of Christ and of God in this world,—as the champion of light and truth, and the enemy of spiritual darkness and error. Ensconced in the panoply of God, and with mighty spiritual weapons in his hands,—even the sayings of God, made good to him by God's Spirit,—he wars for the overthrow of the strongholds of error, the reasonings of unbelief, and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of

God (Eph. vi. 10-20; 2 Cor. x. 3-5). Men, as the mouth-pieces of Satan, are thus withstood. Yet this is not a warfare against men, but in behalf of men, against wicked spirits, the world-rulers of this darkness, who deceive men and hold them in error. The great motive for this warfare is that it is waged in maintenance of the Name and testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world. But it is also for the people of God, to maintain for them the truth of God which sanctifies the soul. And, in the gospel, the fight is in the interest of lost and unbelieving sinners in the world, whose minds Satan, the god of this world, has blinded. And all this is the calling of every saint, and not merely of special "gifts."

But how can Christ wage such a warfare, through us as His members, unless we are "holding the Head"? He is our Captain, and a good soldier must keep in communication with headquarters. He is our Strength and our Refreshment, and a soldier cannot serve apart from the ammunition train and the commissary stores. The inward man must be renewed day by day. By combining the types of Caleb and Abraham, we doubtless have a picture of both sides here. Caleb suggests to us the wilderness-activities of one whose members are on the earth, though mind and heart have their home in heaven. Abraham suggests the Canaan-activities of the mind and heart, which are already dwelling in the land of promise by faith, possessing themselves of its fertile regions in communion with God. Faith and whole-heartedness are surely tested in the maintenance of this Abrahamic side, of mind-and-heart abstraction from this scene, so as to be dwelling much in the house of the Lord, beholding the beauty of the Lord

and inquiring in His temple (Ps. xxvii. 4). The freshness of the service in the wilderness hangs upon this. Upon the energy of faith for communion,—“holding the Head,”—all the practice in Colossians and the succeeding epistles depends.

But though we consent to all this and more, as doctrine, this in itself is not experimental deliverance. Faith must plant its feet upon this good land, exercised before God to enter into the power of such truth. And he who attempts this will confront the wiles of a crafty foe, who seeks to thwart spiritual progress. Our many failures are so many opportunities for him to launch against us the fiery darts of accusation, in order to rob us of the joy of the sense of God's favor in our souls, and stir up our legal mind and heart into the revolt of unbelief. Let us pause to seriously examine ourselves as to this. When we find ourselves downcast, under the sense of failure, what is the result? Is this sad consequence simply a monitor, to remind us of how we have slipped away from communion into occupation with defiling things, which have paved the way for the more pronounced sin, in thought or deed, which accuses us? And in the face of the shame, do we yet turn at once to our precious Advocate, to have Him wash our feet and restore our soul? Or do we mope under a sense of discouragement, as if our title to communion had been impugned—temporarily at least? If it be the latter, the enemy's fiery dart has found lodgment, and the unbelief of legal-mindedness is at work. We are acting as if our sin had dimmed the abiding efficacy of the cross, altered the grace in which we stand, beclouded our standing before God, or caused Him to withdraw His favor, temporarily at least. But He

has not withdrawn from us; we have withdrawn from Him. His fellowship with us was ever on the basis of the cross alone, and not on the basis of anything in us. Our sin beclouds the sense of this in our own souls, because it turns our eyes from the cross, and from our Representative in heaven, to self-occupation. This is unbelief, and the Spirit within us is grieved by this dishonor to the work of Christ. Did we yield to *His* guidance, the moment there was the consciousness that sin and defilement had come in, He would lead us to the feet of our great High Priest for restoration.

Here it is that our faith must stand and do battle, as often as need be, to maintain the sin-accused soul in the sense of its judicial reckonings. Of what practical avail are these delivering truths, unless faith takes its stand upon them *in the very face of the soul's sad failure, and the resulting accusations of heart and conscience?* Faith, Spirit-taught and Spirit-led, will triumph over the evil as soon as it is manifest, casting the sin-defiled soul upon Him who can wash the feet and restore the sense of favor in the soul. But fleshly religiousness, and an accusing enemy, would keep the work of the cross out of sight, pretending that through its sin the soul has temporarily forfeited its right of access into the sanctuary, and should submit to the discipline of forfeiture of communion for a long time to come, earning restoration to communion by some works meet for repentance. But if we acquiesce in this, as our hearts are too ready to do, it is plain that we consent to a policy which only insures failure upon failure. For so long as we remain out of communion, nothing but failure is possible.

Many, perhaps, who apprehend the judicial reckonings for faith, set forth in the Pauline ministry, come short of knowing their power because they are thus overcome. To this conflict, in which Satan would employ the shame of our ways to stir up unbelief in us, I believe we should apply the type of the warfare with Amalek in the wilderness. For Amalek seems to speak of the will, or animus, of the flesh, rather than of its gross lusts. But it is the indulgence of the flesh, defiling the conscience, which gives the enemy his opportunity, precipitating conflict with the unbelief and legality so natural to the flesh. Sin manifests itself in our life, and at once the accusing hosts of Amalek appear, to dispute our progress, to obscure our sense of God's favor toward us, and to keep us grovelling in self-occupation. But are we to fall back again into the misery and discouragement from which we have sought deliverance? Are we to abandon our judicial reckonings, or to allow them to be obscured? God forbid! We are to *stand and fight*, in obedience to the command: "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. v. 1). Let faith turn from the sad failure, and, in the confidence that our judicial reckonings are holy, and to be acted upon, let it boldly enter the sanctuary to praise the Son of God, whose glorious cross has saved such a failing creature!

The exhortation to maintain ourselves in liberty of conscience before God, refusing the bondage of legal-mindedness, is thus an exhortation to abide in these judicial reckonings, as the secret of faith's continuance in the sense of favor even when failure has come in. Hence the conflict with Amalek is a fight

for the truth, although not that—in service to others,—contemplated in 2 Cor. x. When we lag behind, and fall into hurtful lusts, we must fight in order to retain the truth, in its sanctifying power, *in our own souls*. Until this victory is won for ourselves, we cannot go on to the proper Christian warfare,—contention for the truth to deliver others.

In this warfare with the unbelief of our own hearts, we triumph as our faith *beholds the Advocate*, representing us before the Father's face. Moses upon the mount, supported by Hur ("white"—righteousness) and Aaron, the high priest, is a type of our Advocate in heaven, as 1 John ii. 1, 2, presents Him to us. In Moses,—the mediator of the people, in the sense of being their representative before God,—we see the Man, Jesus, in whose blessed Person we exist, judicially, before God. Hur reminds us that our Representative is "the Righteous" One, however unrighteous, in ourselves, the failure troubling us has just proven us to be. Aaron reminds us that our Representative is the "Christ," God's Anointed High Priest,—the Son and Priest appointed over His house. Despite all that can be charged against us, we have such an One as this to represent us in the Father's presence in heaven. And ever at our call is His priestly service, to bear us up in that Ineffable Presence, in the merit of what He has done, and in the fragrance of what He Himself is. He is ever living to make intercession for us in the very fact that He is thus ever before God as our Representative. His representation of us there *is* perpetual intercession. And if we sin, "*He Himself*" (*Gr.*),—as our Advocate, our Representative there,—"*is a Propitiation for our sins.*" This is our Sanctuary of refuge, in

passing through a wilderness where we may fail, and where the enemy stands ready to use any failure as the basis of his assault.

Thus we obtain this precious and most practical doctrine in 1 John, the *sanctuary* epistle of the *wilderness* group,—the Catholic epistles. In the first chapter, the apostle dwells upon the grace of our calling,—even to fellowship with the Father and the Son in the light. He declares our perfect and unchangeable judicial fitness for it, as cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, once for all, when we were saved,—when we repented as sinners, confessing our sins. But he establishes us in this grace,—of judicial perfection before God,—*not* that we may sin, but that we may sin not. It is Paul's principle, that the sense of pure grace in the soul, rather than the burden of legal requirement, is what sanctifies a quickened soul (Rom. vi. 14). For if we are legal, we will enter, experimentally, very little into this fellowship with the Father and the Son in the light. One who thinks to bring some subjective fitness as his passport to such unfathomable favor as this, but grieves the Spirit, who is the Power for communion, and can know little of it. While he who thus deprives himself of this close walk with God, basking in the sense of His favor, is the very one who will be continually subject to shame and failure. Let our estimate of the value of the work of the cross be such that, in the holy boldness of faith, we can abide in confidence of a judicial fitness even for the infinite blaze of light and glory of the Father's Presence! Then will the energy of faith, in the Spirit's power, lift us up, in the experience of the soul, in communion with the God and Father who has begotten us! Then will the

craving of the child's heart in us, and the longings of the Spirit of sonship in us, take hold of the Almighty in the holy liberty of filial love, delighting the heart of God! And the grace of this is the very means,—the only means,—of not sinning continually.

Yet, at the best, we come sadly short of perfect self-surrender to the power of the grace of this sanctifying truth. And if we *do* sin, and are assailed in consequence, we need that which our faith can take hold upon to gain courage for surrender to the loving Priestly hands which wait to restore us. This is found in remembering that our failure has not changed the fact that we have an Advocate, a judicial Representative, in the Father's presence, even Jesus Christ, the Righteous. And He Himself,—His Person there being the living Memorial of His work for us,—is a Propitiation in respect to our sins, which otherwise, as it were, would rise to the Father as a stench from us. But they cannot so rise judicially. Nought can ascend from us to God, *judicially*, save the sweet fragrance of our Representative before His face! For as the Advocate is, there in heaven for us, so are we in this world! Indeed, His presence there, according to the same text (1 John ii. 1, 2), is even a Propitiation which satisfies the Father in respect to the present passing-over of the sins of the whole world, during this period of long-suffering.

Thus, fortified by Paul's judicial reckonings, and John's instruction for recovering the sense of them in the soul in case we sin,—in the fullest assurance of faith we may cast ourselves upon our Lord, for His blessed service of foot-washing and restoration, *the instant we realize that we have defiled ourselves*. If living faith in us makes these judicial reckonings

the practical basis of our habit of life, that life cannot fail to become happy and fruitful. In the Spirit's power we shall be led through the enemy's country in holy joy and triumph. But let us *lay hold* of these things, *practise* them, *live* by them. We must not allow any creature, within or without, to separate us from the enjoyment of the love of God, the love of Christ. We must *abide in the sunshine*, if we would bear clusters of ripened fruit,—the restful and joyful soul's overflow of spontaneous worship Godward, and spontaneous service manward, in the sweetness of love and humility. We must *abide* in the sense of God's favor: we must *keep* ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21).

May God show mercy in our meditation of a theme concerning which one must remain silent were its power in one's own life in question. But if it be of the truth, may God bless His word, and make its power known in reader and writer.

F. A.

OUR LORD'S ESTIMATE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

I AM asked, What is your view of the Holy Letters? I answer, What thought my Master of them? how did He appeal to them? what use did He make of them? what were their smallest details in His eyes? (Matt. v. 18; xxiv. 35).

Ah! speak to these inquirers Thyself, Eternal Wisdom, Uncreated Word, Judge of judges! or as we repeat to them the declarations of Thy mouth, show them the majesty in which the Scriptures appeared to Thee, the perfection Thou didst recognize in them, that everlasting stability which Thou didst assign to

their smallest iota, and that imperishable destiny which will outlast the universe, after the very heavens and the earth have passed away!

We are not ashamed to say that, when we hear the Son of God quote the Scriptures, we become docile believers in their divine inspiration—we need no further testimony. All the declarations of the Bible are, no doubt, equally divine; but this example of the Saviour of the world has settled the question for us at once. This proof requires neither long nor learned researches; it is grasped by the mind of a child as powerfully as by that of a doctor. Should any doubt assail your soul, the tone of His voice, as Jesus Himself talks of the Scriptures, will quell your scruples.

Follow our Lord in the days of His flesh. With what serious and tender respect does He constantly hold in His hands “the volume of the Book,” to quote every part of it, and note its shortest verses! See how one word, one single word, whether of a psalm or of an historical book, has for Him the authority of a law. Mark with what confident submission He receives *the whole Scripture*, without ever contesting its sacred canon: for He knows that “salvation is of the Jews,” and that under the infallible providence of God “to them were committed the oracles of God.” Did I say, He receives them? From His childhood to the grave, and from His rising again from the grave to His disappearance in the clouds, what does He bear always about with Him: in the desert, in the temple, in the synagogue? What does He continue to quote with His resuscitated voice, just as the heavens are about to exclaim, “Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come

in?" It is the Bible, ever the Bible; it is Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets: He quotes them, He explains them, but how? Why, verse by verse, and word by word.

In what alarming and melancholy contrast do we gaze at and groan over those misguided men in our days, who dare to arraign, challenge, contradict, and mutilate the Scriptures! Who does not tremble, after following with his eyes the Son of man as He commands the elements, stills the storms, and opens the graves, filled with so profound a reverence for the sacred volume, while He declares that He is one day to judge by that Book the quick and the dead? Who does not shudder, whose heart does not bleed when, after observing this, he ventures to step into a Rationalist academy, and sees the professor's chair occupied by a poor mortal, learned by reputation, but a miserable sinner in reality, responsible for handling God's Word irreverently? Follow him as he goes through this deplorable task before a body of youths, destined to be the guides of a parish or a populous district—youths capable of doing so much good if guided to the heights of the faith, and so much mischief if tutored in disrespect for those Scriptures which they are one day to preach? With what peremptory decision do such men display the phantasmagoria of their hypotheses—they retrench, they add, they praise, they blame! and they pity the simplicity of those who read the Bible as it was read by Jesus Christ, like Him cling to every syllable, and never dream of finding error in the Word of God. They pronounce on the intercalations and retrenchments that Holy Scripture must have undergone—intercalations and retrenchments that He never sus-

spected: they lop off the chapters they do not understand, and point out blunders, ill-sustained or ill-concluded reasonings, prejudices, imprudences, and instances of vulgar ignorance!

May God forgive my being compelled to put this frightful dilemma into words, but the alternative is inevitable! Either Jesus Christ exaggerated and spoke incoherently when He quoted the Scriptures thus, or these rash, wretched men unwittingly blaspheme their divine authority. It pains us to write these lines. God is our witness that we could have wished to recall, and then to efface them; but we venture to say, with profound feeling, that it is in obedience, it is in charity, they have been penned. Alas! in a few short years both the doctors and the disciples will be laid in the tomb, they shall wither like grass; but not one jot or tittle of that divine book will then have passed away; and as certainly as the Bible is the truth, and that it has changed the face of the world, so certainly shall we see the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven, to judge by His eternal Word the secret thoughts of all men! (Rom. ii. 16; John xii. 48; Matt. xxv. 31.) "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. i. 24, 25); this is the word which will judge us.

From "Theopneustia:" the Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by L. Gaussen.

NOAH, DANIEL AND JOB.

(Ezek. xiv. 12-21.)

EZEKIEL, as we know, uttered his prophecy outside the land, though the captivity was not complete. Jerusalem had been captured, the land was in the hands of the Gentiles, and the final consummation was about to be reached. If there ever was a time calling for prostration of spirit before God, in all the reality of penitence, both individual and national, it was then. Alas, the people but manifested the absolute alienation of heart and life from God—a state of complete hopelessness, because they were wedded to their sins, they had “set up their idols in their hearts.” With such complete apostasy, there was no hope for the nation; it was ripe for judgment.

It was in this connection that the Spirit of God declares that all connection with the nation as such is broken off, and He can only recognize individual faithfulness. He selects three representative men, in different circumstances, and widely separated in time from one another, and declares, “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.”

There is an evident contrast here with the state of Sodom, prior to its fall, when Abraham, in intercession, secured from God the promise that He would spare it if ten righteous were found in it. It was Abraham, and not God, who set that as a limit, for the patriarch ceased to intercede further, “and the Lord went His way” (Gen. xviii. 33). The same prophet also whom we are now following speaks of Sodom as the younger sister of Jerusalem (ch. xvi. 46-50).

It is interesting also to notice that each of these men, while exercising faith for himself, was instrumental in rescuing others. With Noah this was notably the case. He was the leader of the only remnant that escaped the flood that came upon the entire world. Daniel also was an intercessor, and through

him the wise men of Babylon were rescued from the king's wrath, his brethren strengthened in their testimony for God, and the pledge of later national restoration given. Even in Job's case there was something of the same kind, for he interceded for his friends, and secured their acceptance before God.

Now the prophet declares that even such men as these could not be deliverers; they must stand alone. If there were any lingering hope in the heart of the people that faithfulness on the part of a few would atone for the sins of the nation, it was dissipated by this solemn word. It is similar to what had been declared through Jeremiah. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be toward this people" (Jer. xv. 1). How hopeless then and how final must have been their heart departuer from God.

Times and dispensations change, but the truth of God remains the same. The professing church has, alas, followed Israel, and with more light has gone further into absolute independency of God. His glory has departed from it, corporately, and while He ever blesses individual faithfulness, and owns the desire to obey His word in the few who still hold it fast, yet the united testimony has gone, never, alas, to be revived.

There is room, thank God, for individual faith, and a quiet testimony of the few. For such, without doubt, the history of these three men must have special significance. They are brought together from most distant times and scenes, apparently at random. Yet we know divine wisdom always has a purpose which it is ours to search out. May we learn some lessons, then, from these three men.

Noah lived, morally, in the end of the world. The end of all flesh had been reached, and, so far as man was concerned, nothing but judgment remained. But grace must have its resources even in the darkest hour, and we see its provision of shelter from impending judgment. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and during all the time the longsuffering of God waited, he testified of the world's sin and of

God's mercy. Little enough fruit, it will be said, resulted from his long witnessing. But there are two facts to consider. Many must have died during the hundred and twenty years, and how many of these may have hearkened to his warnings, and turned to God ere it was too late. It is not for us to speculate, but we remember how God spoke at a later and somewhat similar time about Nineveh, of the multitudes who did not know their right hands from their left (Jonah iv. 11). May we not believe that possibly some from the multitudes of the ungodly were turned to Him through the preaching of Noah, and were taken away from the judgment to come?

The other fact is beyond speculation. Noah's preaching was believed by his household. He carried them all with him into the ark. Contrast that with Lot, and his testimony to his mocking sons-in-law, his wife, lost on the very brink of Sodom, and his daughters apparently lost after they had escaped the corruption of that wicked place. Is it not worthy of consideration that Noah could thus influence his own family?

But this suggests the fitness of naming Noah as the first remnant character we are to consider. Judgment was before him. He accepted the shelter provided of God, and in the long years, when judgment lingered, he bore his testimony in the face of an ungodly and mocking age. Is not that the position of God's remnant in these days? For us the coming of the Lord is a blessed hope, but for the world it is the end of probation, and the beginning of doom. Our testimony is to be to the certainty of that judgment and to God's merciful provision against it. No one can truly maintain a testimony in these days who does not emphasize the near approach of judgment. May we not add that nothing is more uncommon and distasteful to man than such testimony? This is in itself a solemn intimation of the nearness of the end. There will come mockers in the last days saying, Where is the promise of His coming? Our Lord also likens the indifference in Noah's day to that of the time just preceding His coming.

Beloved brethren, is this our testimony, not merely upon our lips, but so real that our families believe it? How searching is this. But such was Noah; he bore witness to a soon-coming judgment from which he was most effectually to be sheltered.

Daniel follows next, not in order of time, for Job far antedated him, but there must be some reason for his having the second place. There is something remarkable in his being mentioned at all, for he was living when Ezekiel wrote. When we think of the simplicity of his faith, the firmness of his separation and the clearness of his testimony, we are not surprised that even his contemporaries had been struck by it. What an honor, unsought surely by that lowly man, to be known for his devotedness and subjection to God, and thus to be associated with the faithful of all time. Beloved, do we so live that our names, even if unknown here, are entered upon the rolls of that "goodly company" who have in all time stood for God?

Daniel was a captive, not only a witness to ruin impending, but a partaker of that ruin. He had been carried to Babylon to be a servant to its king, and the honor of the beloved city, yea, the honor of God, was in the dust. But his faith was as vigorous as though he were living in the brightest days of Joshua's or Solomon's government. He was as careful not to defile himself at Babylon as at Jerusalem. For him the will of God was just as real as it ever was, and to be as implicitly obeyed. For him too the promises and power of God were unchanged, and he rested in them implicitly. The key to his entire history is found in his nazariteship. He walked in separation from his surroundings, and therefore had power. This explains too his understanding of what was in the future for the kingdoms of the world. He maintained his separation, and therefore his testimony. When the time of persecution came, he was not found wanting. He could go into the lions' den as calmly as he went to prayer, and for the same reason—God was with him.

The Lord give us to be true Daniels, in these days of the world's supremacy ; to maintain our separation at all times and at all cost. May we be in that attitude of loyalty to our Lord that will not compromise His truth no matter what suffering it involves.

Job suggests other thoughts. There was no stir of preparation for a flood in his life, nor did he have to maintain a separate walk and testimony in the midst of an ungodly world, as Daniel. The current of his life had run as smoothly as possible, until the time of testing came, and that was exclusively an individual experience.

For this reason there are some lessons of special importance which appeal to our consciences strongly.

The prominent thought in Job's history is the nothingness of human goodness. He was a righteous man to begin with, and all Satan's malice could not alter that. He maintained his integrity through it all. But God used his troubles and the harshness of his friends to prepare him for an unfolding as to his character of which he had not dreamed. He is brought into the presence of God, and there learns his vileness and nothingness, as he had never before. He learns the lesson and comes out of the furnace purified. It is this lesson of no good thing in us that we have to learn in the inmost depths of our souls, if we are to be truly God's remnant. Painful, humbling it is, but who that in any measure has been in Job's place has failed to get the blessedness of it? We can conceive of one being harsh in bearing witness of coming judgment : a separate man may have a tinge of Pharisaism about him ; but if he has reached the end of himself in the presence of God, he will be neither harsh nor censorious, but a broken vessel for the Spirit of God to use as He sees fit.

The Lord lead us, beloved brethren, into these things, that we may in these days of hopeless darkness, still maintain His truth, according to His nature, and His desire for His people.

A DIVINE MONOPOLY.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deut. vi. 4-9).

THE book of Deuteronomy is by no means merely a repetition of the laws in the other Mosaic books. While there is a reiteration of some, and an enlargement or curtailment of others, the book has a character of its own which is clearly marked. Unbelief may wrest this, as it ever attempts, into proof of contradiction, and therefore of later origin, but faith sees God behind all, and seeks to learn His reasons in what may seem at first contradictory statements. Nor is faith disappointed, for here are the rich mines of truth, where are found the most beautiful gems.

Deuteronomy is the book of moral principles, the book in which God goes over His law afresh with His people, impressing upon them its holiness, and warning them of the dangers of neglect or disobedience. In it we find much that would be out of place in the other books. It is a sort of divine commentary upon all that had preceded it.

The passage now before us occurs near the intro-

duction to the main part of the book, which is devoted to the enforcement of the law. We have first the historical setting of the law, the circumstances under which it was given at Sinai, together with the ten commandments themselves. Then follows this, which may be considered as a text for the whole succeeding discourse.

It begins with the unity of God, excluding all other thought of deity, and then claims for Him the complete devotedness of the heart. It is the scripture quoted by our Lord as the first and greatest of all the commandments, including as it does all others, for when God has His place in the heart, every duty is attended to with the proper motive.

Thus he who keeps this first and greatest commandment, and the second which is like to it—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"—has kept the whole law, for "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Alas! all are condemned by this divinely simple requirement, for love does not come at command, and from hearts alienated from the life of God nothing but enmity to Him can come.

But we can thank Him that we have been delivered from the condemnation deserved from the law, broken by those who were under it, and that we are never to be under that which is ever the "strength of sin," and not of holiness. As those to whom law, as such, has nothing to say, we may now turn to it and find the principles which govern it, principles which are in perfect accord with all God's thoughts and ways. Thus we get lessons of blessing and profit, and through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in us, "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the

Spirit." The Spirit shed abroad in our hearts has revealed the love of God, and now, not as a matter of requirement, but of the constraint of love, we desire to walk in a way pleasing to God. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

It is only thus that the portion we are looking at becomes either endurable or possible of accomplishment. It is absolutely inflexible, and, as we have called it, a monopoly, of time, strength,—all that a man has. Who, beloved brethren, could think for a moment of such complete absorption in the things of God if there were any latent suspicion of His perfect love to us in the heart? More than this, unless His claim upon us, and His authority over us, is completely acknowledged, none could yield themselves up unreservedly to Him.

But, blessed be His name, He has won our poor hearts to Himself, and has also established a twofold claim, of the most absolute character, upon us. We are His by creation, and His by redemption as well! "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

We are perfectly familiar with the doctrine that we and all we have belongs to God, and that we owe to Him the love of our whole being; but it is one thing to accept this as a statement of truth, and quite another to let it be manifest practically in the daily life. What is to occupy us now is not anything new in doctrine, but that with which we are abundantly familiar. May the Lord make it more a practical reality in our hearts and ways. Thus and thus only can the reproach of the enemy be removed, that grace has no power in the daily life. What a solemn consideration, that the only power for holiness should

thus be discredited through the practical unbelief of those who are the objects of the grace. But let us look further at the scripture.

“And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.” The heart is the seat of authority and power in man. The mind has knowledge, but the heart includes the will and the affections, with the conscience also. It is not sufficient that the word of God should be in the intellect. Indeed there is great danger in a merely intellectual interest in the things of God. Truth unfelt, which has not searched out our own lives, is a most deadly thing to trifle with. Nothing so effectually sears the conscience and leads to the loss of all spiritual power as truth merely in the mind. It is that Laodiceanism which is the mark of the apostasy of the last days, days even now upon us.

Nor is this a danger to which the true people of God are not exposed. In one sense they are peculiarly open to it. Their minds are stored with much precious truth, the remnants of other and brighter days of spiritual joy and power. This truth has ceased to act upon the conscience, to affect the practical life. It is therefore the suited instrument, ready to the hand of the enemy. With it he induces a familiarity with holy things that leads to looking upon them as common. Oh, the awful sin of despising the wonders of divine grace by growing familiar with them in an unholy way ! It is this that leads to sin, often of the grossest kind.

“Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.” Do we know of this hidden word, down in the secret depths of the heart ? Other concerns may engage our minds, and must do so, of

necessity; but the hidden man of the heart is nourished only by the Word hidden in the heart.

As we have said, this suggests that the word has authority over our consciences. Our sense of right and wrong is thus formed by the truth of God. What a difference this would make in the lives of many. Too often it is the opinion of others that is the guide for the conscience. As a result the standard is lowered constantly, God is gradually excluded, and all is reduced to the level of a merely worldly morality. We are to be imitators of one another's faith, but never of one another's conscience.

The will too is included in the term heart, and this must also be under the power of the word of God if it is to produce in us that right living which is to show the power of grace, while love can only come from the heart. The "love of the truth" must be received, in "a good and honest heart." The word of God reveals His will to which our wills must bow. It searches out all in us that is contrary to that will. Humbling indeed but most necessary is this breaking of our natural wills, but how blessed are the results. An unbroken will is a most effectual barrier to all spiritual progress, or true service. There may be much Martha-like energy, but it will only fret the soul and take it out of the Lord's presence. Till the will is truly subject, the very citadel of the life is in the hands of the flesh.

Notice too how it is not merely the Word in general, very important in its place, but the *words*, the separate statements for special conduct, that are to be in the heart. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy

children." When the heart is occupied, it will find an outlet, and most naturally this will first reach those for whom we are first responsible, and who are nearest to us. It is a common confession that it is easier to speak to strangers of the things of God than to those nearest to us. But why should this be? Do we not naturally love our own most? and what most concerns us and them will surely be easily spoken of. May we not find the reason why this is not the case in the fact that the Word is not in the heart? If *there*, it will surely find its natural outlet in the first circle of the affections, the family.

How is it with us beloved? Is the family altar set up in the home? Are the things of God matter for unconstrained conversation at the table? Ah, what is our table talk? Nor will it do to say that we cannot always be dragging in Bible themes in the home. Where the heart is filled there will be no effort to drag in, they will rise in love from a full heart, in all simplicity and spontaneity. Happy the home where this is the case.

But there is more: these things must be taught diligently to the children, or, as correctly rendered in the margin, be *sharpened* for them. As with the parents, so with the children, the Word must reach the conscience. To do this, nothing must be allowed to take off its keen edge. The word of God is a sword, and what is a sword without a keen edge? There is a danger of taking this edge off only too common. Nothing so easily and effectually dulls the edge of the word of God as to see that it has no power over the lives of the parents. Children are the mirrors of their parents' hearts in very many ways. How can they expect the children to obey that

which so little affects their own life? The Lord awaken His beloved people as to this !

“And shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way.” The first part of this we have already looked at. The second is closely linked with it, and flows from it. A merely garrulous person will pour out a flood of unprofitable conversation upon the scriptures without help to the hearers, but it is not likely that one who lives it out in the home, and enjoys fellowship in the things of God in that inner circle, will pour out foolishness in public. This is doubtless why the qualifications for an elder or a leader in the house of God are so largely of a domestic character.

But what have a business man's acquaintances to say about him? Do they know him to be a child of God, walking in His fear? If the word of God flows from his lips like water from a fountain, he will be known and marked. What a protection against temptation would that be, to put it on the lowest ground.

“And when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Scripture frequently warns against ungirded loins. A careless state is what we are in constant danger of falling into. And yet our gracious God is no hard master. As our Lord said to His disciples, so does He say to us, “Come ye apart and rest awhile.” The constant strain upon all the energies, and which is so disastrous in many cases, is not the Lord's will for His people. “It is vain for you to rise up early, and to sit up late.” After all, this constant rush is but another name for the covetous, restless spirit which marks the age. May the Lord keep His dear people, so far as is possible, from it.

But for how many is rest and relaxation but the

opening for carelessness. Under the plea for a change, worldly ways and thoughts are allowed which grieve the Spirit. This is shown by the loss of taste for the word of God, and for occupation with divine things. How different is this from our Lord. Weary with His journey, resting at the well, He is ready to deal with the sinful woman who meets Him there. He fully exemplified this of which we are speaking. He could never be taken by surprise, for the simple reason that He had nothing but God's will and word in His heart. May we learn to have the sense of the Lord's presence with us in our seasons of leisure and relaxation, to have all our cheerfulness seasoned with the salt of His word.

One of the most difficult questions to settle, especially for the young, is that of amusement. Without doubt here is where Satan robs most of their power and usefulness. He endeavors to have them think of relaxation as something of their own, out of which God and His word is tacitly kept. As a result certain pleasures are enjoyed without God, the appetite for them increases, a distaste for divine things follows, and the world holds the heart. Ah, how many dear young christians have gone in this path. Let us avoid the first step. Let us rigorously refuse everything in which we cannot have as a companion the precious word of God.

The air which surrounds us presses upon every portion of the body with perfect uniformity. The entire weight resting upon a person is something enormous, but it is not felt, because the pressure is the same everywhere. But let the pressure be taken off one portion of the body, and the weight of the air pressing upon the rest of the body will force the

blood through the pores of the skin. It would be torture to have the air thus removed, and yet how much spiritual torture is endured in the effort to exclude God from any portion of the life. If He pervades all, it is not realized what a mighty force is resting upon us, but let Him be excluded and the irksoneness of His presence in anything is felt.

Let us not forget it, beloved brethren, God must have the monopoly in our lives. He must be all, or we will wish Him to be nothing.

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." In the last days, under the sway of the Beast, none will be allowed to buy or sell who have not received his mark upon their forehead or right hand. They are to publicly own him in work or speech. There is wisdom in this, of a worldly, devilish kind. Satan's kingdom cannot stand if it is divided, and only by rigid exclusion of all that owns Christ can he hold his own.

With the people of God too there are to be no compromises, and so they are to have the word of God as a frontlet where all can see it. This hides the world from the saint's view save as he sees it through the medium of truth. Thus it is stripped of all its varnish and seen in its true light. The eye thus covered can discern the emptiness of all the gaudy tinsel of earthly things. Thus the frontlet serves a double purpose; he is committed to the Lord, and he has spiritual discernment.

But the word is to be upon the hand as well. How searching the thought that all our doings are to be controlled by the word of God. Would the hand be found doing evil if this sign were bound upon it?

How this would check all that was not according to that word.

“And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” All that one has is thus marked with the seal of the living God. His sign of ownership is to be upon all. But it will be noticed that it is to be put there voluntarily. The child of God is to do it. It is the badge of a willing, loving allegiance to One who has loved and redeemed us.

A divine monopoly: do we recognize it and acquiesce fully in it? Would we have it otherwise if we could? Ah, if the heart has grasped the fulness of everlasting love, and seen the completeness of redemption, it can give but one answer—“Christ is *all*.” The one prayer will be, Thy will only, and all Thy will be done, always. May it be so with us.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

WATER TRANSFORMED INTO WINE.

(John ii. 1-12.)

IT was at a marriage, a union of two, a symbol of that spiritual union of man with God which the Lord Jesus Christ had come to effect, by the way of the cross, through death and resurrection. It was to unite man with God. “Married to Christ that we might bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. vii. 4). As there is no legitimate fruit to the flesh but in the married relation, so is there none in the spirit but through union with God in Christ. “Born again,” “born from above,” “born of God,” is the fruit of this union with Christ by faith, through grace. It is not what is sometimes called conversion, which may be only man’s own work; turned about, turning

over a new leaf, having been bad, and now going about to be good. This may all be of man, but "born of God" is new life by the Spirit of God. The Saviour said to the Jews, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." It is this new life that unites with God, not simply to be turned about—though a true turning away from self to God always accompanies the gracious impartation from God of this new, eternal, and divine life—but "born of God," and this is always His own miraculous work. In the flesh we are in Adam, born of God we are in Christ, the head of a new race. The former is "*the old man*," which we have "*put off*," and whose deeds we are to put off practically; the latter is "*the new man*," whom we have "*put on*," and are to manifest it in all our behavior in the world.

It was *the third day*. A striking indication of the fulness of divine dealing with man in love and grace. The completeness of the manifestation of God to man. It is the opening up of the new dispensation, in which, by divine power and authority, man is to be brought near to God; nearer than ever before. It is Christ's death and resurrection symbolized, through which it is all to be accomplished. It is all of grace too, which deigned to be present at the feast which needed Him to make it truly that, not in the way His mother thought, but typically through His death.

"Six water pots." Six—Lost man's number. Stone or earthen vessels; man come to the end of himself; helpless, hopeless, lost, as to all he can do; and hence passive, and ready to receive the word of God. Water—the word poured into the earthen vessels by the servants, the proclaimers of His word.

Man must come to the end of himself before God, the end of his own resources must be reached before he can receive Another to do for him. So is he represented by the earthen vessels. As such he is a passive receiver of the word of God. This is repentance: it is conversion, but not the new birth. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." When man thus receiving is "full to the brim," the water of the Word, by supernatural power, the power of God, is transmuted into the wine of joy and gladness, which "cheers the heart of both God and man"! "The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him." The new life has come into him; he is "born of God" and "he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The best wine last.—The last dispensation of God to man is the best of all. It is of grace, the full favor of God to man, righteously administered through the work of Jesus on the cross. It is all of God and flows from His great love to man. It is the end of the old creation "in Adam," and the bringing in of God's new creation "in Christ."

"Manifested His glory."—How perfectly and beautifully does this first "sign," or miracle, set forth His glory! It opens up to us this whole dispensation of God's grace, which the Lord had come to inaugurate and consummate. It is of grace; it is miraculous; it is to all who will receive; it is by the Word; it is administered by the servants; it is by the Spirit of God; it manifests His glory. Praise His name.

J. S. P.

[It is also of interest to note how this miracle sets forth, in a dispensational way, the manner of Israel's

future blessing, which must be, as during the present age, through repentance and faith. The empty forms of Jewish purifying are filled with the reality of the truth of God, and as the Remnant bow in repentance to the Word, the wine of joy flows forth. Ed].

DELIVERANCE.

("God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—Gal. vi. 14.)

LORD, in Thy cross we glory,
 There in Thyself we hide,—
 In that dread hour of Satan's power
 We too were crucified;
 Thy loveliness, Thy beauty
 Now clothes e'en such as we;
 Since Thou hast bled we too were dead,
 But now we live in Thee:
 Yea, e'en as Thou in glory now,
 Exalted, Lord, in Thee!

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 Thy precious blood our boast;
 For us 'twas spilt to purge our guilt
 As sinners, vile and lost;
 Our sins are all forgiven,
 And God Himself is just
 While, justified, th' ungodly hide
 In Thee, the sinner's trust:
 Now by Thy blood we boast in God,—
 Through Thee, the sinner's Trust! ¹

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 From sin it set us free;
 Our old man died—was crucified,
 Still hangs upon the tree;
 His crimes are expiated,
 From every charge we're clear,
 For he who died is justified
 And in Thyself brought near,—
 From sin set free, alive in Thee,
 And to our God brought near! ²

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 'Tis rest from all within,
 For sin in us upon Thy cross
 Was judged,—Thyself made sin;
 Now there's no condemnation;
 Sin's law of death destroyed,
 The soul, set free, claims life in Thee,
 God's favor unalloyed,—
 Now, Spirit-led, in Christ as Head,
 Claims favor unalloyed! ³

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 God's law no longer dread;
 Its holy light revealed our plight,
 Its curse fell on Thy head!
 Now married to Another,
 No law-claims have a place
 To draw our heart from Thee apart
 And hide Thy glorious face:
 None may intrude, however good,
 To veil that glorious Face! ⁴

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 Freed from this hostile scene,
 The world's corruption, rife through lust,
 Which stirs up lust within:
 Vain world! thou'rt judged and conquered,
 Faith gets the victory:
 Our Lord, denied, thou'st crucified,—
 His cross was death to thee!
 We too there died—were crucified:
We rose! 'Twas death to thee! ⁵

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 Our thoughts from self set free;
 Flesh howe'er dressed,—its worst, its best,—
 Was crucified with Thee:
 Thy Resurrection-Beauty
 Our new Self, dearly prized;
 The old was lost,—Thy death the cost,—
 When Thou wast circumcised;
 While now we're ris'n and caught to heav'n
 In Thee—once circumcised! ⁶

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 All we once were is gone ;
 Not we, but Thou liv'st in us now,—
 We live by faith alone :
 Isaac, kind Guest, God's "Laughter,"
 These hearts Thy tent-house now !
 In us, O Christ, Thou keepest tryst,—
 Sweet joys our souls endow !
 Shall Ishmael rude, mocking, intrude
 Where joys our souls endow ? ⁷

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 It set poor self aside
 That Thou, above, mightst claim in love
 Th' affections of Thy Bride !
 Joined to Thee by one Spirit,
 Thy image in each breast,
 We're Thine alone, bone of Thy bone,
 With Thee supremely blest,—
 E'en now are ris'n, at home in heav'n,
 In Thy glad Presence blest ! ⁸

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 Waiting for Thee to come ;
 The heart and mind their Portion find
 In Thee—above, at home ;
 And if our members tarry,
 'Tis here to serve as Thine,—
 Vessels of earth to hold Thy Worth
 And let Thy glory shine :
 These vessels break,—'tis for Thy sake,
 To let Thy glory shine ! ⁹

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
 Teach us Thy cross to bear :
 The love, the grace in Jesus' face,—
 May such Thy members wear !
 O teach us to surrender,
 That we may prove Thy grace,
 The spirit, soul, body,—the whole
 Unto Thy Love's embrace :
 Infirm at best, let Thy power rest
 On us in Love's embrace ! ¹⁰

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
Let our hearts be as Thine :
Be't loss or gain, joy, travail-pain,—
Beat in us, Heart divine !
Mourn in us for Thy members,
Scattered and made a prey,
And in us cry and weep and sigh
Mid ruin of man's day :
Grant us a share in Thy heart's care
Mid ruin of man's day.

Thus in Thy cross we glory,
It looms o'er all things here ;
Beside its bright and glorious light
All vain things disappear !
And in that cross we triumph :
Sins, Sin and Self there see,
All law-claims foiled, and Satan spoiled
And routed openly !—
All worldly power—man's, Satan's hour—
There nailed, spoiled openly ! ¹¹

Yes, in Thy cross we glory,
There Thou hast pledged Thy troth ;
There bowed, opprest in dust of death,
Our poor hearts learned Thy worth ;
There Dying Love in anguish
Poured out atoning blood,
And held us fast through floods of wrath
To bring us unto God :
Blessed embrace of Matchless Grace
That brought us unto God !

Lord, in Thy cross we glory,
There in Thyself we hide,—
In that dread hour of Satan's power
We too were crucified ;
Thy loveliness, Thy beauty
Now clothes e'en such as we ;
Since Thou hast bled we too were dead,
But now we live in Thee :
Yea, e'en as Thou in glory now,
Exalted, Lord, in Thee !

O God, in Thee we glory!
 We boast in depths of Love
 That sent Thy Son, 'Thine only One,
 Death under wrath to prove:
 Now Thou hast many children,
 Begot of His distress:
 Fulness Divine, outrage was Thine
 Our nothingness to bless,—
 Thou'st bruised Thy One—Thy Bosom-Son—
 Thy many sons to bless!

Father, in Thee we glory!
 In Thy blest house of grace
 Thy sons, set free, heart-melody
 Pour out before Thy face!
 Children of God the Father,
 Priests of His royal house,
 And wooed and won of God's dear Son,
 Thy loved One's chosen spouse,—
 Father, we raise e'en now the praise
 Of Thy Beloved's Spouse!

[The foot-notes are for any who may desire to study the subject of deliverance to see whether Scripture justifies the sentiments expressed in the verses.]

¹ Rom. i.-v. 11.

² Rom. v. 12-vi. 11.

³ Rom. vii. 7-viii.; 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴ Rom. vii. 1-6; Gal. ii. 19; iii. 10-13.

⁵ Gal. i. 4; vi. 14; 2 Pet. i. 4; ii. 19, 20; John xvi. 33; xii. 31;
 1 John ii. 15-17; v. 4.

⁶ Gal. v. 24; 2 Cor. xii. 1-5; Col. ii. 9-12.

⁷ Gal. ii. 20; iv. 19-31; Col. i. 27.

⁸ Ephesians.

⁹ Col. iii. 1-4; 2 Cor. iv.

¹⁰ Phil. ii; Rom. vi. 13.; xii. 1; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Phil. iv. 13.

¹¹ Col. ii.

“CATTLE.”

“AND there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle” (Gen. xiii. 7). Whosoever engages in strife shows that he is on low ground, spiritually. The subject of the strife here is the cattle possessed by these men. It was the cattle that made Lot decide for the plains of Sodom, well watered and fertile. Temporal interests are right and proper. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (or unbeliever). A man of the world has natural affection, and will provide for his own, just as sinners love those that love them. It would indeed be a reproach if a Christian man showed less love and care for those near to him than a worldling did.

One then should labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that hath need. But temporal interests must be watched lest they draw the hearts from the things of Christ. How often have God's people been led into strife through temporal affairs, or, worse yet, been lured toward Sodom. We are living in an age of speculation. Men wish to make a competence rapidly and easily, and are drawn into the whirl, excitement, and worse, of the world's ways. Like Lot, they are drawn into Sodom. Ah! too often have peace of conscience and joy of heart been bartered for this world's cattle. “But they that *will* be (are determined to be) rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts” (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10).

God blesses a man's labor, and may give even riches. The thing to guard against is that absorption, which draws the soul away from Christ and His interests. A lean soul is a bad companion at any price.

"Thy servants have cattle" (Num. xxxii. 4). The tribes of Reuben and Gad urged this as a reason for remaining on the east side of Jordan. They came short, practically, of their high calling. Pharaoh had tried to induce Moses to leave the cattle in Egypt, which would answer to a man leaving his business in the world, not subject to the word of God. Pharaoh did not succeed, but selfish interest did keep these tribes from their rightful place.

Are we, any of God's saints, held from going in to possess our full portion in Christ? What interest can dispute Christ's place in our hearts?

The east side of Jordan may not be Sodom, spiritual wickedness, but it is not the heavenly place which God has appointed for our chief enjoyment. We need not fear that He will fail to give us all needed earthly good, but we do need to fear lest our absorption with these things hinder us from the path of faith, and enjoyment of heavenly things.

We are not to be ascetic, nor foolish, but we are to be whole-hearted for our blessed Lord.

The woman of Samaria told the truth when she said Jacob and his cattle drank from the same well. Every earthly spring is like that; we drink it in common with the world; it cannot quench the soul's cravings. "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

The tribe of Manasseh, as has been shown, (See the Numerical Bible) had a portion on both sides of

the River. Forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing on to what is before, we really get the good of heavenly things and all of earth that we need. The Lord teach us to be like Manasseh. May Christ, our blessed Lord, be first in our hearts and thoughts, and He will see to the cattle also. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

LOOKING AT THINGS UNSEEN.

IN this matter-of-fact, rational period, it is more especially needful for those professing to be separated unto the Lord Jesus to bear in mind the fleetingness of time, and the seriousness of eternity. Temporal things loom large. Competition for a livelihood is often severe ; friends prove changeable and those we expect godly prove otherwise. False creeds abound, sin is glossed over, and the love of many waxes cold. And more especially does there seem a tendency to luxury. By that is not meant necessarily extra high living, but a settling down, satisfied with the comforts of the world that tend to set the affections on things below and not to follow the Lord Jesus in "that He pleased not Himself." This trying to please oneself and not regarding the feelings and thoughts of others is shown by that roughness, bluntness, and selfishness which do not glorify our God, and which are certainly not the mind of Christ. The root of this is in minding earthly things. When death draws near, and eternity comes in view, how paltry are the things of time; yet there is only a thread between us and eter-

nity. Our life is but a vapor that vanishes quickly away. Over every house, over every meeting-room, and above all, over our heart should be constantly inscribed—eternity ! eternity !

This looking at the things unseen should effect an alteration in our whole business as well as private life. Our work or labor should be performed with eternity written over it. While others are laboring with this world as their goal, it is ours to prove our heavenly citizenship by separation from the world's ways and means, even though it bring, as it will, the world's laughter and money loss.

We should seriously examine ourselves, and find out if we are seeking our own ends in life, and resolutely determine by the grace of God that for us to live shall be Christ.

But this spirit of freedom from the world and consciousness of eternity can only be obtained by personal communion with our blessed Saviour. Only as we are often in His presence, only as we meditate on His dying love, only as we are conscious of His being with us moment by moment, shall we look at the things not seen, which are eternal.

How difficult sometimes it seems to realize what it means, and yet how near it is continually being shown to be. This year with its terrible record of sudden catastrophes and loss of life—the sudden precipitation into eternity of hundreds of people—ought to act as an incentive for all believers to live more and more as seeing Him who is invisible.

We must show to the world by our conduct, that our life that is hid with Christ in God is just as real—nay, far more so—as the life that is earthly : by that I mean that with us eternal things are real

issues and exert a real influence over our life, just as carnal things that can be seen are real to the unbeliever.

What a testimony to the power of a personal God is a holy life ! Education, culture, refinement, and training all fail completely to make a man *holy*. It requires nothing less than the power of God to make a saint. What a proof to a dying, unbelieving and scoffing world of His reality.

What a testimony to the blood of the Lord Jesus ! For nothing less than a realization of all sin forgiven and an entrance into the heavenlies effected, could give such peace and joy here, and hope for the future.

And what a witness to the keeping power of the Spirit of God, who alone amidst the deceitfulness of sin could keep the believer looking unto Jesus and show him the mind of His Lord ; who in the darkest hour can bring a ray of light, can smooth the rough paths, and enable the believer to say, "Thy will be done," after the fiercest trial.

It is our privilege then to be living epistles, known and read of all men, and to follow in the steps of Him whose meat and drink was to do His Father's will.

It is our duty to point sinners to the Lamb of God who alone taketh away sin, and who only can enable the soul to escape the fearful eternal doom which will be pronounced after the shadows of time have given way to the realities of eternity.

S. J. P.

"THINKETH NO EVIL."

THIS is a mark, a fruit of love, and where there is suspicion, evil surmisings, the first love has dimmed, its energy has been left, and evil is coming in. The first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians v. 22, is "love," and love thinketh no evil. Now among the people of God Satan is ever laboring to bring about the opposite of this, seeking to lead Christians to think evil one of another. And it would be far better for them to know the danger, and guard against it, than to be led into soul destroying suspicion and other sins. It is not the Holy Spirit which we have of God which leads us to watch our fellow believers, to see evils in them, to suspect evil where we do not see it, to attribute to them wrong motives, desires and aims. Remember this, and that all this vile brood are works of the flesh, are the old nature acting within us.

Love does not lead to any such feelings or uprisings from within. When it sees failure in others, it loves, pities, prays for the failing ones, is sorry for them, and carries them to the Lord. There is no rejoicing in the finding of evil in another, no publishing it abroad, but in humbleness confessing it to God.

It is a fact that a great deal of the trouble which arises among the real people of God originates in thinking evil where there is none, or in thinking there is much more that is wrong than there really is. In other words, a lack of the love that thinketh no evil is the root from which many of the evils which afflict gatherings of believers spring. Whether there are two or two hundred or more children of God, they

need to watch lest love ceases to burn brightly, and suspicion takes the place of true brotherly love. How often lack of true love has embittered the relations between two laborers who have been led to go out into the work together.

All saved ones need to recognize the danger of this, need to realize that the allowing of surmising, dwelling upon the failings and faults of others, talking about them, throwing out innuendoes, making disparaging remarks concerning those who are the children of God, all these are steps downward, steps away from the light and love of God, and that it is often from such beginnings that the greatest troubles among Christians arise.

We need to fear and hate all these actings of the flesh in ourselves, to go to the Lord for grace to deliver us from them. We need to have the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ always before us, the love that shone out in all His blessed life amid all the sad scenes through which He passed on His way to the cross. Love is to be without dissimulation, is to be humble and lowly, we are to ever esteem others better than ourselves. We need to be so very careful lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble us, and thereby many be defiled. Love is the remedy for so many of the evils which afflict believers, and love is of God. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Let us remember that we may leave our first love, and that one of the symptoms of our having left it is the harboring suspicions against those who are the Lord's.

J. W. N.

“STRENGTH begins from within. We first have the loins girded about with truth, the breast covered with righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, etc., and then we can take—our only offensive weapon—‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ There is nothing more dangerous than to use the Word when it has not touched my conscience. I put myself into Satan’s hands if I go beyond what I have from God, what is in possession of my soul, and use it in ministry or privately. There is nothing more dangerous than the handling of the Word apart from the guidance of the Spirit. To talk with saints on the things of God beyond what I hold in communion, is most pernicious. There would be a great deal not said that is said, were we watchful as to this, and the word not so used in an unclean way. I know of nothing that more separates from God than truth spoken out of communion with God. There is uncommon danger in it.”

J. N. D.

THE “occupation” of the Church ought to be constant, incessant reference to its Head. If its Head is not its first thought (and that is shown in thinking of its Head, and filling itself into all the thoughts and mind and affections of its Head), it cannot act for Him. This is its grand occupation. “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” I must get through the crowd of Satan’s power, and I must get beyond the crowd to my Head who is the only source of power. We should seek that kind of communion with the saints which living in spirit with the Head gives. We should get all who hear to join in the cry (Rev. xxii. 17). So should the Church have its own light, that all that is outside would be shut out. The

apostle was living in a world of his own—he was filled with ideas of his own; but they were God's ideas, and he had power. It is not knowing the scene I have to act in that gives me power (we get no strength from the contemplation of that), but intercourse and living communion with the Head. We should get near enough to Christ to enjoy Him, and to know Him truly, and to gather up all that is like Him. If not separated by affection from the world, we shall be separated by discipline in the world. He will vex our souls to get us separate, if in spirit and in heart we are not separate. "Because thou servedst not Jehovah thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart . . . therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies which Jehovah thy God shall send against thee."

J. N. D.

"God and the word of His grace are the refuge of His people. They can meet together, and Christ will be in their midst; they can profit by the gifts He has granted according to His promise. The rules for our walk are contained in the Word; but the apostleship, as a personal energy watching over the organization of the assembly, has disappeared, leaving no succession behind it.

This is a solemn truth, which must be well borne in mind. But we must never forget that Christ is always enough for the assembly; that He is faithful in His care of it, and that He can never fail in strength, in love, or in faithfulness. What we have to do is to count on Him, and that with purpose of heart. Divine power is manifested more in Elijah and Elisha than in all the prophets of Jerusalem from the time of Moses himself. The Lord gives what is needful to His people."

J. N. D.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 9.—Please explain Luke vii. 28, which says of John the Baptist “He that is the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.” It has been said that the least in the Kingdom refers to Christ.

ANS.—We could not speak of our Lord as being *in* the Kingdom, for He is the head of it. Most assuredly we could not speak of Him as least, who is over all things. The passage is very simple when we see the connection. Our Lord was speaking of position and privilege, not of personal character. So far as holiness and personal character were concerned, there was not a greater born of woman than John. But he was connected with the old dispensation, the earthly kingdom of Israel, though it was in ruins. He was the last of the prophets, and marked the close of that period of trial, before Christ. He was also the immediate forerunner of our Lord, and the herald of His Kingdom. But he was not in the Kingdom, for the reason that it was not then established. When our Lord departed, after His rejection, His Kingdom was set up. The privileges of Christianity are immeasurably above all that preceded it. Therefore the least in this dispensation has greater privileges than the prophets and kings before Christ. It is not the Church that our Lord speaks of, but the blessings of Christianity, as we might term it.

QUES. 10.—In Matt. xli. 40, it is said our Lord was to be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” If He was crucified on Friday, and rose on the first day of the week, He was only two nights in the grave. How is this to be understood?

ANS.—All through Scripture we have foreshadows of our Lord’s resurrection. The case of Jonah mentioned in the immediate context is but one example of the use of the term, “three days,” “the third day,” etc. Of course, it is not the question of so many hours, but the spiritual significance and connection that is important. The Jewish method of computing time was this,—to-day, to-morrow, the third day. (See Luke xlii. 32, 33.) So the expression, “three days and three nights,” is simply another way of saying our Lord was to be raised on the third day. It is literally true if we count, as the Jews did, each fraction of

a day as a full day, that is, a day and a night. Thus the evening and morning in Gen. i. made a full day. So here the Lord was to be three days in the tomb. It can be counted as follows: part of Friday, called the first day and night (really but the afternoon of Friday); Friday night and Saturday, the second day and night (this one complete); third, Saturday night and the early dawn of the Lord's day, the third day and night. Of course in our phraseology this would not be done, but it was well understood by those to whom our Lord spoke, and was the usage of Scripture.

The reason for His rising on the third day is beautiful and simple. The first day saw the deed done, the second bore witness to its reality, and the third, the day of manifestation, showed all the power of God.

QUES. 11.—In Luke v. whom does the Lord mean by "sons of the bridechamber"? When are the days when they shall fast? Also what is the connection between that and what He says about patching an old garment? In John iii. 29 the Baptist speaks of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom; as he does not speak of the Church, why does he not include himself?

ANS.—The Bridegroom is, of course, our Lord. The sons of the bridechamber are not distinguished from the bride, who is not mentioned here. The presence of our Lord made it impossible for piety to mourn; that would have been formalism and a pretense. But after His rejection they would indeed mourn; "ye shall weep and lament." And this is the attitude and state of those who are now waiting for our Lord to come. They mourn an absent Bridegroom. It is not a dispensational statement, though the sons of the bridechamber were Jews, and after our Lord was taken away they were Christians.

He goes on next to speak of a new order, in which the old bottles of Jewish formalism would be set aside for the new thing, the church, or the new creation, which would be a silted vessel for the new wine of the Spirit.

When John the Baptist calls himself the friend of the Bridegroom, he does not mean to exclude himself from Israel, the earthly bride, but to emphasize the fact that Christ is the Bridegroom, and that He is all. John was but the voice speaking of and pointing to Him. That was his official position; personally he was part of Israel. He will however, with all the Old Testament saints, have his place at the marriage supper of the Lamb, as one of those called to witness the union of the heavenly bride, the Church, with her Lord.

“YOUR LACK OF SERVICE.”

(Phil. ii. 25-30.)

THE character of Epaphroditus, of whom we have a glimpse in the passage referred to, is singularly beautiful and attractive. The apostle uses the strongest language of commendation in speaking of him : “my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants.” He thus was associated with Paul in his labor, fully identifying himself with the “prisoner of the Lord,” and working with all the vigor of “a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” He was evidently not only a man of energetic spirit, but of marked sympathy and gentleness as well, a combination only too rare among the saints. So completely did he throw himself into the Lord’s work, venturing his own life, that, humanly speaking, he seemed about to pay the penalty for what the world calls intemperate, rash zeal. But in the mercy of God he was raised from his sickness. His tender spirit had longed for the saints at Philippi, and was grieved that they should be made anxious as to his welfare. In sending him back, Paul says, “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.”

There is no rebuke necessarily implied in these these last words. The same expression is found where it would be impossible to so understand it. “That which is behind of the afflictions of Christ,” could only mean afflictions still to be endured for the sake of the Church, Christ’s body. (Col. i. 24.) The

apostle testifies that they had been careful to minister to him, but had "lacked opportunity" (Phil. iv. 10). Epaphroditus, as their representative, was doing their work, because they lacked the opportunity to do it.

There is always need of this vicarious service. In one sense all service is vicarious. Every member of the body of Christ with his gift is but the representative of the whole body. It is the *body*, by the effectual working in the measure of every part, that makes increase of itself, unto the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. iv. 16.)

But apart from this general identification of all the members in service, there is a special unity when the saints are sharers in the labor of those with whom they are specially identified. Thus an evangelist goes forth in his service from the bosom of an assembly, upheld by their prayers and sustained by the temporal support and practical sympathy of those whom he has left behind. They feel that in one sense *they* are preaching through him, that he is supplying what is lacking in their service, because of their absence. Without doubt this is a most important and interesting feature of the Lord's work; may there be an increased realization of the privilege of thus being identified with ministry done through another.

Perhaps it may be as well to apply this while it is fresh in our minds. Where and how are the saints being identified with the work in the gospel? If an evangelist labors at a place, naturally there is the fellowship of prayer and interest in his work. But should it cease there? What, then, of the "regions beyond"? Are *we*, dear brethren, preaching through others in the dark places of the earth? Thank God

for all there is of this, but surely we need to exhort one another to increased zeal. Think of the foreign work, of the dark places of ignorance in so-called Christian lands. Is some Epaphroditus at work there as our representative, supplying our lack of service? Or, alas, is there but the "lack of service," without the supply? We do well to say that service is an individual thing, and that none should venture to enter upon a path unless he is assured of the Lord's call and support. But does He not call *all*, in one way or another, to His service? and is it not when a whole company of Christians is aroused, that He calls forth the individuals? Witness the call of Barnabas and Saul (Acts xiii.) from the bosom of the Assembly at Antioch, and where prayer and fasting showed the intensity of the interest in the things of God.

But we will return to something perhaps even more needed than what has been said. The apostle did not intend to intimate, as we have seen, that the saints at Philippi had been derelict in their duty, quite the reverse. But do not these words, "your *lack* of service," suggest for us, perhaps, in their form at least, something that is more than lack of opportunity?

Let us begin with the word of God. We rejoice to see one gifted in expounding its treasures to us and are perhaps quite content to let him continue to do so, without the thought entering our mind, that *we* also should be exploring those mines of wealth for ourselves. It was a rebuke the apostle gave to the Hebrews, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again." He did not mean that they should dispense with

teachers, but rather that they should be increasing their number. How many of the saints of God are original explorers in His word? Lack of knowledge? lack of ability? Ah, beloved, may be it is lack of *heart*. What losers we are thus. A few plod along, and are richly rewarded by what they find; while the many are content to take all they get at second hand, losing thus the great blessing of the exercise that is needful for searching the scriptures, and forgetting that "in *all labor* there is profit." It is not a question of gift, but of hunger for the word of God, and of diligence in making it our own. The teacher will always have his place, and be far more useful and far more appreciated when all the saints are diligent students for themselves.

The same may be said as to the gospel. *Do we love souls?* We may not be evangelists, but we can point sinners to Christ. Without doubt, there will not be a genuine, widespread work of salvation apart from the interest, prayers and labors of the individual saints. Here is a work all can engage in. How much are we doing for the perishing around us? May we not confess to much "lack of service" here?

We come to a simpler matter yet, where there is a woful lack, and about which we should be constantly exhorting one another. We have been speaking of service which requires, not exactly gift, but activity. Let us speak of what requires only a sense of need. We all know the need of prayer, in our closets first of all, but everywhere. "I will that the men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii. 8). Who can conceive of a Christian who does not pray in private? Would not all resent the very thought? But, beloved brethren, who can think of the Christian who does not have

family prayer, or who can think of his not praying in public?

Let us suffer a word of exhortation. It should be just as impossible to think of a brother never praying in private, as never doing so in public. We do not wish to put one another under law, still less to force to a meaningless form, but neither of these is necessary. Surely the Spirit of God must lead, but who dare say He will not lead all brothers to pray in public? Is it said one may not be in communion, and so not be in a fit state to pray? Then the large majority of the brothers must be out of communion. No, dear brethren, we are persuaded that those who remain silent have an equal privilege and responsibility with those whose voices are heard in public!

Here is the meeting for remembering our Lord, when every heart should be attuned to His praise. Is it right that all audible worship should be laid upon the few? Here are twenty brothers, and the voices of ten are never heard in a single word of thanks. Is that pleasing to the Lord? As a result it gets to be almost understood that "the praying brethren" are a limited few. The same ones are heard, week after week, with but little variation. If these are silent, there is too often the barren pause, which occupies saints with one another, until one feels that it is more honoring to the Lord to break the silence and supply some one's lack of service.

Is this overdrawn? does it sound bitter? God forbid that we should accuse one another, but is there not a cause? There is danger on all sides, surely, and a restless* activity of any or all is to be

* That feature is treated in an article entitled "I Forced Myself," in the February number of the current year, p. 29.

guarded against. But is there not a great danger lest we lose that which should be the characteristic of the meetings of Christians? A real freedom of worship, in the fear of God, a fulness in prayer, so that it is expected that each brother will be heard with greater or less frequency—surely this is not too much to expect.

We can prune a growing tree, we can guide a boat in motion, but growth is necessary for pruning, and motion for steering. So where there is activity and readiness to engage in prayer and praise, there will doubtless be need for a wholesome word of check here and there, and a sense of dependence upon the Spirit of God in all. But let us awake, nor be content with a modified clerisy, where all prayer and praise is in the hands, unwillingly enough, of a few.

It may be asked, What is the remedy for this silence on the part of many? Undoubtedly there must be a walk with God, and a feeding upon His word. There must be the habit of secret prayer, or surely public prayer will be a mockery. Above all, there must be a desire for what we ask. How empty is formal prayer! But we all need to be reminded of that.

Some do not pray in public because of timidity or diffidence. But is not that the fear of man and pride? We do not pray because we cannot do as well as others! How ugly it looks upon paper! But let us be honest. The secret of dealing with God is reality. Let us come to Him with confession, acknowledging our emptiness and our pride, or whatever we know hinders us. Let us open our mouths wide to tell Him our emptiness, and He will soon fill them with prayers and thanksgivings.

Nor let us forget that this reticence is not a matter to be overcome at once, or by occasional participation in prayer. We must "strike the ground five or six times," if we are to have entire victory. The Lord awake His beloved people.

JESUS THE FOOD OF HIS PEOPLE.

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John vi. 27).

THESE words were spoken by the Lord Himself when here on earth, in connection with the feeding of the five thousand. He had taken the five barley loaves and the two fishes from the lad—everything speaking of weakness and insufficiency—and with them had fed the multitude. Wondrous was the love as well as the power expressed. The life given was also the life sustained. Our Lord is both the source and supply of the life He imparts. "The gift of God is eternal life *in (Gk.)* Christ Jesus our Lord." Hence He is presented to us as the Bread of Life. How precious is this thought: we are not only His workmanship, but the objects of His constant care; not only born of God, but nourished constantly by the same hand that gave us being.

Let us turn for a little to the table which He spreads for us in the presence of our enemies (Ps. xxiii. 5), and view the bounty of Him who is ever the liberal Giver, not only supplying our need, but ministering most fully to our joy as well. As we feed upon this "bread of the mighty," we can hear Him saying, "Eat, O friends: drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song v. 1).

1. The Roast Lamb. (Ex. xii. 1-13.) In the house

sheltered by the sprinkled blood of the Passover Lamb we see a table furnished for those who had just been delivered from wrath and judgment. Their food was to be the roast lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs. When in the darkness and degradation of slavery, their food had been "the leeks, melons, onions and garlick." But now they have been delivered, not only from the curse, but from the ways of Egypt—all is changed, and their sustenance is changed with the rest :

"God thine everlasting portion,
Feeds thee with the mighty's meat;
Price of Egypt's hard extortion,
Egypt's food no more to eat."

It need not be said that the Lamb points to our Lord Jesus. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The lamb was roast with fire. It was not to be eaten raw, nor sodden with water. This reminds us that Jesus, the blessed One whom the believer knows, loves and feeds upon, was the One who bore His people's sins when He was slain upon the cross, and there endured not only death, but the wrath of God's judgment, the fire. Before He could be the food of His people, He must let this fire of judgment come upon Him. Thus forgiveness, peace and joy are the known portion of those who by faith feed upon Him.

The unleavened bread is what accompanies the roast Lamb, and gives its name to the whole feast—the feast of unleavened bread. A separate life of holiness is the fitting accompaniment of such redemption. The bitter herbs remind us of that "broken and contrite spirit" never despised by God, and without which even the roast lamb would be savorless.

So true is it that pride, self-sufficiency or worldliness deprive us of all appreciation of Christ as our food. "Salt is good."

They fed upon this in Egypt—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday;" they fed upon it also in the wilderness (Num. ix.)—Jesus Christ the same to-day; they fed upon the same when they crossed Jordan and entered the land—Jesus Christ the same forever.

2. The Manna: This bread from heaven was the suited food for the people of God in their wilderness journeyings. (Ex. xvi.) In it we see the same Jesus as was foreshadowed by the Lamb, but now as the One who came down to earth and trod the desert sand, entering into all the circumstances of His people's life—apart from sin. Having gone over the whole path, well acquainted with it as Man, and having glorified God in it, He becomes the suited food for His people. They look back at the path He trod, His lonely separation to God, His faithfulness under all circumstances, and they find Him their stay, delight and strength. So precious was this life to God—a life never to be separated from His atoning death—that the memorial of it is ever before Him. They laid up a pot of the manna to be carried over Jordan, and laid up in the ark for a perpetual memorial. Thus Jesus has passed through the Jordan of death, and entered the Canaan of Heaven, and there is laid up as the food of His faithful overcomers. (Rev. ii. 12.)

3. The Old Corn. We have here the same Jesus, but not as the Lamb enduring the fire of God's judgment, nor as the humbled One walking this earth, as in the Manna; we see Him now in heaven, His own native place. (Josh. v. 11.) This is where Saul

of Tarsus first saw Him (Acts ix.), and this is where we all now behold Him: "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. ii. 9). As we look upon Him there, in the light and glory of heaven, where sin, care and gloom are forever banished, we feed upon Him by faith as the "Bread of Heaven." Already we are there in spirit, and are strengthened to war a good warfare against the hosts of evil that would prevent our enjoyment and possession of our portion. In a little while we will not feed by faith, but by sight, and in heaven itself will find Christ the delight and joy of our hearts.

4. The Meal-Offering. Here we get fresh and broader lessons. (Lev. ii.) Volumes might be written on this subject, and the world could not contain the books that would be written. (Jno. xxi.) 'The first portion of the Meal-Offering belonged to God. Who can measure the delight which the Father finds in His beloved Son? The portion for God was placed upon the altar, and ascended as a sweet savor to Him. "Thou art My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight."

The next portion was for the priestly family, who partook of it inside the sacred enclosure, the court, feeding upon that which had also been offered to the Lord. Thus God and His people alike feed upon the same blessed Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is communion, where the same object is the delight of God's heart and the joy of the saints too. Truly they are a holy and a royal priesthood.

The fine flour was mingled with oil, and in this we get a glimpse of the wondrous truth of the incarnation. That "Holy One," born by the power of the

Holy Spirit, is before us as the object of adoration and worship.

But the meal-offering was also anointed with oil, and this directs our view to Him as emerging from His life of quiet and retirement, and coming forth to take His place in public ministry among men. At His baptism by John the Holy Spirit comes upon Him, and He is anointed. As we behold Him in the manger, we feed upon Him ; as we follow Him through His life of service, listening to every word, marking every action, we feed also at the table so bounteously furnished with the choicest fare. Who can exhaust the theme ? where can we put a limit upon the delight of heart with which we dwell upon Him ?

In this connection we will follow the priests of old, and view them during the seven days of their consecration. (Lev. viii., ix.) We will see our place as believers, and our portion in Christ as well. They are washed, clothed, anointed, sanctified and consecrated—their hands filled. They are shut in for seven days, and during this whole time they eat those things wherewith atonement was made. (Ex. xxviii. 33.) What a thought here engages the heart as we contemplate this priestly family, shut in with God seven days, and during the entire period feeding upon that which spoke of atonement ! Shut in with God ! shut out from the world ! and thus feeding upon Christ alone, the One through whom atonement has been accomplished.

At this time Jehovah has His portion—Ex. xxix. 15-25 ; Moses has his—ver. 26 ; and Aaron and his sons have theirs—vers. 27-33. The breast, the shoulder and the unleavened bread are theirs. The breast

speaks of the deep and wondrous love of Christ; the shoulder, of that everlasting strength which bears us up before God and through all the trials and difficulties of our way here; and the unleavened bread, as we have already seen, tells of the separate life of the believer. This is the priests' food day by day until the end. The whole life through it is Jesus, in all His varied characters, and all the perfection of His work.

5. Let us now visit the Father's house (Luke xv.) and see there the Father and His once prodigal son seated at the same table, feeding upon the "fatted calf." This is not the manna, nor yet the old corn. Yet the company is the same—sinners saved by grace and brought to God, and in His presence sharing in His food and witnessing His joy. The strains of the sweet music fill every ear and every heart. The prodigal, once vile and rebellious, now is forgiven, cleansed and clothed with the best robe. Together with his Father he rejoices and feasts. Jesus is the joy of the Father's heart, and Jesus is also the joy and strength of the prodigal's. This will be our portion forever.

6. Let us next taste the "apples" and "wine" (Song ii. 1-7). Here it is a banqueting house, and His banner over us is love. It is communion true and real, of a very high order. Yet the feasters are the same sinners, saved by grace, and the object is the same Jesus, whose name is as sweet ointment poured forth.

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds

And drives away his fear."

As the apple gives refreshment and comfort to the traveler in the east, wearied under the burning sun,

so to the believer none can compare with Jesus. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow, with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." This suggests the sweetness of communion, and its progress as well. We are not only protected, but are led on to further knowledge and enjoyment of our blessed Lord. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. ii. 2, 3). How precious the Holy Spirit keeps Jesus our Lord and Saviour before the heart. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Here the believer can taste, and eat, and drink.

Thus we have Jesus as the food of the soul—as the Roast Lamb, the Manna, the Old Corn, the Meal-Offering, the Fatted Calf and the Apples. All speak to the heart of Him, the delight, the joy and the comfort of His people now and forever. In His banquet hall, the heart is so overpowered by His love that it cries out, "Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." Poor mortal flesh is too weak, its capacity is limited, so that even though redeemed by blood, and in the enjoyment of Christ's love, it is overpowered, and needs a fresh ministry of that love to buoy it up. It is not weary of His love, but overpowered. How good it is to know that there is suitability in Christ for this state, and that the Holy Spirit gives rest and calm in the enjoyment of the Lord, which is expressed in these words, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till she please."

A. E. B.

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

I. THE LONELINESS OF DEPARTURE FROM GOD.

THERE is perhaps no sadder book in the Scriptures than the one called Judges. The darkness is not only intensified by contrast with the brilliant narrative of Joshua, but we are saddened at the thought that the state of things was foreseen by him, and was the result of the people's departure from God, spite of all warning.

Throughout the book, the darkness deepens. At the beginning, there is a crying to God, confession of sin, and recovery in His mercy; but the work of deliverance grows more and more shallow, the deliverers themselves less and less men of faith, until the last deliverer, Samson, himself dies in captivity. The remainder of the book contains the shameful narratives of idolatrous departure from God, and its concomitant corruption of man, with the bloody civil war that well-nigh exterminated an entire tribe. There are glimpses of God's mercy all through, so far as the wretched people would permit Him to show Himself in their behalf, but the tendency of everything is downward and away from the light. Nationally, the people were proving themselves without faith and everything pointed to the necessity of a new order. There was no king in Israel. While later they did have a king, it was only as a type of the true King for whom the nation must yet wait, whose coming shall be as the morning without clouds.

In Ruth we have the bright picture, not of man but of God's grace. It begins, morally, as we shall see, where Judges ends, in departure from God. But

it is a history of mercy all through, mercy beyond all thought, abounding thus in the surprises which mercy delights to give. Historically, it is evidently the link between the times of the Judges and those of the Kings. It gives us the lineage of the man after God's heart, and typically shows how all blessing comes from David's Son.

Primarily, it has to do with Israel; and we shall find that it unfolds clearly the nation's past course, present condition and the way of future blessing. But grace is the same, whether shown to Israel or to the Gentiles; to a nation, or to the individual. It will be found therefore that, while the form is dispensational and national, the lesson can be applied to the individual as well. There is a common life and a common bond that links together all the people of God, in all dispensations. Family traits can be easily distinguished all through. Abraham is our father, and the family of faith is ever marked by the same humility, obedience and dependence that justified him before God and men.

We will find therefore in this book the history of blessing for the soul, as real and profitable for ourselves as for Israel of whom it is directly the type. While seeking to get the lesson in both, we will see the unity in all God's ways of grace.

The narrative begins at Bethlehem - Judah, at a time of famine. The names here, as doubtless throughout the Scriptures, are significant. Bethlehem is "the House of Bread," fittingly the birth-place, long afterward, of Him who as the "Bread of God" came down from heaven to give life to the world. Judah, "praise," is the royal tribe through which in grace the "King" was to come. Praise

ever flows from a knowledge of the fulness of blessing which is ours in Christ. Thus food and worship are intimately connected—Bethlehem is in Judah. And it is most natural to find them linked thus together: "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Ps. cxxxii. 15, 16).

It seems a strange contradiction to have a famine at Bethlehem. If there is no food at the "house of bread," where can it be found? And yet famines are not unknown in God's land. Abraham found one in his day, and so did Isaac. The character of the country, with its rugged hills and hot climate, without many perennial streams, made it particularly susceptible to drouth. It was dependent upon the periodic rains, and if these failed there was no river, as in Egypt, to take their place. Thus the land was in a marked way dependent upon heaven, which but illustrates the spiritual meaning. Our heritage is a goodly one, none so fertile, and supplying spiritual food in abundance. But it must be in constant intercourse with heaven for this richness to be made good to us.

If then, for any reason, divine blessing is withheld, the house of bread becomes a place of famine. Well do we know that it is not the desire of God that His people should suffer. He is no niggard, and if the rain is withheld, the fault is with His people and not with Him. He had emphasized this for them, so that they well understood that when heaven was "shup up" it was in chastening.

It need hardly be said that for us the withdrawal is on our side, and that if joy and spiritual food and

power fail, we are straitened in ourselves alone. God does not hide Himself, the Spirit is not grieved *away*, but the barrenness and loneliness of soul are just as real as though it were so. Thanks to His grace, the presence of the Spirit with us is a pledge of our recovery to the joy of the Lord.

The famine then was God's call to repentance, and should ever have been so considered. "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain because they have sinned against Thee." Even where there had been no public departure from God, such an affliction should always have brought them upon their faces, in heart-searching inquiry, Why is this?

Further, the saint's walk is not by sight, and God will sometimes test his faith. This seems to have been the reason for the famine in the time of Abraham. God would see whether he had such confidence in His goodness that even a famine could not shake it. Alas, Abraham did as we are all too prone to do; he sought relief from his difficulties, rather than profit from the trial. How true this is with most of us. Is sickness or distress of any kind sent? At once we seek to extricate ourselves from the trouble, rather than to learn the lesson God would teach us. In sickness more attention is given to thoughts of recovery, and to methods of healing rather than to hearing God's voice to us in sickness. Without doubt we should take knowledge of the sickness, and seek also to find relief. But that should not be our first thought.

We should be with God about our sickness, and after bowing under His mighty hand, we may rest assured that He will raise us up. This is not at all a question of so-called faith cure. There is often more

pride in what is called that than in the humble employment of proper means for recovery. God may, and doubtless often does, heal in answer to prayer, and without the use of medicines, just as He often blesses the instrumentalities used. But the point of importance is that recovery is not the first object. What would God have us learn in our sickness? Has there been disobedience for which we are feeling His chastening hand? Or, if there has been no direct act of disobedience, has there been a low, carnal, worldly state, worse than actual outbreking evil? How foolish to expect or want recovery to bodily health before the soul is healed.

So that along with prayerful use of means, or whatever one is led to do for recovery, there should be the ardent, constant prayer, "Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Abraham failed here, and his failure had most disastrous and enduring results. He could not stay in the land and learn his lesson with God, but he must go down into Egypt, at a distance from Him, and there learn by shameful experience what it is to depart from God. May we, dear brethren, be kept from seeking relief in any but God's way.

We have dwelt upon this, for it is of the greatest importance, and explains what follows. No matter what the sorrow, how great the distress, it can never be right or wise to turn the back upon God. Relief can never come in that way. What seems to be that is but the prelude to deeper sorrow.

Moab, as we know, was the child of Lot's sin. Lot was a child of God, who was not content with the

life of obedient dependence upon Him, but had rather go down into Sodom for worldly advantage. Moab represents the results of this departure. It is fitting therefore that the nation springing from him should be typical of mere profession, an outward connection with God without any reality.

This man from Bethlehem, the house of bread, departs into the place of empty formalism. Perhaps the pressing distress was relieved for the moment, but at what a cost! the death of himself and his two sons. But let us look a little closely at what is here.

The man's name was Elimelech, "My God is King." He figures Israel under the benign government of God. What a blessed relationship, had there been faith to recognize it. Alas, the nation soon grew weary of the holy government of God, and desired a king "like all the nations." The famine was but part of His government, and should have been accepted as that. Instead, they desired another ruler, and practically forsook their divine King. So it was when Saul was chosen.

The names of the two sons seem to show both the unbelief of the father and the results of God's chastening. Instead of giving them names suggesting His goodness and love, the parents fasten upon them that which was but a temporary cloud, and thus render it permanent by their unbelief, and prophetic of the final and sorrowful culmination.

Naomi, "pleasant," reminds us of those ways of wisdom which are that. Had the nation but remained in subjection to God, how pleasant would all have been. The very trials would have but sanctified them and brought them into a fuller knowledge of His love, holiness and care. But alas, they will not

learn in that way. "Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, . . . behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many" (Isa. viii. 6, 7). Because the nation would not remain in subjection, they must be given up to the enemy.

Elimelech dies. What else could there be for one who turns his back upon his King? When Israel turned from God, it gave Him up, and that, so far as relationship with Him was concerned, was the end of the nation. It is now, "Lo-Ammi," not my people. Naomi's pleasantness is turned to ashes. The nation has become a widow; God is no longer her King.

But the end has not yet been reached. There has been dreadful chastening but apparently without effect. Instead of turning to God in her affliction, the widowed mother stays on, and sees her two sons form permanent alliances with the enemies of her people, in direct disregard of God's prohibition. Evidently there is no remedy, no hope of recall for those who refuse even to hear the rod; and nothing remains but the final cutting off. Mahlon, "sick," and Chilion, "pining," make good the names which apparently had described the state of their parents' hearts, long before. Their faith had been a sickly, pining thing before any outward sign of declension was visible, and now death puts its seal upon the unbelief of long years. The Lord in His mercy keep us, beloved brethren, from such weakness of faith: its end is the bitterness of death.

There seem to have been two stages in Israel's history, answering to the deaths successively of Elimelech and his two sons. The captivity to Babylon would seem to answer to the death of the father, for

the nation was never recognized as the people of God after that. God was not their king, the sceptre had been delivered to the Gentiles. After the seventy years, there was a restoration to the land in some measure; but "Elimelech" was not there. It was but a sickly, pining thing after all, that allied itself with mere pharisaic profession, and after the full period of responsibility had passed, the last vestige of national existence ceased in the destruction of Jerusalem, after the rejection and crucifixion of our blessed Lord.

Such now is the condition of Israel, a widow, hopeless and desolate, an alien from the home of her youth and from her God. The witness of her departure from God is seen in her Gentile daughters-in-law. So now the very existence of a Jewish people, scattered among the Gentiles, is a solemn witness that God has been forsaken by them, that they have no further claim upon Him. It is a widowed, desolate nation.

We need hardly speak of the application of all this to the individual soul. Alas, it is only too common, this declension from God in soul, and settling down into mere formalism. Christian parents have to mourn the spiritual death of children, who after all are but the reflection of their own hearts. There is no peace and no safety save as we abide near to God.

Are you alone, dear reader? Have you lost the joy of God, and wandered into distance from Him? Pause and ask why it has all been. Go back to the time when your heart first became dissatisfied with God and His government, and there you will find the root of all your sorrow. Do you mourn that your children are unconverted? Ask yourself if their

state is not the result of your own sickly, pining faith. If you are a widow, let there be the widow's tears, the widow's heart-break. There is still One who is the Husband of the widows.

(To be continued, if the Lord please.)

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

(Read John xiv. 2, 3, 28; xvi. 5, 7; xvii. 11, 13; Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9-11.)

THE Ascension of Christ is so closely identified with His resurrection, and His resurrection with His death, that we can but begin our meditations at Calvary. It is written in Luke xxiv. 26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And then in Rom. iv. 25, "Who was *delivered for our offenses*, and was *raised again for our justification*." Also Heb. iv. 14, "Seeing, then, that we have a great High-Priest, who is *passed into the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

From these and many other scriptures we learn that man, being a sinner, is estranged from God—an enemy of God by wicked works, under His wrath and judgment; and ere God could be reconciled, a propitiatory offering *must* be made,—not the sacrifices of beasts, the blood of bulls, goats, or lambs, in which God could not take pleasure; but by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 19).

God be praised that we have not only a sacrifice that He can and has accepted to atone for the *guilt* of our sins; and also the resurrection of the same to

assure us that we are *justified* in the sight of God, as a proof that God has accepted our sacrifice; but what is necessary to the complete manifestation of the work of redemption—the *Ascension* of our precious Saviour and Lord. He must needs ascend, in that He must needs go into the holiest,—not as of old, like Aaron, with “the blood of goats and calves; but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal* redemption for us” (Heb. ix. 12).

Thus, He is not only the sacrifice, “of a sweet savor unto the Lord,” a unique sacrifice, once for all, “by one offering perfecting forever, them that are sanctified” (Heb. x. 14); but He is also our High-Priest before God; not to continue in office for a few short years and then pass away as did the Aaronic priesthood, but a Priest after the order of Melchizedek,—a *perpetual* priesthood—“without father, without mother, without descent (or pedigree), having neither beginning of days nor end of life; . . . the Son of God; abideth a Priest *continually*” (Heb. vii. 3),—a King and a Priest.

When we consider our weakness, frailty, and proneness to sin, how needful is our Mediator! “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation or (mercy-seat) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 Jno. ii. 1, 2, R. V.)

With such “precious blood,” with such a complete sacrifice, “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” with such a heavenly, eternal Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, how we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! what profound peace should be ours!

How triumphantly does the apostle Paul treat of this subject (or rather the Holy Spirit through him) when he says (Rom. viii. 31-34), "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

We thus see that the ascension of Christ is a most important part of God's plan in His actings in our behalf. But there is a necessity of His ascension upon which we have not yet touched, and which indeed ought to have preceded what we have been saying. It will be found in the words of our Lord in John xvi. 7, 8—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."

In these words we find the necessity to consist of a Comforter, a Teacher, a Guide for God's redeemed people; and also a Reprover of the world, a Convincer of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. This was mightily exemplified in the apostle's ministry, in that "as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled" (Acts xxiv. 25). It was the Holy Spirit who spoke with such power by the apostle;—yea, throughout his ministry, we find him a suited vessel through whom the Holy Spirit could speak to the comfort

and consolation of God's people, and to the rebuke of iniquity and convincing of sin of the world.

Blessed was the personal presence of our Lord with His disciples ; but His holy, spotless, and undefiled life on earth could not atone for sin nor justify the sinner-confessed. It could only be a standing testimony against sin. A much-abused passage in this connection is found in Rom. v. 10—"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved *by His life*." This has no reference to His spotless, unblemished earthly life, but to His priestly service for us in His resurrection-life above. Also ver. 19—"For as by one man's [*i. e.*, one act of] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One [or, one act of Christ's obedience unto death on Calvary's cross] shall many be made righteous." It is a mistake to suppose that Christ's personal righteousness is imputed to us, but He Himself is made unto us *God's* righteousness. (See 1 Cor. i. 30.) This is a distinction with quite a difference.

He must needs die on the cross under the judgment of God if our guilt is to be removed. He must needs rise from the dead the third day if the sinner-confessed is to be justified. He must needs ascend to the right hand of the Father, and take His rightful place as our High-Priest, Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, that the justified one may be carried safely through the dangers and intricacies of this world—"kept by the power of God." He must needs ascend if the Holy Spirit is to do His part of God's purposes concerning this world.

But still there is another most blessed truth, so closely linked with His ascension that it is important

to remember. You will find it embodied in the words of our Lord in John xiv. 3—"If I *go* and prepare a place for you, I will *come again*, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This precious fact for God's people calls forth a word of comfort from the Comforter—"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 18).

This indeed is a wonderful cheer to the Church, espoused to Him in the night-time of His absence, and the long-anticipated event (though not understood) of all the rest who shall have part in the first resurrection (see Heb. xi. 10, 14, 16, 39, 40). Such are called "blessed and holy" in Rev. xx. 6, for they shall dwell in the New Jerusalem, which the Holy Spirit says is "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. xxi. 9, 10).

Such, then, for the heavenly people, is the culmination of the work of redemption by Him who came and delighted to do the Father's will.

But we have still another aspect of His coming, as expressed in Acts i. 11—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." And then again we read Rev. i. 7, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen." Both these passages refer, not to His coming to meet His espoused bride in the air, as set forth in 1 Cor. xvi. 51-57 and 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, but His after-coming to earth as set forth in Zech. xii. 10 and Matt. xxv. 31. Thus we see again the need of His ascension in order that He, the despised and rejected

One, might be vindicated by God as the Man of His choice—the Man whom He delighteth to honor,—yea, He “hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. ii. 9–11).

“All hail the power of Jesu’s name;
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!”

What glorious truths we find thus linked together in close proximity to the ascension of Christ! May God grant that His redeemed people may delight to meditate upon them.

R. S.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 12.—In what sense are we to understand the three solemn illustrations at the close of Luke xiv., the Tower, the King, and the Salt. What does their connection with the parable of the great supper on the one hand and the three parables of Luke xv. on the other, teach?

ANS.—The parable of the great supper emphasizes the freeness of the gospel, going out to the world at large after its rejection by the nation of Israel. It further shows how the invitation is given freely to all, without regard to their condition. What is emphasized is the freeness and universality of the gospel.

In the fifteenth chapter it is not the offer of grace to the sinner depending, as it were, upon his acceptance or rejection of it, but grace is seen seeking after the lost. It is more divine sovereignty, coupled with effectual exercise in those wrought upon. The activity of the Shepherd’s love in seeking the lost sheep, until He find it, shows the persistence of a love that had

to go to death before it could get the objects of its search. There is nothing left to the sheep; it is found, and carried safely home by the seeking Shepherd. In a similar way the lost piece of money is found by sovereign diligence. Here it is the Spirit's work. The prodigal shows the exercises of a soul in whom grace has wrought, and here it is also effectual.

Coming between these two aspects of the gospel, the illustrations of our Lord are of solemn warning to those who, in a careless unexercised way, make profession. Alas, what multitudes now, as in our Lord's day, follow Him outwardly, but not really. To such the threefold warning should come in solemnizing power.

The tower suggests, among other things, that prominence which every professor has—a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Can the professor erect such a structure in his own strength, something that will last, and withstand the attacks of the enemy? The King is evidently here an enemy. It may be the "prince of this world," or possibly that greater King who will come forth to meet His enemies. Has the professor, in either case, strength to withstand the assaults of the King? Surely in neither case if he has nothing but a mere profession. In that case he is as salt without savor, to be cast out as utterly worthless. It is practically the warning as to Laodicea, a lukewarm, savorless profession, without exercise and without reality.

The gospel is known and preached with greater or less clearness in our day, particularly as to its freeness. Men are not much troubled with doubts, and it is to be feared have but small feeling of the intense solemnity of these great questions. Far be it from us to cast a shadow upon faith that is real, even though it be weak. But this careless ease which brings people into the sphere of profession without new birth, is a thing to be spoken of most plainly. The work of the evangelist must be largely to bring home to men the awful fact that they are lost, condemned already, and but waiting for the eternal doom soon to be theirs, unless they turn to Christ. When sinners are "pricked in their heart" they will not despise or lightly esteem the gospel of peace.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

I. THE PRESENT OUTLOOK ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE.

IN looking out upon the features of our own times, and even in proportion to our personal interest in them, we are apt to project our own personalities upon them. That a sanguine person will take a hopeful view, where a desponding one will only see gloom and shadow, no one needs to be informed. But every idiosyncrasy, whatever it may be, is quite apt to make its mark upon the canvas of the picture. Hence the taking of one in a manner perfectly trustworthy is a thing as rare as it is desirable. How thankful should we be, therefore, for the briefest testimony of Scripture as to the character of the times through which we are passing, when it is the pathway for our feet that is in question, and our responsibility to God presses upon us at each step we take!

Such guidance we have, through the tender mercy of our Great Shepherd, in the seven epistles of the book of Revelation; every one traced by His own hand, and our attention called to every address, as in no other part of the word of God: he that hath an ear being bidden to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches! We are not going to dwell upon this now: the application has been long familiar to those for whom I am specially writing; but I would nevertheless press upon my readers the main points of that to Philadelphia, which (to myself at least) seems ever of more commanding interest as the time goes on, and the features of the last days develop themselves before our eyes.

There can scarcely be much difficulty in discerning what Philadelphia stands for. If the "woman Jezebel" makes popery absolutely plain in Thyatira, Sardis, having a name to live, though dead, yet with a remnant undefiled, marks out as clearly the state-churches of the Reformation. Philadelphia, following this, with its "brotherly love," as simply speaks of the movement to find and to separate the true Church out of this world-mass. Such has been more or less the character of many "revivals" since the Reformation, when there was sought a true "communion of saints" and subjection to the word of Christ, rather than the state-upheld creed. Laodicea nevertheless closes the series here; a picture, alas, less and less hard to be read at present, of a church made more and more popular to please the masses, and lukewarm as to the Christ outside. But we have to do now with Philadelphia.

Here, if "brotherly love" characterizes the assembly, that which the Lord specially commends is classed under three heads: first, that they keep Christ's word; secondly, they have not denied His name; thirdly; they have kept the word of His patience. Their danger is that, having but "a little strength," they may not hold fast that which they have; the overcoming will, therefore, be in holding fast.

Of necessity the stream will be against them: that is no more than is implied in every phase in which men are found cleaving to God. The world is against God; and, the world having come into the church, the stream here is against God also. Where shall we find a haven of rest outside of it all? Not in any earthly refuge anywhere. Philadelphia is no place of rest, but the centre of a battle-field; and the cry of

“overcome” is found here as elsewhere. Our rest is only in the glorious Leader, who covers our head in the day of battle, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who can make something out of things that are not, and out of weakness make us strong. Our trust cannot be in the attainment of an ecclesiastical position, though a right one,—in principles of truth, although divine; through all this the enemy made his way at the beginning, when things were almost in their first freshness; no! we need tireless energy to resist fresh inroads; never more likely to be successful than when we are beginning to believe that the battle is over, and that our victories are to be now only in the quiet harvest-field,—in the ingathering of souls from the seed sown by the evangelist, or the recovery of the people of God themselves out of the superstition and error that have inwrapped them. Then indeed it may be that, while we are congratulating ourselves that we are leaders of the blind, lights of those who sit in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes, the pit of darkness may be opening at our feet, to engulf us all.

A terrible thing it is, in fact, to think of that actual chasm which swallowed up the church of the apostles' days—the church of Peter and John and Paul—and left only as the successor of this the legal, hierarchical, ritualistic church of the so-called “fathers,” of which one well-known to us has said, “It is quite certain that neither a full redemption, nor, though the words be used once or twice, a complete possessed justification by faith, as Paul teaches it, a perfecting for ever by its one offering, a known personal acceptance in Christ, is ever found in any ecclesiastical writings after the canonical scriptures, for long cen-

turies." In what, then, were *they* inferior to us, those men to whom apostles and prophets preached, —what have we that they had not, which is to assure us that we are not in danger of making such shipwreck of the faith as it is certain they did? What but the most foolish self-confidence could say, with such a warning before our eyes, that we were in none?

Nor can we seriously consider the epistle to Philadelphia in connection with the character of the present times, without realizing that Satan's batteries to-day are turned upon the very central points of Philadelphian position; and that we are contemplating the beginning of an apostasy from the Christian faith which will be more complete than any which have preceded it? What is the so-called "higher criticism," spite of its lamblike speech where the flock of Christ perchance may be alarmed, but the most thorough attack that can be imagined upon the Word of Christ? He Himself was hardly beyond His times in matters of criticism; and grounded His triumphant argument against the scribes as to David's Son being David's Lord upon a mere mistake as to the authorship of the hundred and tenth psalm! But, in fact, who knows if the evangelists have rightly reported Him? or who knows anything that the critics may please to question? Judgment is removed from the power of the common man: we have no more our Bibles with the appeal to every man's heart and conscience; you must have trained specialists to settle the facts! and what they will leave you after they have completed their dissections is but the fragments of a corpse without voice or life!

Look again at the denial of Christ's Name! Was there ever a day in which heresies affecting His Per-

son or work more abounded? or the tendency to leave out any particular demand for orthodoxy as to either, so long as people accept Him as their Leader in some way not to be too severely criticized. If you should have mistaken the Son of the Father for a mere servant of the Father's house, eternity will make that right, of course, and it is hoped that the mistake will not prove very serious! After all, the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are the broad lines upon which religions are to be reconstructed to-day; and we need not fear but that they will be found to run on into eternity.

This, it will be said, is outside the sphere of Philadelphia; but it is what infects the air which day by day we breathe, and Satan is the "prince of the power of it." There are plenty of modifications of such principles to ensnare those for whom the full poisonous dose would be too large; and what is even more to be noted is that there are apt to be contradictories and opposites of them, born, indeed, of reaction, which by this opposition may deceive the earnest-hearted. For the serpent's lie is scarcely ever the mere negative of truth; and he is apt himself to have an alternative to it, planned directly to catch the opposers. And he who goes by the safe-seeming rule of steering as far as possible from Scylla may find the enemy's Charybdis lying before him on the other side. With God is perfect guidance; but even with the word of God before our eyes, how far from it may we swerve through the self-will to which we are so prone!

I have no desire to conceal the thought that prompts me in writing the present series of papers, which is to examine in the light of Scripture princi-

ples and doctrines which are being put forth at the present time among those who, I believe, have truly filled a position answering to what the Spirit of God has characterized as Philadelphian, and which are but the enemy's wile to seduce them from it. Nay, I fear, in the wide-spread acceptance which they are certainly gaining, the loss of that precious deposit of truth which the grace of God had committed to their trust. This is, to me, much more than any ecclesiastical position, however true, which owes its value so largely to the truth to which it witnesses. I therefore desire to take up, with whatever ability the Lord may give, the main points that are in question; in which I shall be in large measure but retracing the outline of truths once familiar, once how precious!—only necessarily to put them in connection and comparison with what is now presented for truth, and not without the hope of some fresh light being elicited by the discussion; which is what God would surely overrule all our differences for. We shall try to look at the moral bearing of things; as indeed the one who is very much the cause of the present inquiry rightly presses: without this they cannot get their just value for our souls; and this is what, speaking for myself once more, I can say I desire. Oh that the value of God's truth may be more realized by us all! It is inestimable, as that which alone can form in us the mind of Christ; and as this, one cannot help contending for it, though it is no wonder if one's motives should be challenged, and one should be treated as a mere "accuser of the brethren." Protestations are of no avail in such a case; specially as those who charge this are not those most likely to seek to satisfy themselves if there may be a cause.

One may be well content if there be some who go far enough with me to discern its gravity.

I do not propose, however, to try and establish any specific charges, or make any quotations from any one with regard to what we shall consider. I prefer to leave every one to make for himself the personal application, and thus to eliminate as far as possible the distressing personal element. Let the inquiry be strictly a scriptural one; though it must be along lines which are marked out by what has called forth these papers. Then, if after all one is only fighting a nightmare of the imagination, we shall still not have made, I trust, a wholly useless survey of some important truths. If, on the other hand, it should be found that there is some serious question raised with regard to views that are really current and finding acceptance with many at the present time, then let my readers, without regard to persons, take it into the court of their own conscience, with God alone as the Judge of all, and argue it out there, with all that could distract them put aside. Truth carries its own authority with it for the true; although that in no wise means the setting aside of needed exercise, and the absolute subjection of one's mind to Scripture where Scripture has plainly spoken. And indeed we have little truth, of any spiritual importance, outside of that which Scripture has given to us. We shall by the course pursued be as far as possible delivered from the collision of opinion as to what Mr——has said, or what he means by what he has said, and fasten our minds upon the one question of any prime importance, "What saith the Lord?"

There is, however, one question with which I shall

now conclude. Looking again at the epistle to Philadelphia, and referring to the first two points in the commendation there, they are plainly these: "Thou hast kept My word, and not denied My Name." Serious, then indeed, would be the issue which raised question as to both of these! If there were admittedly a question as to the Person of the Lord plainly raised, and permitted to go at least without any public settlement of it; the thing dropped, perhaps, yet the offending expressions never withdrawn! not justified; not condemned; not retracted! And again, if Scripture, while formally admitted to be the written and authoritative word of God, yet were always in practice distinguished from the "word of God, living and powerful," as that which does not exactly teach, and which, but for the failure of the Church, would never have been needed?

If these two things should demonstrably come together, what more would be needed to show the extreme gravity of the questions to be raised?

F. W. G.

(To be continued.)

WEAKNESS OF FAITH.

THERE are various forms of weakness in the saints. One is weak in mind, and lets any little "wind of doctrine" swerve him from the truth. Another is feeble in dealing with others, in the family or in the assembly. Still another is weak in resisting evil. But whatever may be the form this weakness takes, we may be assured that it is all summed up in one word—weakness of faith. Where faith is in exercise, it links us with God's strength. Nature does not act, and the various forms of weakness to which we are prone will be displaced by the mighty power of God. It will be "not I but Christ." Well do we need to pray, "Lord increase our faith."

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

2. FAITH: ITS SEPARATIONS AND COMPANIONSHIP.

(Vers. 6-18.)

A MORE hopeless condition than that of Naomi could scarce be imagined—bereft of husband and sons, in the land of a stranger and an enemy. And yet how true it is that the darkest hour is that which just precedes the dawn. It was in divine fitness that our Lord should have selected the cock-crowing as the time to mark Peter's denial. It was the darkest hour in his history—he thrice denied his Saviour, Friend, and Lord, with cursing. And yet that awful outburst of evil brought it to the surface, where it could no longer hide behind loud protestations of devotedness. Peter sees himself, nevermore could trust himself, and in that darkest hour is heard the herald of the coming day. So widowed Naomi, in the hour of her desertion, turns in dim faith to the One from whom she had so deeply revolted.

The same is true in the history of the nation's return to God. Typically, it was in the time of famine that Joseph's brethren returned, unconsciously though it be, with confession to the one they had so grievously injured. In the coming day, it will be "in the cloudy and dark day" that the Lord's wandering sheep will be sought out and gathered. In like manner, each soul is recovered by divine grace when all seems darkest, when the evil is brought out into the light.

But the rekindling of faith makes at first but a

feeble flame, with more smoke than light in the flax. It is a selfish motive that induces her to return, much the same as that which stirred the prodigal to turn his face to the father's house: "She had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread," There does not seem to have been any sense of wrong in having left the "house of bread," or of having sinned in turning to the people of Moab. Ah, even our repentance has nothing in it that we can boast of—all is tainted.

This comes out more clearly in her interview with her daughters-in-law. They had accompanied her on her homeward way, with the apparent intention of identifying themselves fully with her future fortunes. Surely faith would have recognized mercy to these daughters of the stranger in this, and have encouraged them to follow. But Naomi was not yet restored in her own soul, and therefore could be no help to others. She urges them to return home, and expresses the hope that they may find rest in the house of a heathen husband! Her own resources, having failed, she thinks God has also failed, and has nothing to put before these to encourage them to seek the Lord.

But such is unbelief, never more evil than in a saint. It can see no hope for others for it sees none for itself, and would even discourage those who would be seeking God. Let the wanderers among God's people beware. If out of communion themselves, they not only suffer individually, but are stumbling-blocks to any who might be seeking the Lord. Alas, how the cold, wretched spiritual state of God's people serves to repel rather than attract the seeking soul. If not in words, at least in de-

meanor and acts, the world is too often given to understand that there is nothing in the things of God to satisfy the cravings of the soul. What else can the distaste for divine things mean, the gloom of soul that speaks from the manner, the evident hunger for worldly pleasure—ah, brethren, let us not think that the world fails to understand all this; it says as plainly as Naomi's words, "Go return each to her mother's house."

But what an awful responsibility is this. Our Lord has left us here as lights in the darkness to attract souls to Himself: what if we by our failure to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" are driving them away? There is but one remedy for this—to be in a state of active communion at all times; then we will attract others to Christ, our very lives will be a witness.

On the other hand, God's sovereignty makes use of all things, and the coldness of Naomi becomes the test of the reality of faith in her daughters-in-law. Without exonerating her, the discouragement she offers brings to light the state of heart of the two. There is evident natural affection in both, in fact Orpah shows more than Ruth. The names of these two are suggestive. Orpah, "her neck," or "her back," suggests the turning away which marked her. She kissed Naomi, but returns to the land of Moab. Ruth does not, so far as we read, kiss Naomi, but she clave unto her. Ruth most probably means, "having a shepherd." Her faith here shows that she is one of the sheep, though a Gentile, who is to be brought into the fold.

Let us now look a little in detail at the meaning of this, first for the nation, and then for the individual.

Naomi represents the widowed nation, Israel according to the flesh. They have lost the relationship to God suggested by the husband's name, "My God is King," and have, as we were seeing, no claim upon Him according to the flesh—all that has been forfeited. The desolate state of the nation is seen in the widow; and in the two daughters-in-law we see the two states that will mark the people after the close of the present or Christian dispensation, when God will again "visit His people."

In Orpah we see the mass of the people quite content for fancied gain to give up all that faith holds dearest, and to identify themselves with the Antichrist: "If another shall come in his own name, him they will receive." They will see no hope for relief of the wretched condition of the people except in one who will link them with the power of the world, and with all the blasphemy and idolatry which will run riot under the "Beast and the false Prophet."

Ruth, on the other hand, represents that remnant of the nation, which will hold fast to the promises of God, in a dim and cloudy way at first, without claiming aught as a right, but distinctly in faith laying hold upon God. This is seen in her answer to Naomi. It is not mere nature, but faith in the living God that speaks in her reply: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee." This was in answer to Naomi's desire, that she should return to her people *and her gods*. It was thus real

faith which made use of the covenant name Jehovah, which expressed itself in Ruth's reply—a faith which had stood the test of having no attraction for nature offered to it.

This will be the state of the believing remnant in the last days. In spite of all opposition and discouragement; in spite of persecution, misrepresentation and loneliness, it will take hold on God, the God of Israel, Jehovah. It will have no worthiness to plead, it will be only an outcast, even as a Gentile. But there will be a living faith, and this at all costs, in life or death, will claim a place with the Israel of God. How precious in His sight will be the faith of that feeble and despised remnant.

The lesson for the individual soul, at the present time, is the same. Faith cannot be turned back, and it ever identifies itself with the people of God. As with the Syro-phœnician woman it cannot be deterred by the prohibitions of disciples or even by the apparent neglect of the Lord. She must have her need met; what is discouragement as compared with that? Such faith is never disappointed, for it has struck its roots in God's own truth. It does not judge according to sight, and when all seems against it, goes forward without dismay.

This faith separates and it unites. We have seen how, when tested, Orpah turned her back upon Naomi and the people of God. This also separated her from her sister-in-law, for they were going in opposite directions. It is ever thus. Faith separated Abraham from home and country, as it did Moses from the dignities and emoluments of Egypt. Even the ties of human affection cannot hold together souls drawn asunder by opposite motives, one going heav-

enward and the other earthward. Of course, they may outwardly walk together, but how far apart are they spiritually. It is impossible to prevent this, and what a mercy that it is. Faith separates.

On the other hand, it unites with all who are walking in the same path. Many things may combine to make this seem difficult: there may be differences of taste and of habits, but if the great fact of a common faith remains, it links together in spite of all else. Those who have "like precious faith," are by that fact united in bonds that nothing else can sever. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

(To be continued, if the Lord please.)

THE PRACTICAL INFIDELITY OF ROMANISM.

I AM greatly confirmed in the conviction, that at the root of Romanism lies infidelity, not of course in the gross form of denying Christianity in its fundamental truths, or the historical basis of Christianity, but in the annulling those truths on which the blessing of the soul depends, or their application to it. It is a sensuous religion; fills the imagination with gorgeous ceremonies, noble buildings, fine music, stately processions. It feeds it with legends and the poetry of antiquity; but it gives no holy peace to the conscience—ease it may, but not peace; and, while accrediting itself with asceticism,* it accepts for the mass of its votaries full association with the world. It holds sin over the conscience as

* "I looked at her," says Dr. N., "her rites, her ceremonial, her precepts, and I said, This is a religion."

a terror, and relieves from that terror by human intervention, so as to put power into man's hand—into the hands of the priesthood. Looked at as a picture, it fills largely the imagination; in practice it degrades. Christianity and (in its true sense, whatever its shortcomings may have been) Protestantism elevate. I shall refer to this last in a moment: it has largely failed in result, but in its nature, as compared with Romanism, it elevates.

Christianity brings us directly, *immediately* to God. Each individual is directly, immediately, in relationship to God,—his conscience before God, his heart confidingly in His presence. Judaism had a priesthood, the people could not go into God's presence. They might receive blessings, offer offerings, celebrate God's goodness, have a law to command them; but the way into the holiest was closed by a veil: "the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest." When the Lord Jesus died, this veil was rent from top to bottom, and "we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." "Having made peace by the blood of His cross." "He suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;" "His blood cleanseth from all sin." Hence the essence of Christianity, as applied to man, is, that the Christian goes himself, directly, personally to God—in Christ's name, and through Christ, but himself, into the holiest, and with boldness. He has by Christ access through the one Spirit to the Father, the Spirit of adoption. This being brought nigh by the blood of Jesus characterizes Christianity in its nature. The holiness of God's

own presence is brought to bear on the soul: "If we walk," it is said, "in the light, as He is in the light,"—yet not as fear, which repels, for we know perfect love through the gift of Jesus. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, that place where the presence of God Himself assures that the confidence of love will be the adoration of reverence while we go forth to the world; that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body, the epistle (as it is said) of Christ. I am not discussing how far each Christian realizes it, but this is what Christianity practically is. He has made us kings and priests to God and His Father. This elevates truly.

Man is not elevated by intellectual pretensions; for he never gets, nor can get, beyond himself. What elevates him is heart-intercourse with what is above him; what truly elevates him is heart-intercourse with God, fellowship (wondrous word!) with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. But, even where the heart has not found its blessed home there through grace, this principle morally elevates; for it at least puts the natural conscience directly before God, and refers the soul, in its estimate of good and evil, personally and immediately to Him. There may be self-will and failure, but the standard of responsibility is preserved for the soul. I do but sketch the great principle on which I insist.

Romanism, wherever it exercises its influence, has closed the veil again. The faithful are not reconciled to God, they cannot go into the holiest, they do not know (as they quote from Ecclesiastes with so false an application) love and hatred by all that is before them; between them and God they have a priesthood and saints and the virgin Mary. Christianity

is a divine work which, through the redemption and life of a heavenly Mediator, has brought us to God; Romanism, a system of mediators on earth and in heaven, placed between us and God, to whom we are to go, and who go for us; we are too unworthy to go ourselves. It sounds lowly this voluntary humility, but it shuts out the conscience from the witness of God's presence; it casts us back on our worthiness, it puts away and denies the perfect love of God as known to us (shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us) through Christ. It repudiates the blessed tender grace of Jesus, that High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We must go to the heart of Jesus through the heart of Mary, they tell us. Surely I would rather trust His, blessed and honored as she may have been and was in her own place. It removes me from God, to connect me immediately with creatures, however exalted, for my heart, and with sinful men, for my conscience, who are to judge of and absolve me. All this is degrading. It is the denial of Christianity, not in its original facts, but in its power and application to man.

A few illustrations of what I mean. They hold the great facts or truths of Christianity—the Trinity, the divinity and humanity of Christ; the atonement, so far as its sufficiency goes (not, however, as effectual substitution); that men are sinners (this also very imperfectly); and the need of regeneration, through they scorn the true force of the word. They hold the inspiration of the scriptures, though they have falsified them, both in adding books which every honest man knows are not genuine scriptures, and in giving a translation as the authentic scriptures. They

own in a general way the personality and agency of the Holy Ghost. My object is not here to state exactly every point, but to say in general that they own the great fundamental facts of Christianity. It is not there that the spirit of infidelity shows itself.

But the moment you come to the application of these facts to men—to their efficacious value, all is lost. The scriptures are inspired, but the faithful are incapable of using them. In vain is it they are addressed by God Himself through the inspired writers to the body of believers—they must not have them but by leave of others. In vain is it that there is a Holy Ghost—He does not so lead and guide individuals as that they can walk in peace and grace, and understand withal His word. They mock at the thought of His dwelling in believers. They bring the divisions and faults of believers to prove He cannot be there; that is, they use man's sin to deny God's goodness and truth, just as infidels do.

Even as to the scriptures their universal question is the same as the infidel's—How do you know them to be the scriptures? Their doctrine is, You must believe in them through the church: that is, the scriptures do not command faith in and by themselves, nor is man guilty if he rejects them, just as the infidel says. God's word must be believed because God has spoken, and for no other reason, or it is not believing *His* word at all. Grace, no doubt, is needed for it, as for everything; but man's responsibility is there, as the Lord said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." They were responsible for not receiving Him, with all ecclesias-

tical authority rejecting Him : so are men as to the Word.

Again, the sacrifice of Christ, they do not deny it. They repeat it in the Mass in an unbloody sacrifice, they say. But scripture says it was accomplished *once for all*, and contrasts it in its efficacy with the Jewish sacrifices, the repetition of which proved that sin was still there. Whereas the sacrifice of Christ, offered once for all, having perfectly put away sin for him who believes, there could be no repetition, the believer is perfected forever, and God remembers his sins and iniquities no more. Their repetition shows unbelief in this blessed truth. The believer is not perfected forever—the sacrifice must be repeated. It is not true that God will not remember their sins and iniquities any more. That is, the sacrifice is not denied; its efficacy, once offered for the believer's soul, is.

Again, take Christ's intercessional mediatorship. Christianity presents to me that blessed One, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; a man tempted in all points as we are, without sin; One who also can be touched with the feeling of my infirmities, who has suffered being tempted, and thus is able to succor them that are tempted. In a word, the Son of God Himself has descended into our sorrows and trials, and passed through them in tender gracious love, that I might confide in His sympathy and love, and know He could feel for and with me. Do they deny His priesthood and intercession? No. But in fact there are a crowd of mediators; above all, Mary His mother. And why? He is too high and glorious. Any poor man would seek a friend at court to have the king's ear, it is the heart of Mary

I am to trust, and get the saints' intercession, and reach His heart through Mary's. The whole truth and value of Christ's intercessory love is destroyed and denied in practice. The saints' and Mary's intercession is trusted, their tenderness and nearness believed in, not Christ's. Heathenism denied the one true God the Creator (though in a certain sense owning Him as a dogma) by a multiplicity of gods in practice. God intervenes by a Mediator in the most perfect system of blessing, and Romanism, while admitting the mediatorship of Christ as a dogma, has denied the one true mediatorship in practice by a multiplicity of mediators. It is the heathenism of Christianity, that is, of the blessed truth of a redeeming Mediator.—*From J. N. D's Coll. Writ. vol. xviii.*

OUR FUTURE.

WE shall be with Christ forever,
When this world's dark night is o'er.
Us from Him can nothing sever;
We are His forevermore.

God our everlasting dwelling,
And our portion there shall be,
While from hearts with rapture swelling,
Praise shall rise continually.

Faith we'll need not for our seeing;
Hope no more will be our stay:
All the springs of ransomed being
Shall flow out in cloudless day.

In the heavenly fields abiding,
Where the quiet waters roll,
In our Shepherd's love confiding,
Rest and peace shall fill the soul.

Age on age shall follow ages,
 Still no change His love will know;
 All the truths of Scripture's pages
 In that light of life shall glow.

Oh, that here on earth the prospect
 Which before us has been set,
 Of enjoying Jesus' presence
 Without hindrance or let,

Served to keep us ever near Him,
 Walking softly in His ways,
 Till with joy we rise to meet Him,
 Dwell with Him thro' endless days!

H. A. J.

GOVERNMENT.

"The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself: the world also is stablished that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord forever" (Ps. xciii.).

THIS is a Millennial Psalm, describing the time when man's wisdom and efforts to govern the world will have headed up in anarchy, and God will then have in His own power set all in order and established government upon a righteous basis. Then, "holiness unto the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses" (Zech. xiv. 20).

Holiness is that which responds to divine order in government. Man is holy only in the measure in

which he, in heart, respects God's order. This must begin in the man himself. He who does not govern himself in the fear of God, will have no proper sense of government anywhere. When Adam received Satan's lie, he became a rebel against God's government, bringing ruin and confusion upon himself and the world about him. Peace was taken from the earth, only to be re-established through the triumph and reign of the Second Man. In Him we have the divine model of a self-governed Man, before whom every other man stands condemned and guilty.

When grace has wrought in salvation, the first responsibility of every one thus saved is self-government in the fear of God. Not apart from God, which would be merely satanic pride and independency. This was the promise of the enemy at the first, that man should be "as God"; and this was the very condemnation into which Satan fell, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty" (Ezek. xxviii. 13-17). All who have listened to his lie have become like him, and to them our Lord's words apply, "Ye are of your father the devil." Self-culture and self-government apart from the fear of God, then, is nothing but this same spirit of Satan. It is antagonism to Christ, and the spirit of rebellion against the government of God which He has put in the hands of His blessed Son (John v. 22, 23).

Next to self-government in the fear of God comes the responsibility for household government. "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. xviii. 19). An ungoverned man will have an ungoverned household. Even the exercise of his authority will

be of that despotic character which produces in the end rebellion and anarchy.' God's government in the household will be in the power of divine love which holds both the reins of order and the rod of correction.

Passing on further, there is the government of the world, which is the same divine order applied in a larger sphere. In spite of the ruin that has come in, and even the failure of the ruler into whose hands the reins of government have been put, there is a most merciful provision for order and safety in the world through governments. Evil is restrained, and well-doers are protected. "For rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 1-7). This scripture is a witness for God's care of us while living in a scene hostile to Himself and those who are His.

This brings us to another form of government, that of the assembly of God. If He has ordained political government for the protection of His own in the world, has He been less careful to protect the honor of His Son in the assembly of the saints?

There can be no government without headship: "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. xi. 3). Thus all government is in the hands of the supreme ruler of the universe. Therefore in whatever sphere it be,

whether individual, the family, the world or the Church—all is under the One, whose order must be respected and obeyed everywhere. Even the Lake of Fire is but the prison house where all wilful rebels against His rule will be eternally confined with the devil and his angels.

It is the holiness of God's character which gives value to His order and government everywhere. Just as men have lost the sense of God's holiness, they have lost the key of His government. This has led to the departure of the Church from the divine order of apostolic days, and to the substitution of man's order instead of God's. God is displaced, and His word and the Holy Spirit are set aside for human expedients and human rulers. The result can be imagined, nay it is visible.

When Israel departed from God, as foretold by Joshua, they had no king, and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Tracing this down to its last results, we find the crime of Gibeah, and the terrible confusion that accompanied its judgment (Judges xix. and xx.). The king of Israel was to be the head of God's constituted authority and government; the absence of a king was the absence of government, because they had thrown off subjection to God. The same has been true of the Church. Indifference to God's holiness leaves the gate open for self-will, and all manner of corruption and violence. Let us beware of Satan's wiles; his enmity is against Christ, and he seeks to dishonor Him by lowering the standard of God's holiness, and thus producing indifference in the hearts of saints to God's order in the assembly. This is manifestly his special effort in these closing days.

Let us now see the provision for government in the Church, which has been given through the apostles, particularly Paul. We do not find a code of laws, with minute details of the letter, but we have that which is far better and equally definite—the word of God and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. It has been said, for instance, that there is no scripture for a prayer-meeting. But while there is no direct command, there is that which is far better, and which shows God's desire for His people.

In the first chapter of Acts, they were assembled in a ten days prayer-meeting (Acts i. 14). After the Holy Ghost had come upon them, and three thousand had been converted, we read, "They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. In the sixth chapter, the apostles when appointing the deacons to look after the poor, declare their own work to be, "the ministry of the word and prayer." Thus the Spirit shows the mind of God as to the subject of prayer-meetings.

In the same way, we see His guidance as to the government of the assembly. He led to the appointment of the deacons for a special work. They had to be "honest men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." When an assembly was formed, He led to the appointment of elders or spiritual rulers. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23). Another passage will show the nature of their work and how it was to be done. The Apostle was addressing the elders of the As-

sembly of Ephesus, just before his final departure from those quarters.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (or bishops) to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with the blood of His own. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts xx. 28-32).

Here we see who has made them elders, the Holy Ghost; their work is pointed out, to feed the Church of God. The need for it is seen in the danger of there being false teachers. The means by which they were to do their work is the word of God's grace. Following is a description of the apostle's own service as a model for all.

We have no apostles now to designate these elders, and it would be folly for uninspired men to attempt to ordain elders; but we do have the same Holy Spirit to call men into this service and to make known their gifts. In the Epistle to the Romans, we have the recognition of gifts, and among them “he that ruleth, with diligence” (Rom. xii. 6-8). And again, “God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, *governments*, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. xii. 28).

We have also the qualifications for an elder, which remain true for all time.

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) not a novice, (a new convert, or one young in experience) lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim. iii. 2-7. See also 1 Tim. v. 1, 17, 19; Tit. i. 5; Heb. xiii. 7, 17).

With all these and other scriptures, and their explicit statements as to the qualifications of an elder, can we think it an unimportant matter? Surely not; and yet have we not been very indifferent and careless as to the subject of rule and government in the assembly of the saints? and has not this indifference produced its legitimate fruit?

All can see the weakness which has resulted from this, and many different reasons have been given for it. May we not say that the real root of all our failure has been the lack of a proper sense of God's holiness in government? Oh, the solemnity of the presence of God! Think of it in the meetings of the saints, in the home, at the place of business. How feeble is our apprehension of that holy presence, the Almighty God!

But does Satan whisper that this tends to legalism, and that we are not under law? But if the law was

intended to impress men with a sense of the awful majesty of God (and we cannot read the descriptions of Sinai without seeing that it was so intended) does grace do less? We are forever delivered from slavish fear that we might have grace to serve God reverently, and with godly fear. If Israel soon lost the sense of His majesty, it is a sad fact that men have done so ever since. We too have repeatedly proved ourselves to be "a crooked and perverse nation," "a stiffnecked and rebellious people," "no better than our fathers." We shall never truly realize what God's grace is, except as we realize also His holiness.

C. E. H.

(To be continued, if the Lord please.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 13.—"And at that time thy people shall be delivered every one of them that is found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 1, 2). Does not the latter sentence refer to Israel's restoration, and not to the resurrection of the body? In Rom. xi. Israel's restoration is called "life from the dead"; so also in Ezek. xxxvii. May it not be said, "Many of them that sleep, etc.," because *some* of Israel will be already awake?

ANS.—It seems evident that it is not a literal but a national resurrection that is here spoken of. The passages referred to by our correspondent would confirm this. We would rather think the "many" referred to the mass of the nation, almost equivalent to all, the nation as a whole, and not to the remnant, which would seem to be among those who awake.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

2. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE WRITTEN WORD.

THINGS must have come to a pass indeed, when with Christians such as those for whom I am writing, one has to dwell upon—still more, *defend*—the value of the written Word. That which has been to us all the revelation of all the truth which we possess (and it is by the truth we are sanctified); that which alone brings into communion with the mind of God; that which, as inspired of God—"God-breathed"—furnishes the man of God to all good works;—how needless, how unutterably foolish it must appear, to tell any one who owes his all to it, the value of the written word of God!

Is this what those are thinking who, to one's utter astonishment to-day are letting pass without word of audible comment (that has had power, at least, to come across the breadth of the Atlantic) statements that would seem as if they should rouse to indignation impossible to be repressed every soul divinely taught as to what Scripture is? There is only one way besides in which this silence is comprehensible to me. Perhaps by some strange obliquity of mind words have lost for me their proper meaning, and I have failed to understand what I have had before me. If it be so, still let me state this figment of my imagination, and meet it as if it were a reality. How good it would be to get a strong knock-down reply from some one somewhere, to dispel for ever this delusion of mine, and assure me that I was dreaming! Why does not some one in pity to me, who, I

think, have no evil intent, but a real longing over souls who seem drifting away from truth whither they know not, prick this bubble for me, and give relief to more than myself from as uncomfortable a nightmare of the imagination (if it be that) as for long has visited them?

The delusion which I am combating (whether mine or that of others) begins with fair speeches about Scripture (always written characteristically with a small "s") as being authoritative and the written word of God. It blurs this, however, immediately by saying, it is more the *record* of it than the thing itself. I suppose every higher critic of the decent kind would say as much. It warns us, for all that (as I have never known the decent critic do), enforcing this too by personal example, that one can study it too much, and that a Bible student is not much after all; which means, of course, that the study of the Bible does not count for much. In fact, we are told, the method of learning truth by Scripture was not God's original plan at all: if the Church of God had remained in its first estate, we would not have wanted the Scriptures. The mind of God which is in the Scriptures would have been livingly expressed in the Church without them; and that was the divine idea! A very important thought, as some one remarks, if true; and very important, of course, to know if it *be* true: for by it the whole Old Testament is practically discounted and set aside for us.

But how, then, without the Word, was the Church to become the "living expression" of the mind of God? Here a leaf is taken from an old book which is not Scripture, but which many will recognize. **The truth is in the Church.** The apostles had it and

communicated it; Paul to Timothy; Timothy to faithful men, who were to teach others. Here are four generations: Paul; Timothy; faithful men; others: that is the way the truth was to be transmitted. It is the way which the church of Rome hold to-day; and the technical name for it is "Tradition."

But it failed! Yes; somehow it failed. Rome may be excusable here in believing that God's plan could not fail; but it could and did. Have you not observed that it is in the second epistle to Timothy, not the first, that Paul speaks of the Scriptures in that well known eulogy? That was when failure had fully set in; and *then* it was that the Scriptures came to be so important!

But at any rate, one would say, the method of teaching by Scripture is that by which we come into the truth to-day; and all that one can say of it in this respect to-day is fully justified! Ah, but we must not seize that comfort yet, or all that has been said just now must go for little. No, the old method has not been given up like that. The Church is still the method as before; only supplemented by Scripture because of the failure that has come in. It is a kind of humiliation to have to send the Bible to the heathen, and it is no good sending Bibles, if there are not preachers. People do not learn exactly from Scripture, but from the Spirit of truth; and if you say, "Granted that it is always by the Spirit of truth that any true work is done in the soul at all, but do you say that God will not use the Bible to a man's soul without a preacher?" well, it is difficult to put it that way, because God is sovereign; in a day of decay and ruin, *He may speak through an ass's*

mouth; but how shall they hear without a preacher? The divine way, undoubtedly, is preaching.

All as glibly said, as unquestioningly taken, even to the gross irreverence of putting the words of God alongside of the miracle of a speaking ass! Is it then a mistake of the apostle that they are "able to make wise unto salvation?" Well, that is asked and answered, if any one is wise enough to interpret the answer: that "the man of God wants to be furnished with the Scriptures because of their disciplinary value"—the relevancy of which I confess I do not understand; nor do I think that the apostle's words need any explanation. Why should we not inscribe them in every Bible sent to the heathen as an all-sufficient justification?

But how then with regard to the truth as ministered to the believer? Well, in general, in the early days, we are told that they had to take things on trust. The Old Testament did not give the truth of Christianity; and the New Testament was not written till the Church's decline, of course; otherwise, the whole system taught here would be subverted. The safeguard people had is said to be (what again is somewhat difficult to understand) that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" words which are certainly found in Scripture, though scarcely in that connection. However, now that failure is come in, and Scripture as the resource in view of it, it is of the utmost importance to prove all things. Here the Bereans are commended to us as a model for imitation; somewhat in forgetfulness that this example comes to us from before the failure of the Church, and when it is supposed that another method was in order; yet it seems that they had Scriptures

in their hands which they searched to some purpose. Only it is assured us that what they heard they first received; and only searched the Scriptures to get confirmation! A severe critic might say, perhaps, to see what mistakes they might have made in receiving it! Our day is an evil day; and God has given us the Scripture that we may have a standard of truth. Scripture is the limit; and though you don't exactly learn from Scripture (and indeed it is legality to want chapter and verse for doctrine) yet the more familiar people are with it the better: because a man's mind is thus continually pulled up in its tendency to go beyond the limit!

Thus for the outside world Scripture is not to be reckoned on for the conversion of souls. God may use it for that, because He is sovereign, and might be pleased to use the speech of an ass; while for the flock of Christ it is as it were a tether, to prevent their natural tendency to stray! You are right to search it for confirmation of what you hear; only you are to receive this first, and search afterwards. Even then remembering that it is legal to want chapter and verse for doctrines, and that it is possible to study the authority too much!

It would be perfectly natural to say that that must be a caricature of anybody's teaching. My comfort is that, at least, those who think so cannot have received it themselves. If they can find no one who has, or who knows of its existence, that would only show to me how few take in what they read; perhaps even while they applaud it. However, let us make it an occasion for examining what is the use and value of the written Word.

Only think of it as that!—the written word of God! a word prepared for us as the outcome of past ages which have contributed, age after age, their quota to the full result; the whole, in every line and word of it, “God-breathed,”—the quickening breath of the Spirit in it!—from the heart of God to the heart of man! The more we look into it, the more in faith we credit it with a divine message and meaning, the more it responds and opens,—the more it draws and wins us to itself. Had I my life to live over again, I would study it *more*, not less, drink it in, live in it, have it my meditation all the day long. Where else shall I find the Voice of Him who seeks me for Himself? Can any one tell me where? Fancy one telling me that the use of Scripture is in its being a “limit” to *my* poor human thoughts; when it is that which, as far as may be, leads me out into the limitless,—into the “deep things of God”! Here are the things that the Spirit searches—the Spirit, wonderful to say, in me!—and which, having set before me the infinite, leads me into the measureless delight of exploring my inheritance! How many people, handing down to me with flawless accuracy, the traditional truth, could replace for me the scriptures of prophets and apostles which God has put into my hands, with their tale which they are never weary of telling,—which I can read and re-read, carry into my room, set down before me, pray over and look again,—listen to in the quiet of His Presence who is in them and with them, till the music of their chime begins in my soul, soothing, quickening, harmonizing, subduing all my nature to them! If I owe my possession of them to the failure of the Church, then blessed is that failure which, under God, has secured me so

priceless a result. I speak soberly and deliberately while I say, that not the presence of the whole of the apostles with the Church to-day could replace for us the loss of Scripture. Could they all together give us one truth more than God has seen good to give us in it? *Did* they communicate, in fact, one truth besides, which we have lost? More than that, is it certain that they even *knew* all that was in their own communications? still more, can we believe that they knew all that all other inspired writers had communicated from the beginning? Have we one shred of truth, or of interpretation of Scripture even, which has come down to us by this so much lauded tradition, that any one can show us, much less show us value in to-day? What can we glean from apostolic "fathers"? Has not God been pleased to make a clean, broad mark of absolute limitation between Scripture and all else that went before or followed it, so that it should shine out to us in its own peerless character to-day? What has God given us through all the centuries since, which is more than a development from it,—a bit of the treasure from this exhaustless treasure-house?

I do not expect, then, with whatever amount of prayer or meditation, to obtain from my poor thoughts, which have indeed to be kept in order so, one thing which directly or indirectly has not come to me from the Word. Nor can I think of anything higher for myself or any other, than to be an expositor of this glorious Word. Tell me, then how I can study it too much? You need not tell me that I can pray too little: Alas, I know that well.

I suppose, we have nothing to assure us how early in Christian times the Gospel of Matthew may have

been written. It is pre-eminently, as all are aware, the Jewish Gospel; as the church in Jerusalem was for some time a Jewish remnant, and little more. Luke shows us at the end of his Gospel what special pains the Risen Saviour took to ground His disciples from the beginning in the Old Testament, and its relation to the New. Here their feet always stood firm; and the example of the Bereans a good while afterwards makes plain to what good use it could be put by those who had not had the advantage of such instruction. When they had thus assured conviction as to the trustworthiness of those through whom they had received the knowledge of the Saviour, and the pledge and witness of the Holy Spirit, there was of course abundant warrant for their reception through a channel so certified, of those additional communications which God was pleased to give. But notice here that the very slowness with which we know such communications came, gave the fullest opportunity to incorporate them one by one with all that they had known before; the scattering of the truth abroad being itself gradual, so as to carry better together the whole body of disciples. The more we reflect upon all this, the more we shall realize how fully from the beginning of Christianity the Lord grounded His people upon the written Word; and that this was no after-plan when the Church had fallen. Such thoughts may catch those who do not study Scripture too much; and alas, there are plenty of them. They are the mere vagaries of a dreaming mind, to which the word of God is not even a "limit."

We have no need to undervalue the preacher, because of the efficacy of the Word. I would emphasize

it more, indeed, than all this system does. Instead of saying for instance, that God does not use us instrumentally as effecting *anything*, Scripture assures us that men can "*so speak*" that others shall believe (Acts xiv. 1). It makes the character of the speaking effective in the production of the result. But there is another reason for "how shall they hear without a preacher?" without dishonoring Scripture to furnish one; and that is serious and sad enough. It is that men, alas, have to be pursued by the grace that seeks them and the living voice of the preacher is the most effectual means in this way. Wisdom has to cry aloud, and utter her voice in the corners of the streets. "Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in!" Scripture had always been, while necessarily safeguarded by the barrier-wall thrown around Israel, yet placed in the very centre of the chief civilizations of the old world, and on the highways of commerce. Had men desired the treasures of it, they were readily accessible, and there was no prohibition of their acquirement; but they manifested no desire. And in the midst of Christendom to-day, with the completed Word in our hands, what would we do without that publication of it in various ways, by which it is forced upon the notice of the unwilling-hearted? That does not in the least affect the power existing in the Scriptures to make men wise unto salvation which they assuredly have—a power which is being proved continually.

We have spoken, perhaps, enough of the Bereans, and their readiness to receive the word preached to them. No doubt that there is in the truth always an inherent acceptability to an earnest mind. But the belief of it is distinctly put here *after* that search-

ing of the Scriptures which they are praised for, *not* before it. Think of the consequences of a principle such as is advocated, of receiving first, before proving! when the proving will surely follow with a lag-gard and indifferent step; and during the delay how many falsehoods may spring out of one error received, which may not be destroyed, even when they have lost their attachment to the root from which they sprang! How would such a principle account for the rapid and wide spread of a movement like that which we are now contemplating, in which the captivating brilliancy of many new ideas may with the ready aid of the emotions sweep the traveller off his feet too far away for any present recovery. A voyage of exploration always has its charm; and to be told that you need not know whither you are going, but may give yourself up to the guidance of one who seems so impressively confident of his ability to carry you safely, is a luxury in itself. Certainly you make progress: everything moves. By and by you can take your bearings and see where you have arrived. You can return by the way you have come, if in the end you are not satisfied. But have you gauged then the strength of the stream that is bearing you on it?

F. W. G.

(To be continued.)

"BEING LET GO."

"And being let go, they went to their own company"

Acts iv. 23.

AFTER the miracle of healing the impotent man at the gate Beautiful, the apostles were the objects first of the admiration of the people, and next of the enmity of the leaders. Declining

the first, they gave all the glory of the healing to Him whom it was their delight to confess; nor did they shrink from owning Him before those who had crucified Him, and would willingly have done the same to His disciples. It is indeed refreshing to see this loyalty in the face of danger, nor could the threats of prison or prohibition to speak any more in the name of Jesus hinder them in their work. The threats but bring forth fresh avowals to the very face of the chief priests, and for the present there was nothing to do but threaten again and then let them go.

They are free now to go where they will, and by watching where they go we can see what lies at the bottom of their character. Many a man may pose before the public as a person of rare devotedness, but if he could be seen when “let go” a very different impression would be given. These men go to their own company, that of the saints, and there pour out their heart in prayer to the Lord.

It is not our purpose to follow them further; we may safely leave any one at the mercy-seat in the company of the saints. But let us gather up a few of the thoughts suggested by this expression. Where do *we* go when let go?

There is much in the way of every day employment that is common ground for all men. Unless one is thrown closely with a person in his daily work there may be nothing special in the way he performs it to mark him as a Christian, save a careful, faithful doing what is given him, not with eye-service but as unto God. It is good to remember that the humblest life of toil offers such an opportunity to confess Christ.

In most kinds of work, too, not only the body but the mind has to be engaged, and it is no sign of spirituality to neglect proper attention to the work before us on the plea that we are occupied with the Lord. The mind must be occupied at least to a considerable extent with what is before it. But now the work is over, we are "let go" from the daily task—where do we go? where do our thoughts turn? Do they turn to the proper company of the Lord's people, as naturally as an elastic band returns to its normal condition after being stretched and then loosened? Do we gravitate toward divine things? So that without effort or the urging of conscience we turn to the Lord and His concerns?

Let us apply this very simply to what is a most practical matter, the attendance at the meetings of the Lord's people. You have been detained at work all day, returning weary at evening. You have been "let go" from the burdens of the day. There is a meeting of the saints, but you have been working hard all day and feel the need of bodily and mental rest. How often has there been the temptation to remain quietly at home instead of joining with those who feel a greater need for prayer and the study of the word of God than for bodily rest.

And yet, beloved brethren, we have no doubt as to what is our "own company." Through grace we have been brought to the Lord, and thus to "those that are His own." The sphere of our pleasure as well as of our responsibilities, for there cannot be two, lies within the circle of God's household. All that is needed is to act practically according to this truth. We have, we can have, but one company. Happy are we when we return to that company

whenever we are "let go." If saints could tell the starting point of declension from God, it would most frequently be found to be in alienation from the fellowship of the Lord's people.

Why should the meeting for prayer be less fully attended than that for the breaking of bread? Why should the week-meetings be neglected by many who would be shocked at the thought of being kept, for the same reason, from the Lord's-day-meeting? These are very simple matters, but they test us when we least expect it. Oh, may we *gravitate* to the company of the saints.

It is at once the reproach of the world and the glory of the gospel that it sets men free; the world says, free to sin, but grace says, free from sin to serve Christ. Is there not some ground for the world's reproach when the flesh is allowed to dictate as to our associations or conduct when released from needed occupations? The word for Lazarus was, "Loose him and let him go." It is the word for every soul set free by grace, and in the joy of that freedom we seek our own company. But the flesh must be judged, if there is to be this spontaneous turning to the Lord and His people. To set one free who has not learned the lesson of "no good in me," is to give loose rein to the fleshly man.

Transferring the words to another thought, how sweet it will be to be "let go" from this world! We are held here, as the hireling fills his appointed task, looking to the hour when the time of service will be over. Individually, the letting-go takes place at death, and in view of that the apostle could say, "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better." But what a happy time it will be

when we are *all* set free by the shout of the Lord, who will descend to call His beloved saints to Himself! The earth will no longer hold us, the world will have no attraction even for those who have walked too close to it while their hearts have truly been Christ's. We will be "let go," and with delight will return to our "own company," the presence of the Lord and the goodly fellowship of all that are His.

"Lord haste that day of cloudless ray."

THE MASTER'S WILL.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" . . . "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake!"

THE Christian soldier, ere the fray,
Goes to his Lord, aside, to pray
"What wilt Thou have me do this day?"
And Christ, in love, responds to prayer,
"The courage of the Cross is rare—
What canst thou for my name's sake bear?"
And foemen wonder at the might
With which he stands for God and right.

The suff'rer of the Cross prays too—
"Though opportunities are few,
What wilt Thou, Lord, that I should do?"
And Jesus whispers, "Courage take—
No greater effort canst thou make
Than suffering for My name's sake!"
And people marvel, as they see
Affliction borne so patiently.

The soldier's discipline and drill
The suff'rer's agony, while still,
Each perfectly reflect His will.
In answer to the humble prayer,
The Spirit and the Word prepare
Both, "for His name's sake," all to bear.
Thus, day by day, the servants learn
The Master's will, "till He return."

G. K.

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

3. THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM.

(Vers. 19-22.)

THERE are several features to note in connection with the return. When they reach Bethlehem, the whole place is moved, "Is this Naomi?" What havoc her departure had wrought, and she is forced to confess the sad truth herself. How her few words tell the story, her heart not yet fully restored. "Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter): for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." She calls Him by that dread name which emphasizes His power rather than His love and care. As she thinks of her once happy home, forgetting her own responsibility for the change, she seems to charge the Almighty with it all. But the next words confess the truth, "*I went out full.*" It was voluntary; she had not been compelled to go, and she was full when she went. "*The Lord (Jehovah) hath brought me home again empty.*" Self-will took her away: grace brought her home (ah, it was *home* still). Is this not the confession of every restored soul? We may have made many excuses for our departure from God; circumstances were against us, friends became cold, we were misunderstood—ah multiply them as we will, the one reason for departure from God is expressed in that one brief sentence, "I went out full."

But in that confession the soul reaches God, for true confession can only be in His presence. So the next word is the covenant name, "Jehovah hath brought me home again." We would never come back ourselves. It is only the power of unchanging

grace that restores the wanderer; but for that we would still remain in the land of Moab. Nor could we be brought back in any other condition than empty. There must be the brokenness suggested by that, to make the soul willing to yield to God's love.

But her condition is a witness of what an evil and bitter thing it is depart from the Lord—a warning to all against the folly of turning away from the house of plenty.

Dear brethren, look at that poor desolate widow, crushed with apparently hopeless sorrow, her brightness all behind her—and see a picture of the soul that wanders from God. Ah! how many blighted lives, filled with bitter, unavailing regrets are there among the saints of God.

“It might have been,” says the aged man, looking back upon a lifetime of wasted energy and time. Who can measure the loss suffered by those who spend the life in gathering the “wood, hay, and stubble” of this world? Nor is such departure necessarily a moral declension. The world can be very upright, but it makes *widows* of God's people who yield to its seductions.

It is always the time of harvest when the wanderer returns. Ah, let the proud, stubborn will be broken, let there be the words of confession, and how soon will the poor wanderer find the ripened harvest with all its abundance and its joy.

Who but the God of *all* grace could have blessing for His people at all times, no matter how great their unfaithfulness. But in His presence, plenty abides. None can hunger there, and even for *you*, poor wandering child of His, there is more than enough. His voice is ever, Eat, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.

The prophets abound with pictures of this return of the widowed nation to God. The whole of the Lamentations of Jeremiah might be called Naomi. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! . . . She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. . . . From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed. . . . Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. . . . Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me."

Here we see her wretched state, and a little later we hear the confession of the remnant: "The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment. . . . I have grievously rebelled. . . . My sighs are many and my heart is faint" (Lam. i.).

We see too the recovering mercy of the Lord in the prophet Hosea, though there the house of Ephraim is prominent. "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? . . . My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man" (Hos. xi.). "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

Such passages abound throughout the prophets, showing the wretched yet repentant state of the nation on the one hand, and on the other the everlast-

ing love of our God. What a day will it be when the Lord will again speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and when the land will again be married to Him. But before that time there must be a season of sorrow and deep exercise—the time of Jacob's trouble,—but at this we will look later.

(To be continued, if the Lord please.)

FELLOWSHIP—STEADFASTNESS—JOY.

(Philippians iv.)

THE great importance which the apostle attaches to a feeling of brotherhood in the ranks, is constantly breaking out, in what we may call this epistle of combat, and he himself is a living example of the affection and fellowship which should exist. "My joy and my crown." Such are the ardent words which run from his pen and flow from his heart, and the title to utter which he had proved in the yielding up for their sakes the sweet companionship of Epaphroditus. How often the mutual jealousies of earthly leaders have robbed some fair field of victory of its fruits, but how much direr are the results when strife and envy creep into the army of God. They blast and blight the whole. "Be ye souled together" (*συνψυχολι*) as we might paraphrase a verse in chap. ii. is all important, and this is shown in acts, not in words alone.

But the way in which those early Christians did love one another, would be a good subject of study to-day. It so touched the infidel Gibbon that when he had to speak of it he broke into glowing, rapturous eulogy. Yea, we remember that our Lord once said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My

disciples, that ye have love one to another." But have we? If not, are we then His disciples? This is a very practical question. *It really measures our love to Christ*; for the greater our love for Christ the greater will be that for our brethren.

In the battle, with the foe in front, while he gathers stronger and stronger to the attack, while within the camp itself his emissaries are sowing dissension, and he is seeking to corrupt the word of God, let every true hearted soldier of Christ stand shoulder to shoulder with his brother, and let not the breath of envy do its hateful work. Happy is that man who, when he lays his armor aside in the house of God, shall find no dint wrought by that weapon of the Adversary upon it. Would we know how to accomplish this best? The answer is before us: "So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

The fact that this injunction is so constantly and earnestly reiterated, to an assembly in which everything seemed so bright, is well worthy of our serious consideration. "There is a tide in the affairs of men," says an earthly poet; and alas! how often are our flood tides the commencement of the ebb.

Did you ever think of those words, "The cock crew," in a spiritual way? The cock-crow was the sign of morning near. As Peter went out he may have seen the first glimmer of dawn breaking over the eastern hills, and have heard, as if to hail its advent, the voice of the herald of the dawn. The morning is near, poor Christ forgetter! The resurrection glory is breaking over the shores of time. "Stand fast in Christ" for the few fleeting moments ere He come and then stand ever in His presence, at home! How light will seem the trial then. How

precious the present opportunity! And oh how sweet it will be, when that song, everlasting, because everlasting its cause, wakes the joyous voices of the morning, to think that in the night of His rejection, earth once heard it break from your lips, a true witness to Him.

"I beseech Euodias and I beseech Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." We now come to the practical working of the love that animates the apostle. True affection cannot bear to see its objects at variance with one another, and so this petition comes in to remove all "root of bitterness." But how delicate and judicious in its framing! How well calculated to attain its end. He beseeches, and he beseeches both. No doubt one was more right than the other. Indeed there are very few questions in which this is not so. And yet the apostle ignores all that and leaves them to recognize it themselves. How much trouble would be avoided by God's people if there were ever such care and love exercised, and differences of opinion were removed ere separation of heart followed. But not only is this so but bonds must be strengthened, and so he goes on to say, "And I entreat thee also true yokefellow help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also and with other my fellowlaborers, whose names are written in the book of life." And then once more he breaks out, "Rejoice in the Lord alway and again I say, rejoice!" How wonderfully touching is this jubilant music from a prison. But this is after all the secret of all real service. One cannot labor with a sad heart. One cannot preach Christ unless he find Him a source of joy and blessing. The shout of triumph must ring in the heart

of the speaker, and proclaim what a God he has—a God who stays the sun by man's feeble arm, who heals disease, who conquers sin, who preaches deliverance to the captives, recovers sight to the blind and, as the apostle puts it, "causeth us always to be led about in triumph in Christ."

And now that we are thinking about it, let us ask ourselves, how much we know about this. Is it true that the victor's song can be heard, or do the cares of this world stifle it in its birth? It is one thing to talk about it when there is nothing on any hand to put us to the test, and quite another when we are in the thick of the battle. Brass will glitter like gold, but there is a world of difference between them. Buoyancy of spirit will seem like the happiness of faith until it be tried in God's crucible. Dear brethren, how do we stand in the time of testing? It behoves us to ask ourselves this question very often.

The next verse may be considered as a measuring-rod for the joy of the preceding. It is a little difficult to render so as to give the full force of the Greek. Primarily it is that which "fits to," and from this it might be translated "adaptability," and as a special application of this latter meaning to the demands of others upon us, "yieldingness."

"Let your adaptability be known unto all men." If we are rejoicing in the Lord as the apostle wants us to, this will be comparatively easy, but if not, certainly impossible. I say "certainly impossible," for I think the words imply a state of heart as well as of life. When rejoicing in the Lord, we are rich and can afford to yield and give way, and we continue rich. But if not, then we must necessarily cling to our own ways and fancies and to whatever else we

count dear; for *it is our all*, and there be few that will let go their all.

In addition to this it says "let it be known!" Oh what a blessed testimony to Him, when men can say, He is so rich in Christ and the knowledge of His nearness that he does not care what you take from him. Truly that hymn is right which says it is

"Sweeter praise than tongue can tell,

"God is satisfied with Jesus,

"We are satisfied as well."

But then "satisfied" means a great deal and before leaving this point let us ask ourselves, "Are we really and absolutely *satisfied* with Him?"

The *making known* in the verse we have been considering is coupled with another making known in the verse which follows, "Be anxious about nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

In ver. 5, you are exhorted to let men draw as many drafts upon you as they wish, and then in ver. 6, God, in His wonderful grace says, "Come to Me, I will make up your shortage and fill your treasury to overflowing."

There are several things to be noted here. First of all it says, "in everything." How broad and inclusive is this invitation. We are to give God our full confidence. There is nothing in which He will not be interested, nothing too small for His care, nothing too great for His power. Then as to suitable manner of presentation it is "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," and as to result, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

If this peace then do not keep our hearts and minds, it is evident that we are not fulfilling the condition upon which it depends. It "passeth all understanding." How can men understand a peaceful mind where corroding anxieties would be natural? Do we know and possess that peace, dear brethren? If so we shall neither be fretful nor peevish though passing through painful circumstances. "But *are* we so? And if not, why not? Alas it is because we forget in everything with all prayer and supplication; with thanksgiving, to make known our requests unto God. May we awake to our blessed privileges in this great grace of our God.

Prayer is a measure of our care for Him. If we do not pray much *to* Him we do not care much *for* Him. Is not that true? Let each of us make answer for himself. And should we, when thus before the bar of our conscience, feel compelled to return an answer of condemnation, may our cry be, ever increasingly, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me by Thy free Spirit!"

Danger thickens about us on every hand. The adversary knows that his time is short, and as we near our journey's end, increased effort is being made by him, to ensnare us into sleep.

"Blessed is that man whom when his Lord cometh, He shall find watching." To wait for Him! To watch for Him! To long for Him! and all through this dark night to let the candles of faith, and hope, and love burn brightly until they be swallowed up in the glory of His Presence. This is our blessed privilege. Are we enjoying it?

F. C. G.

GOVERNMENT.

(Continued from page 196)

HOW then is this, His order and government to be maintained? And who are the responsible "overseers," made such by the Holy Ghost, according to Acts xx. 28?—overseers to shepherd the flock of God. This is a wonderful thought, and it is a wonderful work beautifully illustrated in the apostle Paul himself. "And who is sufficient for these things"? Paul could say, and so can we; yet Paul was responsible according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and so are we; each in his, and her place.

We cannot recognize any one man, nor any body of men, as the head of authority and power to govern the Church. But we can recognize our own need, and our individuality, and responsibility to maintain God's government, and have a proper respect for God's holiness in ourselves. And if we maintain this in ourselves, we shall recognize God's true headship of the Church, His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is vested all power and authority in heaven and on earth. Thus we shall maintain in our own souls, and in the assembly of His saints, a proper regard for the holiness which becomes His presence, and "the joy of the Lord will be our strength." We shall sit down in the shadow of His presence with great delight. And then we shall be able to discern through the Spirit's guidance the "overseers," or "elders," whom God would have us respect as such.

And now let us bring this matter home practically, to our own hearts. Do we know what this guidance is? We may be able to say that such and such things

are not the Spirit's guidance, but can we be as sure *what is* of the Spirit's guidance? If I am not sure that God has given me spiritual intelligence and discernment to detect *what is*, and *what is not*, of the Spirit's guidance, I should be very careful not to express my judgment. I should conclude, and rightly so, that I am not one of those made overseers by the Holy Ghost.

If we had always been careful as to this we should have escaped very much sorrow to ourselves, and dishonor to the Lord. For it is too often the case that it is those who have not this spiritual discernment who are foremost in seeking to rule. Have we not all seen this to our sorrow and shame? God has given us as we have seen in the Scriptures quoted His perfect standard. He could give nothing short of a perfect standard. But what does His perfect standard do for me?

It shows me just where I come short: which is a most wholesome lesson for me. If I heed it, I shall not be putting myself forward and meddling with things which I ought not to touch, neither shall I be dictating to others as to their path: but seek humbly to walk in my own. I shall not be hasty in judging others as to their path, for when it is a question of service, every one is individually responsible before God, and to God; not to men, not to elders, nor overseers, nor to bishops, (and these three words imply the same thing, so that the elder of 1 Tim. iii. covers the whole responsibility).

Is there then no such thing now as eldership in the gatherings of God's saints? Not of the apostolic pattern, surely. What then? Is there no provision for this need? We can hardly say that; for God

knew all about this as well as every other need, before He gave us His word, and we should not allow the thought that He has not provided for this also. But we must not forget that everything is in ruin and confusion, and that we ourselves are a part of that ruin: and what is more, God has provided for this very need in this state of ruin. Blessed be His name.

Let us then turn to the epistle of Paul to the Galatians, the sixth chapter. "Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." And now the question is, who is the spiritual man? The Word answers that question in the closing of the foregoing chapter: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. . . The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Here we have the fruits by which every one can see who is the spiritual man, and such ones we should regard according to Heb. xiii. 7. "Remember them which have the rule over you, and have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Christ Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

And respect their judgment according to Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

I venture to anticipate, and answer a few questions, as to the Spirit's guidance in meetings. And first of all, you may be sure of this, that it is not the Spirit's guiding when anything is brought in to cause distraction, contention or strife. Nothing should be allowed which does not savor of Christ, since the Holy Ghost cannot be the author of anything which dishonors Him, neither can we say that the Spirit is leading in anything which is not to His glory. For Jesus said of the Spirit, "He shall glorify Me" (John xvi. 14).

And in view of this divine fact, we may always test ourselves by asking, What is my motive in doing or saying this? And if I cannot say honestly before God, that I am sure I have no other motive apart from seeking to honor and glorify Him, let it not be done or said. And mark this beloved, there can be no such thing as it being my duty to act, or to speak, anything which is not to glorify Him. If we can ever be mindful of this, there would be far less of fleshly and dishonoring exhibitions of merely human energy.

Further, it is never right to take up to criticize, or to correct what another has said, unless he has repeated it to the disturbing of the meeting. I should go to him privately about it.

If two brethren should give out a hymn at the same time, both should be silent, and leave the saints to judge which to sing, or to leave both, and wait on the Lord for another hymn, or for whatever He may lead to. Sometimes too many hymns are given out, and if this is the spiritual judgment of the saints, let them be silent, and wait on the Lord for the Spirit's leading. Hymns should never be given out because

they are our favorites.

If a brother is addicted to giving out too many hymns, or because he wants to keep the meeting going, saints should simply wait on the Lord in silence: and if a brother is in the habit of occupying the time, but not to the edification of the saints, let them all as one, wait on the Lord in prayer, until he ceases. Many wrong things may be corrected in this way, without grieving the Spirit or disturbing the meeting, if saints are before the Lord, and cherish a proper regard for the holiness which becometh His presence. For all who are really in His presence; a few moments of profound silence is never lost time, but may, and often does, add to the power and joy of the meeting.

Just a word as to receiving persons to the Lord's table. No one should be received while there is one dissenting voice, if the person dissenting can give a good reason for his or her objection. Persons should be well-known, or commended by those who are well-known, and in whom the saints have confidence, before being received, if we would properly regard the holiness, order and government of God's assembly. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ hath received us to the glory of God." *To the glory of God!* Not to disturbing the peace of the saints.

The fact that a man claims to be a Christian is not a guarantee against evil doctrines, evil association and unholy walk. We are responsible to know where he is as to these things, before receiving him to the Lord's table. There is no half fellowship. If a person breaks bread with us, he should understand that he is in fellowship with us, in all that God has given to us: and that we are not in fellowship with what he has left behind.

C. E. H.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

3. LETTER AND SPIRIT.

WE have not yet done, however, with doctrines which affect Scripture; and I place these first, because the character of all the teaching may be rightly judged by them. If that which is the standard of truth be taken from us,—if it be obscured even, or made less available to the common mass of Christians,—it is plain that this will have disastrous effect upon every truth drawn from it, or to be compared with it. Rome herself makes great parade of late of her reverence for the word of God. She will exalt it as much as you please,—and the more she does the more gain will it be to her,—if only you will let her interpret it for you. It is the interpretation that is the great point; and if a system of interpretation is adopted which takes this out of the reach of the simple man, then you have set up an esoteric teaching which is not subject to Scripture, however much you may accredit those who receive it (as it is quite easy to do) with a higher spirituality which enables them to do so. No doubt spirituality is of all importance in the things of God; but it is not this which will refuse to submit to the plain word of Scripture: “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. viii. 20).

Now the system before us, as represented in its chief exponent, avowedly sets aside the letter of Scripture, in the interests of what it is pleased to consider the “spirit” of it. Scripture, has been put alongside of a supposed faulty hymn, to say—“I do

not read those hymns in the letter; *I do not read Scripture in the letter*: I try to get the spirit of the hymn, and I do." The self-complacence of the last two words is characteristic. Are we not left to infer that as with the hymns, so with Scripture, he not only seeks to get the spirit of Scripture, but he *does*? Most people would have left others to say that of them. Whatever conviction they might have as to their success in such a matter, they would not expect to move others by their own conviction—at least those of the class that it would be worth while to convince: "let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth" (Pro. xxvii. 2) is a rule which has long been commended to us as a maxim of wisdom.

But the important point is, that we are not, as it seems, to read Scripture in the letter. It would be gratifying to know whether this is what the Book itself teaches, and how it teaches it. The thought is not altogether a new one; others have equally proclaimed their belief in Scripture as "read by the illumination of that Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in us," as contrasted with "the letter that killeth."* But one can hardly think of the one from whom I before quoted as meaning to refer us to a text which gives the contrast between the old covenant and the new, and this last even as ministered by grace to us in the present gospel. It could not be said indeed rightly of the new covenant in any wise that the letter killed, although as Gentiles we should not come under it. Those who do come under it will certainly not be killed, even by the letter of it. The spirit is the spirit of the letter and that is the sweetest grace.

* Canon Farrar.

In Romans again (vii. 6), "the oldness of the letter," in which as Christians we are not to serve, is that legal bondage which the old covenant implies, and has nothing to do with Scripture as such. For the Christian in the liberty to which God has called him, the very letter of the law as such remains, not only without injury, but with plenty of profit in it. There is absolutely no scripture which so much as suggests that the letter of God's blessed word is something to be put aside, even in favor of the spirit which resides in it. If I want to be in communion with the spirit of a man, I do not kill his body for that purpose; and grotesque as such a comparison may seem to be, it is a joy to me to believe that God's word is as it were a living organism, in which even far beyond what we find in man (as man is now) the spirit residing is expressed in every part; so that every jot and tittle has importance from it, and must be preserved, for the spirit to be in any proper manner realized.

I own, therefore, with gladness and thankfulness of heart, that I *do* read Scripture in the letter—that is, in the very form and expression which God has been pleased to give it—and that more and more. Can I give it a form more suited? To convey to another what I find in it I may use other terms, and find them useful, to break through that crust with which a mere external familiarity often encrusts them:—all well; yet shall I find that not only will the same crust form over these new inventions, so that to those familiar with them in the same external way they shall become still a lifeless verbiage, but also that, after all, the words by which I have expressed what I have found will in the end be proved too narrow to contain the fulness of the divine mean-

ing, if happily they may not be proved in some way inaccurate and really misleading. I do not deny at all the very great usefulness, therefore, of other phraseology than that of Scripture, for the explanation of Scripture; while yet I am sure that for the rectification of all our phrases, and also that Scripture may not be narrowed into the littleness of human conceptions, we must go back, and ever back, to refresh and purify and enlarge our thoughts by the very words—the only adequate, the *divine* words of the peerless Book which infinite grace has given us.

Distil the blessed words in your alembic and give me the result: to justify it, you must show both the material and the method. But to show me that what you have got is the full equivalent of all the material is still another matter; when your material is scripture, a very difficult thing indeed. But at least you must justify all that you speak of as the spirit by the letter, which is the only thing to begin with which we have. The Spirit within us does not give any new revelation, but “searches the deep things of God” which are contained in what has been already given. The spirit of Scripture is that contained in the letter: it is the spirit of the letter; I read it in the letter to get the spirit of it. The letter has the spirit in it, and more than all that we may please to call the spirit. How important to remember, when you contrast, as in this case, the letter and the spirit, that the letter is of God, the *spirit* is that in which you have to fear the intrusion of an element which is not of Him!

The principle which we have had asserted is, undoubtedly, one of contrast: “I do not read Scripture

in the letter;" but, if that which has been stated is the truth, then there is as to practical apprehension, in this case, no such contrast. The letter is but the wisest possible expression of that which you may express otherwise sometimes with benefit, no doubt, but yet in a way which is still in reality something *less* wise than the old one. How unsafe then would it be to say, "I do not read Scripture in the way it is written, but according to what I take to be the meaning of it"! Would it not assume, in fact, that wisdom was in my poor words, beyond that of those who wrote, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth?" (1 Cor. ii. 13). Where can you show me the spirit of Scripture in words which have the sanction that such words have? After all, will it not be *your* letter in contrast with the actual letter, neither more nor less?

The whole statement is such arrogant assumption that it is hard to believe that a spiritually sane man could make it. The effect of it, if carried out, would be to give us a Bible, or rather, Bibles many, which would be anything rather than the endeared, familiar, well-proved friend of all our hearts. The adoption of such a principle would be at once to blur all lines and bring in everywhere confusion and uncertainty. This is not the Voice of the Spirit that would enfeeble and degrade what the Spirit Himself has given, as this system does; putting it at one time in company with a faulty hymn, at another time with the speech (miraculous though it were) of Balaam's ass! I do not envy the quietness of those who can take all this (go with it or not, as they may) without a protest.

"I do not read Scripture in the letter"! Why, it is just the most literal part of it that of necessity must be used to interpret all the rest. That there are figures, types, parables in it, who is not aware? But who would like to build his soul upon things such as these, without the plain letter of doctrine which alone can interpret them definitely and surely? Is it not "letter" that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? Am I to read that in the spirit, and not in the letter? Who will stand forth then and tell me, in contrast with the letter, what the spirit of it is?

See now how it all works together: I am justified in accepting this guidance that is offered me, of one so spiritually wise and competent that he can give me the spirit of that which I, poor dullard, have been reading in the letter. What can I do but submit myself to this, and let the proof abide a more convenient season? I may be bewildered at first to find how things immediately begin to change, and how little remains absolutely what it was before. But then, if I am humble, this is all proof of how I needed a teacher,—how without a teacher (and indeed, with all the teachers I have had hitherto) I have been going astray. I learn to distrust myself the more, and cling to my guide. By and by indeed, I must come to a halt, and begin to see where I am,—to see if perchance anything may have gone wrong with me. I have heard that "in a day of evil it is of the utmost importance to prove all things, and not accept the dictum of anybody." That is all right, I suppose: it is the same guide says it; I am yet to prove all by Scripture! But Scripture, what Scripture? *He* does

not read it in the letter; no more must I then, if I am to reach the same results! God has somehow provided me with a Bible in the letter; and this Bible in the spirit I have got to form for myself out of it, and by its help; or, at least, I have got to prove the new Bible in the spirit which has been put into my hand by that old Bible which is so different, and which it will be my wisdom in due time to give up! Think of the perplexity to a simple soul, of using in this way a standard which has to be renounced, and for the very purpose of being able to renounce it; while at the same time, it is capable in some way of putting me on a platform higher than itself! Must not all this end in inextricable confusion? Is it not, in fact, confusion all the way through?

F. W. G.

(To be continued.)

RETURN UNTO THY REST.

“Return unto the Lord, For He will have mercy; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. lv. 7).

I HAD a rare and costly vase, fresh cast,
 And graven by the Master's hand;
 It bore the impress of His glorious touch;
 'Twas bound by love's sweet silken band.
 The world's rude hand, alas,
 Its blighting touch did pass,
 And thus it had well nigh effaced
 The richness of the pattern traced.

I had a bright and sparkling gem, God's gift,
 In answer to much fervent prayer;
 I loved to mark its ever varying flash
 Of glory, in the Sun's full glare.
 By earthly dust soon soiled,
 My brilliant gem was spoiled,
 The brightness I had loved, grown dim,
 My jewel shone no more for Him.

I had a pure and tender flower, so sweet,
'Twas whiter than the fresh fall'n snow;
I tried to shield it from the blight of earth,
It was His gift, I loved it so,
But soon earth's withering blast
Had o'er its petals past,
It drooped and hung its graceful head,
The beauty of my flow'ret fled.

I found a wayward, wilful soul, that loved
In bitter unbelief to roam;
I pointed to the cross, and told of Him
Who loved to lead such wand'ers home.
I plead with God, to give
This soul, that it might live
The very reflex of His face,
A glowing witness to His grace.

He granted the desire of my heart,
Another soul now reconciled,
My heart was full, as when a mother looks
With joy upon her new born child.
This storm for ever passed,
The goal was reached at last;
God's love alone, such need could meet,
And bring this soul to Jesus' feet.

Alas! how soon the dust and soil of earth,
Had marred this vessel of His grace;
My jewel lusterless, had ceased to give
The bright reflection of His face.
My pure white flower had lost
Its fragrance by earth's frost,
This flaunting world so soon, could move
A blood bought soul from Jesus' love.

O, foolish soul, entrapped by Satan's wiles,
How quickly thou art off thy guard;
And turned aside from Him who won thy heart,
Thou art that beauteous vessel marred.
That jewel lusterless;
The world hath soiled thy dress,

Communion's golden cord is slack,
The wounded Spirit woos thee back.

How soon thou'st learned to wander from thy rest!
The Shepherd's voice is faintly heard,
By reason of the distance from the fold,
Unheeded is His precious Word;
And prayer grows wearisome,
And heart and lips are dumb;
The conscience sleeps uneasily,
The heart is full of misery.

Return to Him who sought thee in the waste,
And set thy heart on things above;
Thou canst not satisfy thy craving soul
With aught henceforth, but Jesus love.
The world hath many snares
To catch thee unawares;
The Shepherd only, can restore,
And satisfy, forevermore.

He hath not ceased to love, tho' thou art cold,
He grieveth that thy light is dim;
He marketh every wayward step
That leads thy heart away from Him.
Yet thou canst cast thy lot
With those who love Him not!
What heartless, strange ingratitude,
To One who only seeks thy good! •

Then let me plead thy Father's tender love,
The mourning Dove, thy heavenly guest,
The pierced hands and feet, the riven side;
The cleft where Jesus bids thee rest.
Thy peace is more to thee
Than worldly smiles could be,
Thou'rt bartering eternal gain,
For what must bring thee bitter pain.

I'll tell thee just the secret of it all,
Thy heart hath never found its home

In Jesus' love, its blessed hiding place,
 And so thy feet have learned to rove.
 But as thou'rt dear to God,
 He'll surely use the rod;
 And though He let thee have thy way,
 Thy will *must* break thy heart, *some day*.
 H. McD.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE LAND.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS ON

Numb. xxxiv. 1-12.

THE book of Numbers has been well named the "Pilgrim's Guide Book," and the portion I have read is in the fifth division, which speaks of God's *way* with His pilgrims, and the *end* He has in view for them.

In the sixth subdivision, of which this is a part, we have the commands as to the subjugation and limits of the land, while in this second section we have the "metes and bounds," as surveyors would say.

It was good for them to have the boundaries of their inheritance described to them while yet in the wilderness. One requires to know something of his estate ere he actually takes possession, to know what is on the *inside* of the fence as well as what is on the outside, who his neighbors are, etc. And if he cannot see it himself first, it is good to have it described by one who has seen it, and one who has sufficient ability in every way to give an accurate description. We may rest assured in this case, that as the description is the Lord's own, it is absolutely reliable.

The territory is one He has long had His heart upon for His beloved people. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds

of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. xxxii. 8).

Since "all these things happened unto them for types, and they are written for *our* admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come," it behooves us to acquaint ourselves with these boundaries; they are ours in a very special way.

The boundaries are twenty-one in number, which appear to divide readily into three distinct series of seven each,

a. Suggesting the Father's thought for His children.

b. Suggesting the Son's work as Accomplisher.

c. While in this series the fruits of the Spirit are clearly discernible.

1. "The wilderness of Zin." It is singular that this should be the first boundary of our heavenly inheritance, but we have seen already that this description is for wilderness use, and it is an immense help to the understanding of what an estate *is* to know what it is *not*, and that appears to be the import of what we have here. "Zin" means a "thorn," an abortive attempt at fruit and the mark of God's curse upon the earth because of sin. Here the world is before us with all its progress in civilization, Cain's world, but a wilderness and stamped with a curse.

"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world," and a wilderness of thorn the pilgrim is sure to find it, if he attempt to settle down in it; but a most fitting scene in which to learn the resources of a Father's hand and heart. How important then that this should be the first boundary, for how often have God's pilgrims been

hindered in their progress by vainly seeking their inheritance *in* the wilderness, not having learned at the outset that it was wholly *beyond*.

The "south quarter," suggests the full clear daylight, the absence of mystery. Let Abraham's rule then, be the rule of God's pilgrims ever; "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 10, 16).

2. "Edom." They would remember Edom. They tried compromise with him, but there could be none. "Wherefore Israel turned away from him."

Edom is practically the same as Adam and means "red." He was Jacob's twin brother with his name changed, but *he* was unchanged.

"Esau," "hairy" or "shaggy" showed the outside, while Edom showed the inside. He was profane, valued his birthright less than a mess of red pottage. "That which is first is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual."

Edom is just the natural man, the first man—"our old man"—and we are brought in this our second boundary to Edom that we may see our deliverance from him; he is on *the other side of the fence*. We "*go along by the west of Edom*." As a boundary in the land it speaks of an abiding memorial to deliverance, as given to pilgrims in the wilderness; it suggests the present application of the truth of it, as in 1 Pet. ii. "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul."

3. "The salt sea," another name for the dead sea, and represents the lake of fire.

Its being called the "salt sea" here is noticeable. Salt is preservative in character, "Remember Lot's wife"; and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Thus is suggested God's righteous recompense on both sides of the line, to those *in* the lake of fire and to God's pilgrims who have escaped it.

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, *rest*" (2 Thess. i. 6, 7).

"Your south border shall be the outmost west of the salt sea eastward." "*South* border" suggesting the broad open day-light in which all now lies, nothing hidden, nothing further to come out. Here God's pilgrims may view "the hole of the pit whence" they were "digged" (Isa. li. 1). "Outmost west . . . eastward," may suggest "the last dark drop" of that cup of wrath was drained by Him who was "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth," the One whose coming was ever the Hope of pilgrims. How rich and how full is the number three here, God fully displayed; His pilgrims sanctified unto Him and their praises ascending in view of what they are sanctified *to* and what they are sanctified *from*; and here is the sanctuary, where He dwells, for He dwells amid the praises of His redeemed (Ps. xxii. 3).

Now we turn to the ascent of

4. "Akrabbim," which means "scorpions," "ascent of the scorpions."

The number four is the number of experience, testing, and we are reminded here of "the serpent lifted up" and thus of the cross, where that love which made us pilgrims was exhibited, and where capacity was obtained to walk as pilgrims. Life was

needed, and obtained through the Son of man being lifted up, so that now we can "turn from the south to the ascent of Akkrabbim," which is like fleeing from the wrath to come, true repentance, intensely practical, alone enabling for a pilgrim walk. Thence we "pass over to

5. Zin," not now "the wilderness of Zin," but simply Zin, *i. e.* "the thorn."

The number five suggests God's presence, and review of the path; our need of the chastening "thorn," and the wisdom and tenderness with which He has used it. We are on the ascent still, and must not despise "the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" (Heb. xii. 5-13).

God with man indeed it is, with us as a Father, with us because He loved us.

His way, His end, His *presence*, and this everlasting monument to His faithful, wise, and loving use of the rod and given to us beforehand that we may "hear the rod and who hath appointed it" (Micah vi. 9). "And the going forth thereof shall be from the south to"

6. "Kadesh-barnea," *i. e.*, the "sanctuary of the wanderer."

We go forth from the discipline we have just been speaking of as those who have learned what the Father means by it, to the sanctuary, the "sanctuary of the *wanderer*"; and how often has His discipline been needed to bring us there, to "be partakers of His holiness"! It is like Rom. v. 3-5: "We boast

in tribulations also knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." No sanctuary like this, and what victory over sin, (which our sixth boundary suggests to us) does the "wanderer" find it to be!

"And if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee."

Blessed be God for a sanctuary like this, and for the key to it put into our hands beforehand! And now we "go on to"

7. "Hazar-addar" (enclosure of the mighty), a wonderful sabbath, the rest of God, we may say, and the fact that it is *His* rest gives it all its blessedness.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing."

As the seventh boundary it speaks of a full measure, and what could better fill this our first measure than Hazar-addar, the Father's house? Here one would linger, but we must "pass on to"

1. "Azmon," the first of the second series. Azmon means "strong," and if this second series speaks of the *second* Person of the Trinity, the Saviour, the Helper, it is of all importance that He should be "Strong," so that this boundary is most appropriately number one.

"I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people" (Ps. lxxxix. 19).

From this we turn unto—

2. "The river of Egypt." If the first monument spoke of the mighty Saviour, this second speaks of

the "so great salvation" which He accomplished for us.

This "river of Egypt" is really "the Sihor," *i. e.*, the "black" or "turbid" stream which marked off the land of Canaan from Egypt, a stream easily crossed, and was the "near" way of the Philistines into the land; but as seen now in contrast with the way God's pilgrims have come, will enlarge their view of this "so great salvation" "neglected" by the Philistines; and the fact that this river was "before Egypt," and here called "the river of Egypt," is an eternal reminder of what they have been delivered from. "And the goings out of it shall be at"

3. "The sea," the great sea, or Mediterranean.

As the western limit, it may speak of rest, for it is there the sun sinks to his rest, while it is also in contrast with the wicked who "are like the waves of the sea which *cannot* rest," the vast congregation of the dead, from whose doom and portion we are forever fenced off by having life in Him who was raised from the dead on the third day, our full realized portion as on resurrection ground, suggested by the number three.

From "this ye shall point out for you"

4. "Mount Hor," not the mountain where Aaron died, but suggesting that and with the same meaning, which is given as "pregnant" and hence perhaps "fruitful." There Aaron died and gave place to Eleazar ("help of God" or "help of the mighty One"), type of the death and resurrection of our Great High Priest. Death seems to have been the lesson for God's pilgrims at that time, life out of death, and that appears to be the lesson here. The Great Sea—picture of death—is our western border, it is wholly outside, we do not "taste of death."

This is beautifully the "north border," the side of mystery, the side of *faith*. Our Great Priest is there but unseen save by faith. The number of the bound speaks of walk, and we walk as seeing Him who is invisible, "we walk by faith, not by sight."

Remark, we must ourselves "point out" this border from the Great Sea to Mount Hor, as also the next,

5. "Unto the entrance of Hamath."

"Hamath means "fortress," and God's pilgrims have ever needed this and ever found it when sought. "The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer: the God of my rock; in Him will I trust: He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour. Thou savest me from violence." (2 Sam. xxii. 2, 3).

"The *entrance* of Hamath," may suggest with the number five, "by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). "And the goings forth of the border shall be to"

6. "Zedad." This means "steep side"; the "*extremity*" of the border is to reach this. Is this the glory of God to which allusion has just been made? God's pilgrims assuredly stand in His favor and look forward exultingly to His glory, and this is the "extremity" of their pilgrimage surely, and as surely is it a wonderfully "steep side," whether we look up to it as that *to* which we are delivered, or look down at the foe *from* which we are delivered, and in either case it answers well to its number (6) as victory over sin. Exulting in such hope is to be indeed upon a "steep side" quite out of the enemy's reach. "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength."

"Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We can now "go on to"

7. "Ziphron" ("sweet odor"). Surely, if rejoicing in the Lord is strength to pilgrims, it is "sweet odor" to Him who has furnished the materials for it. If "sweet odor" is the same as "savor of rest" (*cf.* Gen. viii. 21, *margin*) another lovely sabbath is brought before us, witnessed to both by the number of our boundary (7) and by its name; an eternal memorial to the One who has brought in new creation rest, where God will rest in His love forever.

Blessed Lord Jesus, Thy Name is indeed a "sweet odor," and it will be the everlasting joy of Thy pilgrims' hearts to ascribe homage and praise to Thee for having had the fragrance of that Name upon them and for having rendered it possible for them to add, in some sense at least, volume to it, as it goes up before Thy God forever!

"And the goings out of it shall be at"

1. "Hazar-enan," the meaning of which is "enclosure of fountains." Here we may say the Spirit dwells; lovely and appropriate beginning for the series of boundaries which more particularly refer to the Spirit. But He dwells in believers—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, . . . a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (Song iv. 12, 15).

This gives character to all the series.

So the *extremity* of our northern boundary is here at Hazar-enan, which looks as though all this north-

ern boundary, this walking by faith not by sight, all those ways of God which looked so mysterious, were to land God's pilgrims here at this "enclosure of fountains"! In this *third* series we must look for full divine manifestation, and a realized, settled order of things, and here we find it; here we see what He has had in mind all along. Surely "He knows the way He taketh," and let us now say, since we are let into His secret, "Awake O north wind: and come thou south: blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." From hence we are to point out our east border to

2. "Shepham," which means "fruitful."

The east wind of difficulty and trial was not always welcomed at the time, but then "*afterwards* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby."

We go down now to

3. "Riblah," ("fertility"). This third boundary in the third series, seems to speak of the full manifest and settled condition of things. The *soil* is fertile, all the fruits of the Spirit may be expected here. We have to "go down" to reach this boundary, for the most precious fruits grow in fertile vales. Lillies grow there, and "He feedeth among the lillies."

We pass "on the *east* side of Ain," and if pilgrims need, as so often, the searching east wind to force them into these fertile valleys, it is then they are most likely to turn the eye towards the east for the "morning star," the expected dawn, for "joy comes in the morning." Towards the west, the side of repose, lies

4. "Ain,"—"the fountain," where pilgrims may

drink, and where He drinks with them. This number four reminds us of the wilderness path, and the fact that we have *descended* to it, may well suggest Ps. lxxxiv. 6: "Who passing through the valley of Baca, make *it* a well."

The sorrow or trial met with, being accepted from Him as His love token, is made to yield refreshment to His Spirit, and thus *it* is made a well and He responds in rain from heaven filling the pools for pilgrims. And since the border passes to the east of Ain, it is *enclosed*, and becomes ours forever. It is in the land, whose springs never fail, but spring up into everlasting life. An everlasting reminder of the east wind was made to turn our eyes towards the quarter whence our star of Hope was coming, enabling pilgrims to sing: "In hope we lift our wishful, longing eyes." Blessed be God, well may pilgrims sing songs in the night, and say, "All my fresh springs are in Thee."

It was in the wilderness that "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." How sweet for the Holy Spirit to be saying to us here in this fourth boundary of the third series: "O Christ He is the Fountain, the deep sweet well of love!" and point Him out,—our "Ain"—upon the *west* side, the side of rest, eternal rest! But we continue to "descend, and shall reach unto the side (shoulder) of "

5. "The sea of Chinnereth eastward."

Chinnereth means "harp" or "lyre." The New Testament name for it is "Gennesaret," which means "garden of the prince." Wonderful combination we have here, standing in the "garden of the Prince," a "harp" put into our hands, in the presence of God

(5) to review His *way* with His pilgrims, and see the *end* He had in view all along. How wondrously has "the regeneration" transformed things, so that the "sea" has become a garden, the "garden of the Prince"! How like Rev. xv. 2, 3, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty." "In Thy presence fulness of joy, and pleasures forevermore."

Still further, however, we "go down" to

6. "Jordan," the "descending" river, which leads to the Dead Sea where nothing lives, and nothing ever returns from it. It is a type of death, which leads to judgment, but God's pilgrims cross dryshod by a path He prepared for them at His own cost, and the harps will take on a deeper, tenderer tone as they remember that all its waves and billows rolled over Him. Death when He entered into it for us was death in all its dread reality to Him, death as the judgment of God against sin, but what victory for us, as our *sixth* boundary now suggests, and what a triumph too for Him! Satan's power annulled, God glorified as to sin, a righteous basis laid upon which shall stand forever that "Kingdom which cannot be moved," and those praises secured amid which God shall dwell forever and forever! (Ps. xxii. 3). Glory to God! "And the goings out (extremity) of it shall be at the"

7. "Salt sea," picture of the lake of fire.

Here the deepest, and most solemn notes will be reached by those harps as this, the end, is reached. The character and extent of what is *not* our portion, of that we have escaped is fully before us, and to abide an eternal memorial of the greatness of our salvation, "What hath God wrought?" One of the most prolific sources of litigation to-day is the obliteration of boundaries, may ours be kept clearly defined in the soul, and the fact that they are described beforehand to pilgrims be sanctified to us, and our hearts enlarged towards those whose portion is not within those wondrous bounds.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

J. B. J.

ARE YOU IN DARKNESS OR IN LIGHT?

READER, do you realize that this world, as Satan's sinfulness and man's sinfulness have made it, is in God's sight a scene of moral degradation and darkness? And have you weighed the terrible fact which the word of God demonstrates, that, moving amidst such darkness, the great multitude of men are in themselves as dark as their surroundings?

Do you realize that the mass of men are lost souls, blindly groping their way in time, with eternity before them? that they are heart-hardened and conscience-seared victims of their own lusts? and that Satan induces them not to take their own sinfulness and that of their fellows too seriously, by means of plausible lies concerning this life, eternity, and God?

Do not men prove what they are by their thoughts

and actions? Each individual has a selfish heart; therefore the world is full of selfishness. Each heart is a hot-bed of secret lusts which it would like to gratify. A certain proportion of these secret desires are actually carried into execution, making human society groan beneath its burden of crime and shameful deeds.

Select but one of the world's great cities, and take the record of its newspapers and police courts for but a single day! What an exhibition of the human heart! Yet here we have only such cases as reach publicity amongst the grosser outbreaks merely, which even man's law must prohibit in order to make this world tolerable even to sinners! But also consider the brood of social sins, winked at by man's law, which each day brings forth! And think, further, of the surging tide of impure thoughts and secret desires,—impulses of lust, covetousness, passion and hate,—which daily leave their defiling trail in the *hearts* of perhaps all in the city, high and low, depraved and highly “cultured,” alike!

The flood of corruption and evil which prevails in the world is merely the aggregate of iniquity which is constantly being poured out from individual hearts. Each child of Adam, however respectable, contributes his part to this enormous cesspool. Whoever you are, my reader, certainly you also contribute *your* part. And the most appalling feature is the sad fact that each heart still contains within itself more and worse than it ever pours out,—yea, the *spring* and *fountain* of the evil! For human governments, courts, police, jails, and other social institutions,—corrupt as is their administration, in the hands of men who are themselves sinners like all others,—are

nevertheless God's merciful provision to restrain man from unbridled license.

But a restraint is not a cure. Hence the attempts of all the reformers in the world's history to solve the problem of good and evil have proved futile. Such men (themselves also sinners, however respectable) attempt to curb and restrain the world's grosser evils, yet cannot eradicate the *root* of all these evils, since they cannot *re-create the human heart* and make it pure!

The sinful heart in your bosom and mine, my friend, is the thing at fault. The Saviour put His finger upon the sore spot,—this root of evil,—when He said: "That which *cometh out of the man*, that defileth the man. For *from within, out of the heart* of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things *come from within*, and defile the man" (Mark vii. 20-23).

Shall we, then, trim and doctor the branches of a tree which is *rotten at the roots*? God, at least, is not so foolish. John, the fore-runner of Christ, testified: "Now also the ax is laid *unto the roots of the trees*" (Matt. iii. 10). And the Saviour Himself said, very plainly, and to a most respectable man, "*Ye must be born again*"! Man must be newly fashioned—through and through!

Thus even God Himself can command but two remedies to stem the flood of evil which surges from the inexhaustible source of evil in the human heart. (1) If we will permit Him to *save* us, honestly confessing to Him our need of this, He will eventually *re-fashion these hearts of ours*, making them holy for

eternity. (2) But if we refuse His offer to do this (and we refuse it by rejecting the gospel of Jesus Christ), then He must bring our career of evil to a close in death and judgment, His wrath throughout eternity restraining the unchanged heart from breaking out into open sin.

Dear reader, which thing have *you* chosen,—to be a vessel of God's mercy, or a vessel of His wrath? to have your heart *cured*, and made fit for eternal happiness with the redeemed in God's presence, or merely to have your pestilential heart *curbed and restrained in judgment*, so as no longer to contaminate the moral atmosphere? Which have you chosen?

But not alone is man immersed in the corruption he has produced: he is in *darkness* concerning it,—de-luded, blinded, as to his real condition, and the inexorable consequences flowing out of it. The word of God says: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world,—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,—is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John ii. 15, 16). But men say (because their hearts are as dark as the world around them, the world answering to, and being in affinity with, what is in their hearts): "This world is good enough for me!" Reader, have you ever said or thought this? *Is* this world "good enough" for you? Then how good are you? Are you at home in this sin-laden atmosphere? How impregnated, then, with the virus of sin must your own heart and mind be!

A world of man's crime and misery! of sin, of suffering, of sorrow! of groans and pain and blasphemy and cruelty and selfishness and impure

thoughts and deeds! Yet in such a scene most men are self-satisfied optimists, while they heartlessly tread one another down in the mad struggle for the selfish advantages and prizes of this life! Dear reader, are *you* one of this selfish multitude,—loving and seeking “the things that are in the world,” jostling your way among fellow-sinners to grasp at these things, in order that you may gratify the sinful lusts of your flesh, the covetous desires of your eyes, and the vain pride of this life? Then may God have mercy upon you, before it is too late!

But how can men be optimists, in the face of this universal corruption, and each soul's contribution to it? The word of God explains this mystery. It is because the minds and hearts of men are immeshed in “the snare of the devil,” and “are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tim. ii. 26).

Satan, inspiring the minds of men, his dupes, is the author of all the optimistic systems of philosophy—of all the excuses for sin, and palliations of it, behind which men hide their seared consciences! He it is who inspires and nourishes unbelief in every heart! who seeks to discredit the testimony of the word of God, in its exposure of the darkness! who invents the slanders, voiced both by open infidels and by such professing Christians as the “higher critics,” against the “Scriptures of truth”!

Satan forged the lie about God which, entering into the heart of Adam and Eve, corrupted them from their allegiance to God's word. And ever since, this “Father of lies” has continued to forge plausible sophistries, constantly tempering his methods, and his philosophy of unbelief, to the spirit of the times. Sinful man is naturally hostile to God, “because the

carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7). And Satan is the spirit who, at his own will, stirs up and employs against the truth this natural enmity of the human heart. Scripture therefore speaks of him as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh *in* the sons of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2).

So completely is the world under Satan's sway and subtle influence that he is also spoken of as "the *god* of this age." If men do not accept the light of God's revelation, it is simply because Satan, this world's god, has darkened and blinded the minds of his victims. For "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

Thus, with the exception only of those who are saved through faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, Satan deceives to their destruction the whole world. He holds the human intellect, in which man boasts, in his seductive power, prating of human progress, enlightenment, and the age of reason, while he lulls foolish men, who trust to their supposed wisdom, into false security—in the very face of their *manifest* corruption! Hence Scripture proclaims the fearful fact that "the *whole world lieth in the wicked one*" (1 John v. 1, *Gr.*)!

Such, in brief, is the moral darkness of this world: a scene where man wallows in his own corruption, while Satan's subtle inspiration makes black appear white to the sin-beclouded reason of fallen humanity, seducing men from realizing the facts as they are, or making them skeptics as to future consequences,

through the cunning occupation of the mind with man's material achievements, and the insinuation into it of some one of the many schemes of fatal error!

But mark well, unsaved reader: as one living in Christendom, where the word of God is known, *your* condemnation proceeds not merely upon the fact that you are a responsible unit in the world's system of corruption. An additional verdict is rendered against you: that *Light* has shone into this darkness, through God's mercy and yet you have not honestly come to this Light, and pleaded guilty under its exposure, in order that you might be saved! F. A.

(To be continued.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QUES. 14.—Please explain the expression “washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. i. 5). Is the reading of the Revised Version correct, “loosed” instead of “washed,” and if so is there no thought of cleansing by blood except as applying to our position before God? Would it be correct to say that the blood is what gives us a perfect cleansing as to our standing before God, and the cleansing of the heart is by the new birth, through the word of God?

ANS.—The blood suggests the life given up as the atoning sacrifice provided in the love of God for our sins. It is that which avails before God, and is the ground of our perfect and eternal justification. The blood is thus Godward and its effects are in the holiest, whither Christ has entered by it for us. This is the work done *for* us. The work done *in* us is by the Spirit, through the word of God. The expression therefore, “washed us in His own blood,” would not refer to the personal cleansing of the believer's soul, but the effectual work of Christ which presents him perfect before God. While the reading, “loosed us” is well supported, it is not necessarily the correct one, and “washed” is more like John's writings. See 1 John i. 7; Rev. vii. 14. Inward cleansing is by new birth, through the Word, and constant cleansing is by that Word applied to our hearts day by day. Of course, all rests upon the ground of Christ's finished work, but the distinction indicated should be preserved.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

4. NEW BIRTH: WHAT IS IT.

THERE has doubtless been so much said of late with regard to new birth and eternal life that many will wish that controversy as to these could stop; and many will think that all has been said that can be said about them. One can surely sympathize with those who think so, and what is said may be the briefer on that account: still these subjects are so central in their importance in relation to Christian truth, and the novel doctrines concerning them have so central a place also in connection with the system which we are reviewing, that it would be impossible to treat this in any satisfactory way without looking at what is in question here. So far also as we are individually concerned, whatever might be the purpose of God with regard to us, and whatever the blessed work upon the basis of which that purpose can alone be justified and take effect, yet where it begins to take effect is in new birth. Thus our review may well begin here, although as to the system before us it is rather in this case a blank than a doctrine—a denial than an affirmation. Yet a denial may have all the importance of an affirmation, and the meeting it be absolutely necessary in order to laying securely the foundations of truth. If we do not know what new birth is, we cannot rightly know what eternal life is either, and much else will become uncertain as the result of this. Amid this uncertainty many suppositions may assume the character of truth and be accepted for it which will for ever prevent the truth being received. If Scripture can

clear up this cloud-land for us, it will not only be in itself a gain, but it may prove a way made clear to further progress. Let us inquire at least.

Not merely has the confession been made, "I cannot tell you what new birth is," but it has been openly challenged that no one has any better ability. This is the ignorance of the agnostic, which requires more knowledge than anything that knowledge would pretend to. For in this case one has to be sure that the level of one's own capacity is at least as high as any other whatever can possibly be; and with such knowledge as this, every humble mind would readily concede the palm of superiority to its happy possessor.

Such an one will naturally teach, or at least tell his thoughts; and safely, where no one has better knowledge. Thus it is not thought that there is in new birth a communication of anything, but simply an effect produced. It is the *man* that is born again: whatever may be the extent of it; it is I myself, the individuality. That is how Scripture speaks of new birth. It is a human idea that something is imparted, but Scripture says, *I* am born again. Then the Lord puts it more abstractly—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh," for it would go too far to say, "he who is born of the Spirit is spirit": it would make *me* spirit and nothing else. Yet if the wick of a lamp may represent the individual, it is as though a thread of another description were introduced into the texture of the wick! The result is a collapse of the man,—of all that makes him a man of the world, of all his self-importance. Then there is a cry, a very feeble cry! the first sign of life in a babe is a cry of want or pain; yet Scripture does not apply the term "life" to such a state!

One feels so often as if one needed to make apology for such statements, and as if it must certainly be thought that there is some misrepresentation here; but while the putting together is indeed my own, every statement made is an actual quotation. New birth makes a man appear alive, but he is not alive. In it there is no communication of anything at all, but only an *introduction* of something; with very important consequences, no doubt; but still there is as yet no link in the soul with God.

I am not responsible for the contradiction that appears in these things, either among themselves or with scripture. Scripture says,—yea, the Lord Jesus Himself,—that that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and to say that here nevertheless there is no link with God, seems as near a direct denial of the divine word as could be uttered, if we are not to assert that it is that. And again there is a similar thing when the Lord speaks of the man as being born again, and we are assured notwithstanding that he is not alive! What kind of birth are we to call it, when although the “renewing of the mind is the outcome” of it, yet there is no life! one is born of God and yet not His; yea, has no link with Him as yet at all!

Is it necessary to go further in the examination of these statements! There should be no need. But let us look at the Lord’s words themselves, and see if they leave us so much in the dark as is supposed, as to what new birth is. There is nothing imparted, says this teaching; because it is *I* who am born again. Scripture says, we are born again, not of “corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth” (1 Pet. i. 23); and it

adds, "and this is the word which in the gospel is preached unto you." The word of the gospel then, brought home by the power of the Spirit of God, is that by which the man is born again.

But here again the truth as Scripture gives it to us comes right up against the theories; which as usual also clash with each other. For we have already seen that it is denied the Scripture is of any use to souls away from God, without the voice of the living preacher. It is conceded indeed that God is sovereign, and may be pleased to use it, in the same way that He could by an exceptional miracle make use of the speech of Balaam's ass. It is useless to send Bibles to the heathen, because this is so very exceptional. God's way is undoubtedly by preaching! And yet, strangely enough (if anything is strange here) in connection with this theme of new birth we are informed that the work of the evangelist is to *enlighten the new born soul*. When by the power of God's Spirit a man *has* been born again, the next thing is that the soul has to be enlightened.

Thus here again we seem to be in a dilemma. It is of no use to send Bibles to the heathen: God's way is undoubtedly by preaching. And yet the preachers' work is only to enlighten those already new born! Scripture however declares that men are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God in the gospel, and that the Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation; while the preacher is God's great instrumentality for getting the saving truth before unwilling men. There is here no semblance of contradiction, the word of God being in all cases that by which new birth is effected in the soul,—whether it be in the page of the inspired

Word or by the mouth of the evangelist. In either case the Spirit of God must act: as the Lord puts it in His pregnant figure, "water" and "Spirit" must go together.

The incorruptible seed is thus imparted. The seed is not the mere word, but as nature itself teaches, *the word with the life in it*. Every fruitful seed carries in it that mystery of life, which we may be little able to analyze, but which we cannot reason away: it is *there*, reason as we will; and without it there would be no growth or good whatever.

Thus there is that which is born of the Spirit, and what is born is "spirit." Will any one say that that does not convey the thought of a new nature, akin to that from which it has originated? And "the Spirit is life" (Rom. viii. 10); everything here speaks of the communication of life; look through Scripture as you will, there is no dead spirit anywhere. "The Spirit quickeneth" (2 Cor. iii. 6): "the spirit is life;" dead spirit, dead spiritual birth, dead child of God, or new born child with yet no link with Him,—these are all thoughts so foreign to Scripture, so contrary to it, that nothing but the exigency of an untenable theory could ever suggest them to one even tolerably acquainted with it.

As for the argument that the *man* being born again is in contradiction to the idea of something being imparted in this, the answer has been given by the one who uses it. "The Scripture teaches that *I* am born again, *whatever may be the extent of it*." There is the whole difficulty, such as it is; and it is no very great one. The man is born again, and yet he is not new in all that he is. His body does not partake in this transformation; and he has yet the old nature—

the flesh in that sense. The moment you say, The man is born again, whatever may be the extent of it, you state the difficulty, and admit it to be one that you must recognize, as well as the person you are arguing with. But it is no more a difficulty than abundance of fully admitted things. The man is born again; and yet, when you come to define more closely, you speak of "*that* which is born again," and could not say of the man what you say of this. You can say, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," while you cannot say, "The man who is born of the Spirit is spirit." It argues nothing whatever in the way desired. Let us only change the figure, as Scripture itself enables us, so as now to take into consideration what was before omitted, that this is a yet incomplete change in a moral being, the figure of grafting furnishes you with the needed means of taking in, as before you could not, all the facts. The tree which is grafted yet retains enough of its old nature to need care lest, by allowing shoots from below the graft, it should become practically wild again. Yet we speak of it rightly enough as a grafted *tree*. In a figure taken from the human sphere, which alone fits with the Lord's application for Nicodemus, one cannot find what will fit all round; no unusual thing in figures constantly made use of. The Lord's purpose does not contemplate the old nature,—that is all; and therefore the figure of birth, in other respects so perfect, is thoroughly suited.

But the man is born again; and the thought of a new life imparted is inherent in this. This life, moreover, is all that counts for life before God. The man was dead previously; now he lives; there is but one death in this sense, and but one coming to life;

and if a man is no longer dead, he is alive: there is no intermediate state between the two, and therefore no interval. The one born of God is a child of God, and He has no dead children. Spirit from the Spirit is the nature of that which is born; the child partakes of the father's nature. If life is communicated, as despite all protests it most surely is, then the life so derived is necessarily eternal life. Whether or not you allow that it is what Scripture designates under that term, (and as to this we shall have to inquire directly,) yet it is impossible to deny that life attaching to a spiritual nature originating in a new birth of the Spirit must be in the fullest sense eternal life.

How important then, in connection with questions that lie before us, is this doctrine of new birth! and how significant that the system which is sought to be imposed upon us as the truth of God has to begin with a confession of blank ignorance, which is really a denial of Scripture testimony upon so important a matter! According to the system, to be born of God is somewhat that involves neither life, nature, nor relationship,—no link in the soul with God at all! It is no wonder, but a necessity of this, that those born of Him should be denied to be His children. Thus it is asked, "Is it so that 'children' speaks of *descent*?" And the answer is,—"I do not think that is quite just. It is not the scriptural thought of children. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit: it is by the Spirit we understand that we are children. . . . You ought not to take that place, except as born of God; but the place is given you of the Father"!—an argument quite as inconsequent as anything we have listened to on the same side. Naturally, eternal life is something far beyond, and although you are born

of God, if that is all, you have yet to pass from death unto life!

Thus I repeat it, the doctrine is that one that is simply born of God is not a child of God, has not life, nature, nor relationship. To put it in the dreariest form of the negation made, he has no link in his soul with God at all!

F. W. G.

(To be continued.)

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

(Continued from page 214.)

4. A GLEANER IN THE FIELDS OF GRACE.

(Chapter ii.)

BETHLEHEM is true to its name, "the House of Bread," and its white harvest fields speak of the plenty there must be where God's blessing rests. The time of harvest and ingathering is one of joyous labor. It is the crown of the year,— "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." All the long patience of the husbandman is at an end, and his care now is but to reap the fruits of his labor. "The valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."

God's harvest is without doubt a time of special joy to Him, as He sees the results of divine care and patience in the world. Spite of the unbelief of men, the malignity of satan, and the slowness of heart even in His own, there is fruit to His praise. Nor is it necessary to divorce the thought of the seed sown, the Word, from the fruits gathered in, souls saved and conformed to that Word. Our Lord does not separate them, and as a matter of fact, it is the Word that produces saints: "Being born again, not

of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. i. 23). How precious is the thought that every child of God will be conformed to that Word through which he has been begotten, and thus also to Christ who in the perfection of His person is the embodiment of all that the word of God is. So we think of the harvest time as the season of gathering in the souls who have been brought under the saving power of the word of God. At the same time, we do no violence to the figure when we apply it also to the full grace that is in the Word for souls, and above all to Christ Himself, "the old corn of the land," who as we have said, in Himself has all the fulness of the Godhead.

Thus we are introduced to but one person at Bethlehem, Boaz, who is the lord of the harvest and the dispenser of bounty. His name, "in him is strength," reminds us at once of the One of whom he is the type. He is "a mighty man of wealth," or valor, as the word more naturally means; for He has reached His place as the Lord of the harvest, and the bountiful Giver through the conflict in which He was the Victor over the "strong man." He has reached the place of wealth through the path of poverty—laying aside the riches that were His by right, in order that He might have associated with Himself those objects of His love and grace. This also reminds us of His long patience and the "travail of His soul," when He poured out His soul in tears and shed His blood that there might be fruit for God in a lost world. Surely to Him those words of the Psalm could apply in a special way, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again

with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him " (Ps. cxxvi. 6).

Thus in Boaz we see the Lord in resurrection, after His toil and suffering, entering upon His joy, and the One in whom is everlasting strength. He is of the kindred of Elimelech, for our Lord took hold of the seed of Abraham and is not ashamed to call them brethren. His relation to Elimelech also recalls what Israel should have been to God, but which she lost, for Elimelech is dead. Here is One, however, who in His life ever manifested the relation to God which Israel failed to do, but who in grace went into the death and judgment which Israel deserved. He is thus ready to maintain the relation forfeited by them, and in resurrection to make good what they had lost.

This is beautifully brought out in Isaiah. Jacob was God's servant, but he proved unfaithful and had to be set aside; then the true and perfect Servant is presented, the One who in life and death always did God's will and is now exalted; then a remnant will turn in faith to this Servant, and finding forgiveness through Him, will themselves become the servant of the Lord, and the seed of a holy nation, which will finally be brought back to its proper allegiance and subjection to God. All will come through the kinsman, who we shall see is the Redeemer. But we must return to our narrative.

The scene is a beautiful and attractive one even in a natural sense. The relation between Boaz and his reapers is all too rare in a world where selfishness in the master and suspicion in the servant are the rule. This must ever be the case where God is left out, and the gulf between "labor and capital" will only widen

till the reign of grace be established in the hearts of men. How futile are labor laws and efforts for universal prosperity, when the root of the evil—the sin and selfishness of man's heart—is not reached. It never will be reached until He come of whom Boaz is the type. Then there will be the greetings we have here, "The Lord be with you;" "The Lord bless Thee."

What a flood of memories must have well-nigh overwhelmed Naomi as she gazed on those familiar fields! When she last saw them her life was bright with hope; now all was changed. No doubt she looked through her tears at all the joy and abundance before her, but which had for her passed to come again no more. How sad to the widowed heart is the joy to which she must ever be a stranger. No wonder then that she makes no effort to better herself. Memory was busy, and doubtless for the present employed all her time and thoughts.

Doubtless there will be, as we have been seeing, this sense of desolation on the part of the remnant of Israel. For them there will be no joy, and all the abundance of God's house will but intensify their sense of poverty, and thus, in His mercy, deepen the work so needful in their souls. Whether for Israel, or the wandering saint, there must be a deep work in the soul if God's restoring mercy is to be enjoyed. This is often forgotten by the Lord's people, and the "hurt" is healed slightly. It is good to be in the house of affliction, and a proper preparation for the house of feasting. So Naomi's sorrow and her silence is natural and proper.

But with Ruth it is different. She represents, as we have seen, the faith in the remnant, which makes

no claim of right, but comes to glean in the fields of divine mercy. Hence she is called the Moabitess here, her gentile origin debarring her from all legal claim to any portion in Israel. And yet God had made provision for just such. "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger" (Lev. xxiii. 22). Here are the crumbs which fall from the Master's table, and which will prove for Ruth, as for the woman of Canaan, an abundance for all her need.

This passage, coming between the feast of Pentecost and that of Tabernacles, would suggest just this widowed state of the remnant, which must precede their time of joy, and the fulness of blessing when "every man shall dwell under his own vine and fig tree." Pentecost signifies the blessing of the Church associated with Christ in resurrection. When the Lord has taken her to Himself as His heavenly bride the widowed remnant of Israel will appear as one who has forfeited her rights, but whose faith as in Ruth, will begin to glean according to the special provision of the mercy of God.

Naomi gives her consent to Ruth's gleaning and thus is identified in all that happens to the younger woman. How blessed it is to know that the broken-hearted desolation and the budding forth of faith are thus identified before God. Faith looks through the tears of penitence, and both are one in God's sight.

It is all grace, and Ruth realizes that her gleaning is to be in the fields of him in whose eyes she shall find favor. It is always a mark of an unbroken

spirit, or one but partially restored, when this lowly sense of absolute unworthiness is lacking. Oh, how we rob ourselves when we maintain a high place and a bold attitude. Grace is for the lowly only, whether sinner or saint, and there can be no enjoyment of it without the broken heart which God will not despise.

We see how everything is ordered of God, not by Ruth. She does not know in whose field she is gleaning: "Her *hap* was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz." Humanly speaking, it was Rebekah's hap to be at the well when Abraham's servant came in search for a bride for his master's son; it was the hap of the woman of Samaria to meet the Stranger from Judea, who had such words of life and grace to tell her. But we know that what is man's "hap" is God's purpose, the purpose of love of Him who sees the end from the beginning and plans it all. His eye was upon Rebekah, and He made her go out to the well the first to meet the servant of Abraham. He constrained the woman of Samaria to go where she would meet the Son of God, and have her life transformed by the message He brought her. He knows and He draws each of us, at the appointed time and in the appointed way, to the place of blessing. How wonderful are His ways, and what love there is behind what seem to be the merest incidents. God is absolutely sovereign. All our blessings are from Him alone. The work of grace, from beginning to end, is His. Therefore to Him alone is all the praise.

(To be continued, if the Lord please.)

THE VEIL.

IN Exod. xxvi. 31-35 we find the instructions given to Moses as to the veil. He is told what material to use, the manner of its workmanship, where and how to hang it. It was to divide between the holy place and the most holy, and signified that the way of approaching God was not made known. It did not mean that there was no way by which men could go to God, but that the way had not then been made manifest. Subsequently, (Lev. xvi.) we find instructions are given as to how the high-priest was to come into the place within the veil. He could not come at all times, only on stated occasions. Once a year only could he enter in there, and then it must be with the blood of a sacrifice.

All this speaks unmistakably of a way to God, but of a way not then made known. On the ground of sacrifice and with the blood of it one man, the high-priest of the nation of Israel, could go in just once a year where the symbol of the presence of Jehovah was. This declared that the way for man to go to God was by sacrifice, but the sacrifice on the ground of which the high-priest went in only once a year was not the sacrifice which opened up the real way to God. The veil unrent proclaimed that the true way of approaching God was still unrevealed. The sacrifice by which Aaron went in once a year was a type of the true and perfect sacrifice, and his entrance within a type of the entrance of the High-Priest of the heavenly sanctuary. He went in, but not through a rent veil. The veil still unrent declared that if the way in was by sacrifice, the true sacrifice—the one

which really opens up the actual way to the presence of God, had not yet been provided.

But if the unrent veil signified that the true way was not yet made known, it also implied that it would be made known. Faith, then, using what was a figure for the time then present, and what had been imposed on them until the time of reformation, looked forward to the time of the revelation of the true sacrifice and the manifestation of the true way of approach to God.

Turning now to the New Testament, we find that when Christ died as a sacrifice, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This rending of the veil declared that the true way to God had been made known. The sacrifice of Christ is the true ground of approach to God. His death, His blood, has opened up the way to His presence. The rending of the veil of the temple, when Christ died, was the sign that the way to God which faith had been taught to look forward to had been opened up. The sacrifice which the yearly sacrifice pointed to had been made and the way to God of which the veil was a witness, while declaring it to be unmanifested, was now revealed.

Looking back now in the light of this it is not difficult to understand how the veil of the tabernacle was a type of Christ's flesh. The real veil was the holy, heavenly man Jesus. When His flesh was rent, when He died, when His blood was shed, the true way for man to go to God was made manifest, the way for man to enter the presence of God was opened up.

The epistle to the Hebrews takes this view. It looks at the veil as Christ's flesh. It considers the

sacrifice of Christ as the ground of approach to God. It tells us that the way to God has been opened up by Christ's death, that it is the blood of Jesus that gives us boldness to enter into the holy places.

We find in the epistle that Christ is spoken of as having "passed *through* the heavens" (chap. iv. 14), as having "entered *within* the veil" (chap. vi. 19, 20), as "set down on the right hand of the Majesty *on high*" (chap. i. 3), as "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty *in the heavens*" (chap. viii. 1), "as a minister *of the sanctuary*" (chap. viii. 2), as having "entered in once for all *into the holy place*" (chap. ix. 12), as having entered "*into heaven itself*" (chap. ix. 24), as appearing "*in the presence of God*" chap. ix. 24), and as having made a way—a new and living way *through the veil* (chap. x. 20).

Now all these passages speak of Christ having gone in to God, or as being in His presence on the ground of His death. But we might ask, Was He not entitled to be in the presence of God on the ground of His own personal rights and titles? Surely, He did not die for Himself. But He undertook to open up a way for us. It was a question, not of how He could go to God, but of how we could go. Only *He* could answer it. But if He answers it He must die as a sacrifice. If He undertakes to make a way for us to God He must go in Himself by the way of death. No other way of going in for Him would open the way to us. For us to enter into God's presence He must first find entrance for us, and that could only be by death, by shedding His blood. Thus it is clear that the veil between us and God was the veil of His flesh. He has passed it by rending it, by dying.

Having passed it thus, having thus gone in to God for us, we know the way by which we may draw nigh to Him. Our way to God is the way He has made for us—the way of His death.

If we think of Him as gone in for us, He is there in all the reality of His humanity—a true man still, touched with all the feeling of our infirmity, and so we may be bold to come for sympathy, succor and help—the grace and mercy we need.

He is there also as our Forerunner (Heb. vi. 20). He necessarily went in first, but having gone in as Forerunner, He is the guarantee that we shall reach the place He has entered for us. Thus we have a sure and steadfast hope. Whatever the storms here we have an anchor in there where He has gone.

Again, His priestly activity there will not be interrupted or superseded. He *ever* lives to intercede for us. He is incessant in His care. Will never weary of the work He is doing for us, and it will never pass from His hands. A constant, unfailing Intercessor, He is able to save us right along the way to the very end of it.

All the affairs of the place in which He is are in His hands. The sympathy, succor and help we need He gives. The day by day salvation He effects and the sacrifices of praise we offer to God are presented to Him by the One who has gone in to God for us. In every way provision is made for us, but it is all found in Him who is there for us.

The veil being now rent, the sacrifice having been made, His blood having been shed, and He being there in God's presence on that ground—and there for us, we may boldly come. We may draw nigh with a better hope than Israel had. We can boldly enter in. We can draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith.

ARE YOU IN DARKNESS OR IN LIGHT?

(Continued from page 252.)

GOD is merciful and full of pity; He loves His creatures, however fallen; and He longs to save men from the corruption and darkness which engulf them. Therefore the world is not condemned merely because it is *lost*, but because it is not willing to be saved—honestly! The condemnation is not that the world is in gross darkness, but that it deliberately chooses to *remain* in this darkness, after Light is mercifully sent to it. Hear the sad words of the Saviour Himself:

“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, *through Him*, might be saved. He that believeth in Him is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation: that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John iii. 17-21).

Why was it that the Lord of Glory, coming into the world which His hands had made, in love and grace and tender pity, as a Man among men, was crucified by His creatures, under the charge of being a criminal, unfit to live among them? It was because “*men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil*”! His life among us was itself an

exposure of the lives of all others, and in His words He told the truth about us, exposing our hearts as God sees them. This was His only crime; for this He was crucified! True, He told the truth in love and sweet compassion, holding up the mirror to us in order that we might realize our need and accept salvation at His hands. For while the mere presence of such an One in the world necessarily manifested all things here, yet He testified that He had come *not* to condemn, but to *save*. And thus not cold and merciless "truth" alone, exposing us to hopeless condemnation, but "*grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17)! But yet the truth, in the purest grace, we will not have, and even man's indifferent laws and standard of justice were outraged by us in order that He Who is "THE TRUTH" *might be got rid of!*

Since the murder of Jesus of Nazareth, the world is under the condemnation of having killed the only Man in the world's history Who was fit to live! is guilty of having visited the criminal's doom upon the only One born of woman Who was not, by nature and by practice, a criminal! This is the cruel answer of the human heart to Him Who simply ventured to tell the necessary truth to those He loved, and came to save! And do not say that it is not the answer of *your* heart, dear reader, simply because you did not have the opportunity to actually imbrue your hands in His blood! Satan could have stirred up *your* sinful heart just as easily as he did the hearts of the murderers of Jesus. The capacity of one heart is the capacity of all, for "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19); while this capacity of each human heart for evil God

alone can estimate: "The heart is deceitful *above all things*, and *desperately* wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. xvii. 9, 10).

But there is a present test of this matter, my reader? What is *your present attitude* toward the Light? Have *you* accepted Jesus' testimony that *you* are a lost sinner, only fit for judgment in your natural state, and have *you* trusted your soul to Him, that you might be fitted for eternal happiness? Or do *you* with all your respectability, love darkness rather than light, because your deeds, too, are evil?

For Jesus Christ, the Son of God,—“God . . . manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. iii. 16),—is this Light that has come into the world, to save all who will come to it, and thus necessarily condemning all who refuse it! The Word of God, one of the Persons of the Godhead (through Whom, as become Man, all the Fulness of the Godhead has shown out in a perfect Humanity), He has fully revealed amidst the darkness of earth *what God is*,—all that *man* is being thus also delineated, by vivid contrast. This is the Light! “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”; “and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” “in Him was *Life*, and the *Life* was the *Light of men*” (John i. 1, 14, 4).

This great phenomenon of the ages,—the appearance in the world of *the only perfect Man it has ever seen*, the lowly and tender-hearted Jesus of Nazareth,—was nothing less than *the revelation of the Almighty Himself*, the Creator Who framed the universe, in humble Manhood! “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John i. 3). God's purpose

was ever fixed, as His love was set, upon *man*,—the creature whom He had destined to be His friend and companion! Therefore *as Man*, the great Lover of men Himself drew near, to woo and to redeem the objects of His Divine affections. In assuming humanity He became the *manifestation* of that Eternal Life that had existed in God without a beginning. For when He took part in flesh and blood, God, Who had always lived *as God*, beyond our ken, now lived the life of God *before our eyes*, as Man.

This Life of God, shining out in the career of a *Man*, is the "Light of men," the "Light of the world"! And thus we have "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God [God's *moral* glory,—the sublime perfection of His nature and character, displayed in words and acts] *in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor. iv. 6)! From the face of Jesus,—the face of a *Man*,—the Light of what God is, in blended holiness and tenderness, now shines toward all men, and into the hearts of all who open their hearts to receive the blessed, healing revelation!

How is it with *you*, dear reader? Has this Light shined into *your* heart? or are *you* under the condemnation of having rejected the God Who has thus revealed Himself, because you are not willing to face the truth about yourself in the presence even of the love which seeks but to heal you? If the latter be your case then, in spite of the many theories of unbelief with which you may be attempting to reassure yourself, know this from God's Word: If you will not permit the Light to unmask you *now*, in tender, saving grace, He Who is that Light, *as your Judge*, must inevitably unmask you in the day of judgment, stripping you naked in condemnation, in the presence

of the whole universe, to your eternal undoing! But now, in boundless love and pity, He *besecches* you to trust Him and be reconciled to Him, so as not to force Him to such an alternative. Have you closed with this offer? Or do you tempt your God?

Thus the advent of Jesus in this world of sinners was the coming of *God Himself*, in humble guise, to live the Life of God in humanity, illuminating the darkness. That the Almighty should assume manhood was predicted by the prophets. In foretelling that the promised Ruler in Israel was to be born in Bethlehem, Micah (v. 2) declared He would be the One "Whose goings forth have been of old, *from everlasting*." In Zechariah xii. 10, Jehovah says, "They shall look upon *Me* Whom they have pierced." Jehovah could not be "pierced," except He assumed creaturehood. And Isaiah testifies most unequivocally: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel,"—that it to say, "God with us"; "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6).

None other than "the Mighty God" Himself, the "Father of Eternity," was revealing Himself in the meek and lowly Jesus. Therefore the life and death of this *Man*, Who was God also, is henceforth the only Standard of perfection,—the Light by which all other things are judged. My unsaved reader, do you wish to begin to learn what you are, and what God is? Then come, and honestly measure yourself by this Standard.

Measure your life of self-seeking in the Light of His life of complete self-abnegation, even to the point of His endurance on the cross of the punishment of *your* sins, that you might be forgiven! Measure the enmity of your mind against God in the Light of His loving devotion to His Father,—His obedience *unto death*, and that the death of the cross! Measure your pride and ambitions in the Light of His voluntary humiliation! your selfish struggle for riches, fame and power in the Light of His self-sacrifice Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich! Measure your selfish insistence upon your "rights" in this world—who have really forfeited all rights before God—in the Light of His uncomplaining abrogation of all rights as Man, Who, as God, alone possessed rights! Measure your feeble and selfish love toward even those dearest to you,—not to speak of your *hatred* of those you deem your enemies,—in the Light of His marvelous love for His enemies, for whom He died, and for whom He interceded on the cross, even while His murderers mocked Him! Measure your transgressions, more than the hairs of your head, in the Light of His holy deeds of love! Your corruption of heart and mind in the Light of His transparent purity!

To what extent have *you* lost reputation and caste through loving service among the publicans and sinners of this world? Where is *your* life, lived in such holy power as to completely convict men of sin and arouse their enmity to the point of outraging even human justice to get rid of you by hanging you on a gallows as a criminal? *Measure* yourself with this One? *compare* yourself with Him? You can only

contrast yourself with Jesus of Nazareth, though you should happen to be the *least* guilty sinner that ever lived! In the glorious Light of His life and death, in suffering for others, the very best deeds of our lives become spotted and dark, with the mixed motives which attend even the best impulses of our poor selfish hearts. In this Light,—judged by this, the true Standard, by which all things *must* be judged, and *will* be, for time and eternity,—even “all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags.” (Isa. lxiv. 6)

Atheists, agnostics, infidels, and “higher critics” acknowledge the existence of this Light, and are forced grudgingly to concede that it *is* Light, at the same time that they squirm under it, and seek to turn the edge of its exposure of their moral nakedness. They all confess that Jesus stands alone in human history. But yet these wretched sinners affect to speak in a condescending and patronizing way of Him whose shoe-latchet the very best of them who has ever lived is utterly unworthy to stoop down and unloose! They seek to avoid the demonstration that the life of Jesus is the LIFE OF GOD in a Man, and thus the *condemnation* of the lives of all others, as a Standard of comparison which proves that “*all* have sinned, and *come short of the glory of God*,” so “that they are *all* under sin, as it is written, There is *none* righteous, no, *not one*.” (Rom. iii. 23, 9, 10)

How we would like to put the life of Jesus to the *credit* of man, instead of acknowledging that it *condemns* the entire human race! How we seek to persuade ourselves that perhaps, after all, simply a man, *like ourselves* (!), has lived this unique Life of love and self-sacrifice at which all the world marvels!

But no! God Himself it is Who emptied Himself,

mysteriously veiled His majesty in creaturehood, and visited His creature thus, to tell out the infinite depths of the love of His tender heart, and to do the work which would justify Him in showing mercy to the vilest sinner! God Himself it is Who, in the humanity which He had truly taken, grew up in this barren world of darkness as a tender plant, a root out of a dry ground! Who went about doing good, suffering with the suffering, and sympathizing with the sorrowful! ministering to the poor and the oppressed, temporally and spiritually! healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, raising the dead, speaking peace and granting forgiveness of sins to sinful outcasts who know their need!

God Himself it is Who, in the Person of the lowly Jesus, in perfect sympathy endured in His own heart the suffering and the sorrow He relieved, even as it had been written: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (Isa. liii. 4) God Himself it is Who, as *Man* for *men*, upon the cross suffered the full punishment for sins, vicariously, for the very ones who mocked and murdered Him, as well as for all the fallen sons of men,—as it had also been written of Him:

"He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii.)

Yea, God Himself it is Who, as *Man*, rose from the dead, bringing creaturehood, in His Person, be-

yond death and judgment, and carrying it into the heavens whence He came! And God Himself it is Who, *still as Man*, shall soon come again, revealing Himself the second time to the world, though this time in *judgment*,—appearing to convict His gainsayers, in the dazzling glory and irresistible power which belong to Him *as God*! For “Behold, the Lord cometh, with myriads of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have unrighteously committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14, 15)

Finally, dear reader, as one who loves your soul with a feeble reflection of the love of God, your Maker, I ask again: How is it with *you*? Have *you* come to this Light? or have you chosen darkness? Have *your* eyes been opened to behold the gracious beauty of the lowly-hearted Mighty One Who is both Light and Love? What have *you*, individually, to say to your God, in view of His revelation of Himself to you as the *Man*, Christ Jesus, Who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost? Do you *despise* Him, because He has proven Himself to be *gracious and approachable*, instead of a stern Judge? If so, you shall meet Him in this other character, which you will *not* despise! May God's mercy save you from such a fate!

For then, alas, you *must* behold the Light! And you will measure yourself by it, and realize the truth when it is too late,—when the period is forever past during which the grace and power of God could and would have remedied your hopeless condition!

Sinner, waste not one moment! *Flee* from the

wrath to come! Fall at the feet of Jesus, the Light of the world, the Light of men! Put *all* your trust in *Him alone*! For He is "God over all, blessed forever!" (Rom. ix. 5.)

Come! hasten! *flee* to this gracious, healing, saving Light! Let *His* voice persuade you to salvation, Who poured all His sweetness out before us in this dark scene as the *Man*, Jesus, in order to interpret Himself to His creatures, and Whose gracious words *still go out to you from His throne in heaven*: "Come unto *Me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest! 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." (Matt. xi. 28, 29)

F. A.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Ques. 15.—Please explain Rom. viii. 11, "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." Is this quickening present or future, as in 1 Cor. xv. 54?

Ans.—Without doubt the quickening refers to the future. In no sense is the body spoken of as now quickened. If it were, there would be no need of the resurrection. "The body is dead because of sin," it is the spirit which is alone life. But the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the pledge of the resurrection or quickening of the mortal body. The Spirit is spoken of as "The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead," and it is by, or rather on account of, the presence of the Spirit now dwelling in the believer that his mortal body will be quickened. The body of the saint, in itself, differs in nothing from that of the sinner, save that it has been purchased, and in the power of the Spirit the believer can now present it a living sacrifice to God, yielding his members as instruments of righteousness. But we groan being burdened, "waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body." Therefore to claim resurrection life for the body now would be to declare that the resurrection is past, and if this were the case, the believer could not die.

Without doubt the application of this doctrine to the subject of bodily healing has misled many, and is a grave error. Paul had the life of Jesus manifest in his mortal flesh (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11), but that is the exact reverse of resurrection life for the body; it was the excellency of a power not inherent in him, and working out through what was subject to death and weakness and decay. "Alway delivered unto death" does not speak of the throb of resurrection life, but it does give an opportunity for the exhibition of the power of Christ to rest upon the feeblest instrument.

QUES. 16.—Does Phil. iii. 21 refer exclusively to the change of the living at Christ's coming, or to the resurrection of the dead in Christ also? Is identification involved, or do the saints have new bodies apart from identity? (1 Cor. xv. 36-38).

ANS.—We might say that death is not contemplated for the Christian, so that a special revelation was given to comfort as to those who had fallen asleep, to show that they would in no wise be losers as compared with the living (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). Therefore while the *form* of the verse speaks only of those whose bodies of humiliation will be changed, its spirit would assure us that the sleeping saints will be included. The corruptible, the dead, will put on incorruption, and the mortal, the living, will put on immortality (1 Cor. xv. 50-53). As to the identity, there can be no question, for our Lord, the first-fruits, has established that. "To every seed his own body" shows the identity, while "God giveth it a body as it has pleased Him" shows how far the resurrection body will transcend this body of humiliation.

QUES. 17.—Why is the manna called the Mighty's meat?

ANS.—"Bread of the Mighty" is the proper rendering of Ps. lxxviii. 25, and seems to suggest the omnipotence of the One who was providing for Israel and the sustaining character of the food supplied to them in the wilderness. Of course, it is all typical of Him who is the true bread of God, the bread which gives life, Christ the sustainer of His people all through their pilgrimage.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

5. LIFE AND ETERNAL LIFE.

IN considering the subject which is now before us, there are two questions which lie at the foundation: first, is there any spiritual life which is not eternal life? And then what is eternal life? I shall as usual state the view from which I dissent, and then give as clearly as possible the reason for my dissent.

1. Is there any life for the Christian which is not eternal life?

As to this we are told: In Romans you see life, but not eternal life. The two and a half tribes typically had life; they stopped this side of Jordan, but they had life. Everybody who has the Spirit has life, because the Spirit is life. In Rom. viii. life is the consequence of the presence of the Spirit in a believer; that is, "The body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness." But that is connected with the wilderness and practice, and is connected with your pathway, which will come to an end. You can very well understand that the experience of Romans viii. comes to an end. It is not eternal life, and yet life is there; life comes out morally, in view of righteousness; the evidence of life in the Christian is that he does righteousness; he proves that he is born of God. The Spirit takes that place in the Christian till he is quickened. You are not said to be quickened in Romans; but in our state down here the Spirit displaces the flesh, and takes the place of life in the Christian, in order that practical righteousness should be accomplished. In Colossians and Ephesians we

get a step further, and that is, "you hath He quickened," but you must understand that in a limited, not in an absolute way. It is at the coming of Christ we are quickened; only it is anticipated in Colossians and Ephesians in a limited way as the work of God fitting us for the assembly. At the coming of the Lord we shall be quickened and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. [?!] In that chapter it is viewed as anticipated.

2. What then is eternal life?

The answer given is: It involves a state of blessing consequent on the setting aside of death. "Life for evermore" (Ps. cxxxiii.), in regard to Israel is in the public setting aside of death. We come to that on resurrection ground, that makes the difference between us and Israel: they don't come into resurrection, we do. A person cannot say that he has actually eternal life, unless he is clear of death. If he is going to die, how can he say he has actually got eternal life? For us, eternal life is the heavenly condition and blessedness in which in the Son man is now placed, and lives before the Father. It is a sphere and order of blessing. It is to live in the blessed consciousness of the love of God, in the out-of-the-world, heavenly condition in which Christ lives.

I believe persons have made great mistakes with regard to eternal life in viewing it as a something substantive which is communicated to us. I can understand life in God, because God is eternal; He lives, He is. But I live, and so does every saint, simply by the quickening power of God. I am made alive now in my soul together with Christ, after His order, and eventually I shall be made alive in body after His

order. People have looked at it as if it were a kind of material thing given to a person. People think they have life in themselves instead of in Christ. It is life in Christ Jesus, yet the Spirit being in me, it is practically my life.

It used to be commonly said, I know that I have got eternal life. Why? Because the scripture says, "he that believeth has everlasting life." I say that you have thus the faith of eternal life, but that does not prove that you have the thing itself. Many a person has had a promise, but not the thing promised; that was the case largely with the Old Testament saints. It is the mind of God for every Christian, and God has put it there in His Son, and the whole question is as to reaching the Son. In the last chapter of John's epistle it says, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life"; because you are come to it; you are conscious of it, but not as a possession. If I talk about having the Son, the Son is not a possession, and yet I am said to have the Son, I have appropriated Him; affection has really reached Him: you cannot make the word "have" always mean possession. In scripture eternal life is not a subjective thought as a possession, but it is placed in the Son, and the whole point is reaching the Son.

This will probably be sufficient for quotation, at least for the present; we can see that there is an apparently careful grading and measurement of the spiritual life, supported by a few texts which, if we can overlook others, and accept the positiveness of an assertion as proof of its reliability, may be held for a success. Let us examine it, however, and see what may be the effect of introducing some omitted texts.

Is there a spiritual life which is not eternal life? Scripture emphatically denies this. The passages have been so often quoted, that one may fairly ask why they are not considered; especially as they used to be quite familiar texts, and face us in very familiar parts of Scripture. Here is one that will bear every effort that can be made to induce it to speak the doctrine that is being commended to us as truth, and will not do it,—one that is sufficient in itself to destroy the whole system down to the roots:—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have *no life* in you; whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath *eternal* life" (Jno. vi. 53, 54).

Notice how many things fundamental to the views we have been listening to are swept away for ever by words so plain as these. First, we have either *no* life or eternal life; if you eat not you have no life; if you eat, you have eternal life. Is there any possible middle ground between these alternatives? If there be, why not let us know it; if there be not, why not be candid enough to own that there is not.

But again, look at the alternatives: "ye have no life *in you*"; "hath eternal life." If eternal life is not really *in* you, then you may eat His flesh and drink His blood, and have no life *in* you still! Otherwise there is no antithesis, as is most plainly intended: whether you eat or do not eat, it is one and the same thing! Who can accredit the words with such absolute want of meaning?

Still again, it is the flesh and blood of the Son of *man*, of which the Lord speaks: if you eat the flesh of the Son of *man*, you have eternal life; but in what we have been looking at a distinction is made

between apprehension of the Son of man, and reaching the Son (of *God*); and it is only this last that gives eternal life. The Lord speaks quite differently here.

What remains of these subtle theories, if the words of the Lord are allowed any real force?

John supplements them with the remark, simple as it is, that "ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John iii. 15); a strange sentence, according to this system, with all its self-evidence! For why speak of eternal life in this connection, when "many a good Christian" even has not eternal life? Would you not expect the apostle rather to say simply that he has not life? or, still better, that he is not born again? How strange a thing to associate a murderer, even by a negative, with the thought of eternal life, if this be an advanced condition, even for a Christian! What would you think if I asserted of a murderer, that he was not completely sanctified?

But again, he "hath not eternal life abiding in him!" Did not John know that there is not so much as a single Christian who has eternal life abiding in him? Did he not know that eternal life is a "sphere," of which you could not speak in such a way? If he did, how could he pen such an unmeaning sentence?

Once more:—it is the Lord who says, and in His strongest style of affirmation, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). These words are actually used in the interests of the system we are reviewing, to show that it is the *Christian* that has to pass from

death unto life, which here as elsewhere is not distinguished from eternal life! The Lord, we are told, is here speaking as the Son of God, and it is an advanced attainment to hear the words of the Son of God, and to believe on the Father as having sent His Son! Consequently a large number of Christians are dead and not alive. They may be born again, have the Spirit, have learned deliverance, and yet not have passed from death unto life. And this too although in having the Spirit, you have life "practically," because the Spirit is life! Yet this life is in Christ, and not in you, things which even seem to be considered in opposition to one another. But this we must look at elsewhere.

Now Scripture does indeed say that, "if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;" and it never speaks of the *body* being quickened before the Lord comes. It speaks also of the believer being dead with Christ *to* sin: a very different thing, of course, from that of which we are now speaking; but I am not aware that it ever speaks of the Christian being "dead" in any other sense. Most certainly, it never puts forward such a contradiction as that a man can be "practically" alive without being really so, nor makes in this way the blessed influence of the Spirit of God in such to be an effect produced upon a dead man—a life which does not make alive! Here it is no wonder if the things said should be in apparent conflict with one another, when practical life is yet taught not to be life, and he who is working righteousness in the power of the Spirit of God may yet, as we are assured, be waiting to be quickened!

Here is an argument we must not pass over: "It used to be commonly said, I know that I have got

eternal life. Why? Because the scripture says, He that believeth hath everlasting life." Well; is not that a straightforward conclusion, for one who knows himself to be a true believer? It seems not: we are to be taught a new logic, as all else. "I say that you have thus the *faith* of eternal life; but that does not prove that you have the thing itself. Many a person has had a promise, but not the thing promised." Truly! I suppose we shall all at once acquiesce in that; the misfortune is that it does not apply. The Lord's statement here is not a promise, but a direct assurance of the simplest kind. The believer has eternal life; I am a believer; I therefore have eternal life. If the premises are sure, how can the conclusion fail? If that may be doubted, how can any assurance be given, which cannot?

The argument fails so badly, that it is no wonder if another has to reinforce it. So we are told "have" does not always mean possession; "if I talk about having the Son, the Son is not a possession"(!) That is not argued, it is supposed not to need it; but is it the truth? Is not the Son ours *in any sense* now? Who will say so? Is having the Son a promise that we shall have Him? Clearly not. But it says, "He that hath the Son hath life;" does that mean, "He that hath the Son is going to have life?" True, the Son is not ours now in all the fulness of what eternity will give to this; and life too is not ours in such fulness either; for the body is still a mortal body, and will be quickened then. But there is a present "having" in both cases.

A false definition of eternal life is at the bottom of much of the confusion. Rightly enough connected with the Old Testament "life for evermore," it is

forgotten that life and incorruption are brought to light through the gospel (2 Tim. i. 10), and that therefore we must not expect their definition to be gained from the Old Testament scriptures. New birth is not found in doctrinal statement in the Old Testament; and it is in new birth that we shall find what underlies the New Testament doctrine. One born of God is a child of God; the child derives its life from its father, and partakes of its father's nature. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and the life given is eternal life. Here is the fulness found of this expression: it is a life which not only has no end, but had no beginning either, being divine life. It is eternal in the full meaning of eternal, though in us, of course, beginning. This has been dismissed with the strange, curt remark, that "the life of divine Persons is *themselves*;" they cannot, therefore, it is meant, communicate themselves! But the statement and the reasoning are as crude as elsewhere, and are confuted at once by those facts of nature which God has given us as parables of spiritual things. The parents' life and nature in the child are not the *parents*; they *have* a power of communicating life which, mystery as it is, is undeniable; and God has adopted our human language, based upon the facts of creation which He Himself has created, to give us at least such thoughts as we are capable of in regard to all these things, which the strange system before us rudely cuts across. It gives us birth without life, children who are not such by descent, a practical life in those that are still dead, and similar absurdities, against which nature protests absolutely, and Scripture no less.

In life, we are assured, nothing substantive is com-

municated; that there is nothing *material*, will not be disputed; nor that when we speak of life, we may be unable to define it. Infidel scientists have mocked at a vital principle on this account, and told us that we might as well talk of "aquosity" as the principle of water. Yet we believe in a vital force, as well as in vital phenomena. Spiritual life will be naturally still more difficult to define, but that is no reason for denying it to be more than phenomenal, and certainly not for defining it as a sphere, etc. Personality it is not; it is not a "self"; yet there is that which is born of the Spirit, which is spirit, and which gives character to the new-born soul. There is that which is communicated to us, and abides in us, an incorruptible seed that abides in us, and because of this, "whosoever is born of God doth not commit," or better, "practise," "sin" (1 Jno. iii. 9). The phenomenal life is just the display of this in its activities; in other words, there is a life by which we live, as well as a life we live: without the former there cannot be the latter. So Scripture, in harmony with nature, speaks; and in both ways of eternal life.

That in eternal life, according to its very nature, there is the setting aside of death, is too plain to be denied: yet here also, strange mistakes are possible; though to any one who has grasp of the doctrine they should not be possible. First, we are told, and rightly,—“I am made alive now in my soul together with Christ, after His order, and eventually I shall be made alive in body after His order.” And yet with the most entire forgetfulness of this limitation, we are told elsewhere: “A person cannot say that he has actually eternal life, unless he is clear of death.

If he is going to die, how can he say that he has actually got eternal life?" And this is made the ground for saying that while in Rom. viii. life is the consequence of the Spirit in the believer, yet the experience of Rom. viii. comes to an end. "*It is not eternal life, and yet life is there!*" and much doctrine is built upon this;—a mere and extraordinary piece of forgetfulness: for the experience is not the life, but the result of the life in the present circumstances. The death of the body brings this to an end, and the life is transferred to another sphere; but how does this prove that the life so transferred is not eternal life? Yet he must not say, it seems, that he has actually got eternal life (in his soul), because he has not yet got it in his body! A pebble indeed, to turn one from the path of truth!

Let us remember the words of Him who said, in the consciousness of what He is for men as the Resurrection and the Life, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die" (Jno. xi. 25, 26). Against the life, then, that He gives, which is eternal life, death has no claim,—over it no sovereignty. The body still awaits its change and its redemption; none the less is it true for the present partaker of His resurrection life, that death is behind, and not before him. For him, Christ has abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.

F. W. G.

(*To be continued.*)

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

(Continued from page 265.)

5. RECOGNITION AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

(Chapter ii. Continued.)

THE presence of a stranger is soon noticed by Boaz, whose question to the chief servant brings out Ruth's identity. She is described as the "Moabiteess", a name that would at once mark her out as separate from the daughters of Israel; but along with that which declares her alien birth is mention of a faith which has led her to follow the widowed Naomi back to the land of Israel, in preference to returning to the house of her father with its false gods. In addition the servant tells of the desire on her part to glean, and of her diligence in the lowly task with its small remuneration (vers. 5-7).

Israel, as we have already seen, having forfeited all rights to a place before God in her own righteousness, must realize that she is nothing but a Gentile. When she turns to God, she must be willing to be described as a Moabite, a Gentile. Thus Jerusalem is described by the prophet in the pleading with the defiled and guilty people: "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite" (Ezek. xvi. 3, 45). Samaria and Sodom are called her sisters, no more corrupt and guilty than she. When restored, it will be in association with these whom she had despised, and the effect of learning her own moral condition will for all time prevent her from that haughtiness which had marked the days of her assumed superiority over the nations. There was indeed a superiority of position, but where the grace of it is despised, circumcision becomes uncircum-

cision. The apostle dwells upon this in the second chapter of Romans, where, quoting from the prophets, he declares that God's name was blasphemed among the heathen through the sins of Jews (Rom. ii. 17-29). Isaiah had addressed the leaders of the people as "rulers of Sodom" (Is. i. 10).

Had the people but entered into the thought of God, and accepted their true condition when in mercy they were laid hold of, there would have been no need to learn the lesson through bitter shame. For in connection with their entrance into the land at the first, when they were to offer the basket of first-fruits, this confession was put into their lips: "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" (Deut. xxvi. 5). But prosperity and the evidence of God's special favor made them forget that all was of grace, and as a result in bitter sorrow and humiliation they will have to learn again the lesson. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19). So that the repentant remnant, with the first glimmer of faith, will not resent being looked upon as Gentiles, without a claim upon God. "Moabite" will properly designate them.

Applying it to the soul seeking for the first time the mercy of God, the designation is no less appropriate. It reminds us how the Gentile centurion disclaimed all worthiness that the Lord should even enter under his roof, or, as we have just seen of the Syrophenician woman who does not refuse the name of "dog". How opposite to all self-righteousness is this lowliness which takes the lowest place.

But she came to glean, to get that which will

satisfy her hunger, even if but little more than sufficient to prevent starvation. Faith while disclaiming all worthiness or right, has come to *get* something, nor will it lightly take a refusal. How the woman, oppressed by her adversary, and with a heartless judge to deal with, emphasizes this importunity of faith which takes no denial. We will remember, too, that the widow there figures the remnant just as Naomi and Ruth do here (Luke xviii). But faith is the same at all times, and whoever has set himself to seek the Lord's face will take no refusal. The necessity of the case compels to earnest perseverance, and this is in itself the pledge that the desires will be granted, for are not those desires themselves the proof of grace at work in the soul?

It is never wise nor right to occupy the soul with its own frames even when they are the product of the Spirit of God, but may we not remind ourselves that this lack of earnest purpose is the principle cause of so much superficial work? Earnestness that will glean with but small results, that will continue all day in the fields gathering little grains of blessing—such earnestness will reap far more than its expectations. Alas for the shallow convictions, the half-hearted desires, the feeble exercises of soul! We need not be surprised at the vast number of empty professions which like the seed upon stony ground, soon wither away, “wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.” And even where grace has wrought, and there is but partial response to it, what feebleness of testimony and walk result, what world-bordering with all its attendant shipwrecks! May the Lord give more earnest seekers like Ruth.

This poor stranger girl, shrinking from every curious glance, and feeling most keenly her isolation, need not think she is unnoticed. Boaz at once marks her, and his enquiries tell of his true interest. Nor let us forget for a moment that the eye of our Lord falls at once upon each poor soul who is seeking for help. Joseph detected at once his brethren when they came down into Egypt at the time of famine to buy a little food for their hunger, and though he did not make himself known to them till after all needed exercises of soul had been gone through by them, yet he has seen and known them. So will it be at the very moment when the remnant turns to God, and so is it in the case of each soul. He sees, and He knows. What a comfort is this, and how it explains the fulness of grace, as we look back upon the Lord's ways with us in bringing us to Himself. He was thinking upon us when we least thought of it, and even before we turned to Him, He had turned in mercy to us. He knew and could distinguish the touch of faith from all the thronging and pressing of the careless crowd. Trembling soul, His eye of love is upon thee now.

But grace can never rest till it makes itself known, and so from looks and questions of interest, Boaz comes to words with the poor stranger. "Hearest thou not my daughter? Go not to glean in another field." The first word is not only one of welcome for whatever she may have already gleaned, but the positive command to continue where she had begun. Disciples may try to send away the seeking soul, but the Lord, never. No matter how apparently unsuccessful, with the consequent discouragement; no matter how long the seeking has continued,

the first word is, "Go not to another field." Many are the temptations to do this, both for the seeking soul now, and for the remnant in the coming day. How the enemy would allure away or drive away the soul from the word of God, the fields of grace. There are other and easier ways of getting peace; reformation, happy feelings, religious professions—thousands of substitutes are offered for the simple way of God. Or the soul is terrified, there is no hope for one so guilty and hardened, the day of grace is passed, why throw away even the few days that remain of life in futile efforts to get what never can be ours? Ah, who that has been under exercise of soul can forget how many and often were the temptations to go to some other field. And how cheering is this word from the Lord of the field to remain where we are, to get nothing except from Himself.

We remember too what fearful inducements will be held out to the remnant, and the threats if they do not comply. When Jerusalem was besieged and apparently on the eve of capture by the Assyrians, the taunting Rabshakeh not only threatened the trembling people, but held out special inducements if they would yield to his master. But neither threats nor persuasions could move them from their loyalty to their king. In the latter days the bulk of the nation will have accepted the rule of the wilful king, all human prudence will dictate the same to the feeble few who are at his mercy. The great emperor whose image must be worshiped, it will be argued, will be the only one to acknowledge, for does not certain death threaten all those who fail to have his mark in hand or forehead? But thank God, faith will ever

hear the one word of Him whom she may but dimly know, and refuse to go to another field.

May it not be well too for us who know and love our blessed Lord to remember the folly of going elsewhere than to Him and His word for our food or help? Many alas of His own forget this, and bitterly have to regret wasted days of gleaning in what must ever be but fruitless fields for the child of God. How much that is plead for as needed change and recreation is but a snare to draw us away from One in whom we are to find "all our rest and pleasure."

"Fast by my maidens". There are others besides ourselves engaged in the fields of grace, and rare indeed is it when the soul cannot have help from those more advanced than itself. Ruth is to follow those connected with the household of Boaz, and enjoy the immunity from all molestation which his authority imposed. When the seeker in the Song of Solomon asks where her loved one feeds his flocks, and where they rest at noon, for she fears to turn aside to any other flock, the answer is similar: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (Song i. 7, 8). If there be but few in the narrow way, we can find sufficient companionship with that few. And while faith cannot imitate, it can follow the faith of those who love Christ. It is always dangerous when a soul loses taste for real fellowship with those who have a heart for the Lord.

Already, too, the tender pity of Boaz provides beyond what she can glean. She has need for drink as well as grain, and to that he now invites her: "When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of

that which the young men have drawn". His servants are for her need too, their labor for her refreshment. How the ministry of the water of life, intended for the people of God, is also for every seeking soul, and how often does the stranger get a refreshment without which he would have fainted with despair. Well does our Lord know this, and often does He invite the thirsty soul—in all ages and dispensations—to come and drink. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Is. lv. 1). "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink" (Jno. vii. 37). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). Divine mercy would never refuse the water, so long as there is a soul that will have it. Only when in the eternal abode on the other side of the "great gulf" will the cry be unavailing for a drop of water. How this aggravates the guilt of those who despise the offers of grace and the pleadings of love.

Such grace, so unexpected, moves Ruth to deepest gratitude, and falling at his feet, she asks why he should show such kindness to a stranger like herself. His reply shows how familiar he is with her history, which he interprets as far more than filial kindness to her bereaved mother-in-law. She has come to find shelter under the protecting wings of the God of Israel, and her devotion to Naomi cannot be separated from that.

And has not the heart often asked a similar question of our Lord? He has manifested some special thought of us, given some refreshing to our thirsty souls, and we wonder why it should be so. Is not His answer to be found in the fact that He has marked our path, and seen the beginnings of that

faith which He now rewards. Nay, is not the faith itself the fruit of His own sovereign grace, and is He not but setting the seal upon His own divine work? He knows those whom He has drawn to Himself.

Ruth beautifully illustrates that lowliness which is the mark of a young faith: "Let me find favor in thy sight, my Lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens". Like Mephibosheth, when David showed him grace, she was humbled. She did not doubt the grace, much less did she refuse it, but she confesses her utter unworthiness. True humility does not doubt. How strange it is that it has been thought the mark of a lowly mind to question the sincerity of the grace that has been shown. Of course it is not put in that way, but the result is the same, God is doubted and the soul is unblessed. Let such treatment be called by its proper name, not humility, but the most contemptible form of pride, which would wear the garment of poverty to establish its claim to riches.

Humility confesses its unworthiness, but emphasizes the grace of God by accepting with thankful heart what He so freely offers.

We see now how she illustrates the principle "to him that hath shall more be given," though Boaz was but continuing his previous kindness. Grace leads the soul along by blessing. So she is now offered food, and wine, and parched corn, as much as she will.

(To be continued.)

IN HIS ARMS.

“SAFE in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe in His arms of *love*;
 Washed in the blood of Jesus,
 Meet for the courts above.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe in His arms of *care*;
 Under the care of Jesus
 Till with Him “over there.”

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe in His arms of *might*;
 Kept by the power of Jesus
 Till faith be lost in sight.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe, safe should death be near;
 Then soon to be with Jesus,
 His love forbids all fear.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe, safe against that Day
 When He will come in brightness
 To bear His own away.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe, safe from ev’ry foe;
 To ever be with Jesus
 Beyond the reach of woe!

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 Safe, safe for evermore!
 To ever joy in Jesus
 On yonder blissful shore!

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”—
 “The everlasting arms;”
 To ever sing of Jesus,—
 The Name that ever charms!

DO WE ANSWER TO THE PLACE WE OCCUPY?

IT has become our privilege, through mercy, to "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." We have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to our heavenly inheritance with Himself. This leaves us with a conclusion well-defined, that our earthly position and path are marked for us, as members of the One Body, the Church, the home of His presence here, the one green spot in all this desert world.

The Assembly is privileged to be a volume of homage to the Lord, in all its ways; as is said of the temple of, old, "Every whit of it uttereth His glory" (Ps. xxix. 9). Every living stone in His Church is to the praise of His glory. May the longing be,

"E'en now let our ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord."

If this be the heart's longing, we may be sure the royal road to it is the path of humility. "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. lvii. 15).

This may well beget in us reverence and teach us to tread softly, yet with holy liberty, where all that is thought or done should be in His name, for His glory and His people's help.

A correct answer to the question, What should an assembly be, is found in seeing what manner of persons compose it. They are those who have been

brought out of darkness into light, made members of Christ's body, and are waiting for Him from heaven. How wonderful the thought! What may an assembly not be, composed as it is of such, those who have life in Christ, and the Spirit of God to indwell. Such an assembly might be described "as a fruitful tree by a spring; the branches run over the wall." So Joseph was described, and so the Apostle sees the fruitfulness of the assembly at Philippi. "Even at Thessalonica, ye sent once and again to my necessity." A gift indeed it was, but the enjoyment of it lay in the fact that it was fruit to their account. So everything done to the Lord, and in a way pleasing to Him, is fruit running over the wall, which His eye always sees.

The apparently casual greetings and salutations of the apostle, the high and spiritual tone of all that he says as characteristic of assemblies, might well knock at the door of our assemblies to see how we do in these matters.

We sing at times,

"No more to view Thy chosen few,
In selfish strife divided."

as a word that tells of the future relief from the confusion of the present. But this confusion testifies against us, if not in open division, yet perhaps in the separation of heart, the evil speaking, the fleshly thoughts and conclusions concerning one another, instead of the sigh and the priestly intercession if there is carelessness or weakness among us.

The death of Christ may well speak afresh to us, if that awful self of ours be found parading in the midst of those who have put it to death. There is no allowance for anything of the old man, who is

accounted for in the cross. There the flesh received its sentence, and its exhibit of wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking is no more to be heard from; the corrupt thing is put away. We are born again, to live as those who *remember their death*. We are trees of His own planting, that in subjection to the Spirit and Word the fruitfulness and energy of our new life be manifest. Let us talk and walk so that the fact of our being in Christ may be emphasized, and the sweet savor of His name in our actions as an assembly show that the Spirit is enriching and giving tone to that which His power has formed.

May Daniel's purpose of heart, Caleb's wholly following the Lord, stir us up to emulation. Truth not only saves, but holds for God, and has ever been too strong a light for tradition or formality. There are some who traffic in truth without any thought of allowing it to show them a position which would judge their own. Others, with loyalty for a doctrine, have made *it* a center of gathering instead of Christ. While others, with zeal and numbers before them, have allowed the line of separation to become a faded thing.

We speak of this not to enlarge upon what is so well known, but to suggest the wisdom of avoiding the mere strife of tongues. Let us leave others with the Lord, and ourselves seek to be held by that which is unique of itself—the principle of assembly position and assembly order, with all that accompanies it.

Is it not time that we awake as individuals, that assemblies awake as one man—as assemblies with assemblies—to what is due to our glorious, life giving Head, ere He comes? There must be an uprising

from the existing condition of things in our midst. Does not our Lord's honor in His assembly require it? Are we answering to His interest in us, to the love of His heart so free toward us? May the remembrance of what it cost Him to seat us at His table stir all our hearts. Shall it not be the individual purpose of heart that out of the individual we may have the collective, with Daniel, Caleb and others? It was their adherence to principle and their acting upon it that is given for our example.

Thus through us our Lord will be honored, and find a place for His own who sigh over the confusion of the day. Truth has been scattered broadcast, prized by the few and enjoyed in a measure by the many. Where are the persons who are being controlled by the truth? Let us get right in our assemblies, and the Lord will add others who are true-hearted for Himself. Have we not the sweet precious things that will feed the multitude? "Give them to eat," was the Master's word to His disciples. Are *we* His disciples, in the sense of being in the path for Him? If in this practical way our state commend itself to Him, it will be, "Feed My sheep."

The Lord give us grace to submit ourselves to the happy path of obedience, and to see that a chastened spirit keep us from allowing ourselves to be moved by feelings or prejudice, and thus hinder divine order and quench the Spirit in the Assembly. By Him actions are weighed, and though we have reason to be thankful for recovered truth, yet nothing less than embracing it as a fact, together with a whole-hearted embracing of the position it puts us in, will fit us for the need of the day. What is needed is loyalty from us as those upon whom the truth has a special claim.

Let the bright rays of what an assembly should be according to scripture, wither up formality amongst us. Is there not a guard needed lest familiarity with divine things cause them for us to lose their lustre? There is need of a ray of His glory in the midst of His assembly to wither up that which is not of Himself. Surely we will be thankful for the withering up which leaves us a consciousness of His own blessed face of radiant grace shining upon us.

You silent one, will you not render to Him the audible homage, which the fear of man hinders? Is it in your heart for Him? Then see no man save Jesus only (Matt. xvii. 8), and let the incense ascend. Your heart through grace has been fitted for this very thing, and our hearts to enjoy it with you as we offer it to Him.

If we seem earnest about this, it is because one longs for reality, not mere activity. We long that the adoration, the praise that is hid in the heart that belongs to Christ may be told out to Him. It is part of the incense, as it were of the assembly. It is a spiritual sacrifice through Jesus Christ, the worship of a people marked for redemption glories. It is true all must flow out of a right state. Let us, therefore, as they of old, exhort one another that with purpose of heart we cleave unto the Lord (Acts xi. 23). Surely as we are destined for the brightness of glory, we are also by grace fully provided for the path here, and the darker the night, the more brightly should we shine. But we must be in His presence to do this. He has given us a seat at His table, a wondrous seat, at such a cost. Let us account to Him if absent, and if present, have all flow out of the remembrance of Himself.

What is sweeter than communion? what is richer than praise? Occupation with Him in either holds the heart, and keeps from all restless activity or slothful silence. There will be no turning of leaves of our books while at His table, unless it be to seek a hymn wherewith to make melody in the heart, or a word under the guidance of the Spirit to shed forth His glory.

The knowledge of what lukewarmness is to our Lord should beget in us purpose of heart. The rebuke to Israel, "Ye dwell in ceiled houses, and My house lies waste" (Hag. i. 4), might serve in the way of showing that our Lord expects wholeheartedness in that which concerns Him, and in that with which He has connected us. It has been commended all along the stream of time.

This devotion and purpose of heart is seen in all that concerns our Lord, even the simple matter of giving of one's means; "As each one purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (2 Cor. ix. 7). What a sweet thought; the open heart and the open hand, the savor of it borne witness to by Him who saw the widow's mite, and by Paul who speaks of it as to the Philippians as fruit to their account (Phil. iv. 17), with a desire that all might abound in that grace also (2 Cor. viii. 7).

This is but one of the fruits of the many which belong to an assembly, which, together with all else will be forthcoming if self is brought into captivity: "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price."

"Naught that I have my own I call,
I hold it for the Giver;
For I am His and He is mine,
Forever and forever."

Another first day of the week, and afresh His word calls us into His presence. What is it then, beloved? We leave our homes, each step bringing us, like the cleansed leper of old, nearer His presence in the place where He is to be, in the midst of His own, there to occupy the place none other can occupy for us.

Let us remember that while the Lord enjoyed the homage of the one, He asked, Where are the nine. Let His precious love lead us where He is wont to be with His own at His table; that, shut up with Him, in the remembrance of Himself, as those whose hearts have been won, we may render Him the homage of His redeemed.

We are needy and ever will be; prayer becomes us. But let us dwell on our needs at a more seasonable time than this. To pray for my personal needs or in a general way at this time is to leave, as it were, the golden altar, to cause the burning of the incense to cease, to stop the spiritual sacrifice. It is remembering myself at a time when every heart should be held by the remembrance of Him.

Shall these several things exercise us? If so, shall we not speak to the Lord about them? Does our dimness call forth a sigh, a confession? He hears the sigh. Shall it not spring from us as a *people* who are in a special way responsible, because they are in a unique position? Can it not be a collective thing throughout the assemblies, understood by all, a state arrived at, of which He only knows the result?

Lord, may we hear Thy voice through some way of Thy ordering.

A. McC.

THE SECRET OF POWER IN MINISTRY.

THE true secret of all ministry is spiritual power. It is not man's genius, or man's intellect, or man's energy, but simply the power of the Spirit of God. This was true in the days of Moses, and it is true now. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." It is well for all ministers to bear this ever in mind. It will sustain the heart, and give constant freshness in ministry. A ministry which flows from abiding dependence upon the Holy Ghost can never become barren. If a man is drawing upon his own resources, he will soon run dry. It matters not what his powers may be, or how extensive his reading, or how vast his stores of information; if the Holy Ghost be not the spring and power of his ministry, it must sooner or later lose its freshness and its effectiveness.

How important, therefore, that all who minister in the Gospel, or in the Church of God, should lean continually and exclusively on the power of the Holy Ghost; He knows what souls need, and can supply it. But He must be trusted and used. It will not do to lean partly on self and partly on the Spirit of God. If there be aught of self-confidence, it will soon be made apparent. We must really get at the bottom of all that belongs to self, if we are to be the vessels of the Holy Ghost.

It is not—need we say it?—that there should not be holy diligence and earnestness in the study of the word of God, and in the study too of the exercises, the trials, and the varied difficulties of souls. Quite the reverse. We feel persuaded that the more absolutely we lean in self-emptiness upon the mighty

power of the Holy Ghost, the more diligently and earnestly we shall study both the book and the soul. It would be a fatal mistake for a man to use professed dependence upon the Spirit as a plea for neglecting prayerful study and meditation. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim. iv. 5).

But, after all, let it ever be remembered that the Holy Ghost is the ever-living, never-failing spring of ministry. It is He alone that can bring forth in divine freshness and fulness the treasures of God's Word, and apply them in heavenly power to the present need of the soul. It is not a question of bringing forth new truth, but simply of unfolding the word itself, and bringing it to bear upon the moral and spiritual condition of the people of God. This is true ministry. A man may speak a hundred times on the same portion of Scripture to the same people, and on each occasion he may minister Christ in spiritual freshness to their souls. And, on the other hand, a man may rack his brain to find out new subjects and new modes of handling old themes, and all the while there may not be one atom of Christ or of spiritual power in his ministry. . . .

Notes on Numbers.

THE symptoms of spiritual decline are like those which attend the decay of bodily health. It generally commences with loss of appetite and a disrelish for wholesome food, prayer, reading the Scriptures and devotional books. Whenever you perceive these symptoms, be alarmed, for your spiritual health is in danger.—*Payson*.

RE-TRACINGS OF TRUTH:

IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY RAISED.

6. STANDING AND ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST.

WE have been occupied so far with the work in us—with new birth and eternal life: things which are in nearer relation to one another than the views we are examining would at all allow. Yet it is surely true, as has been stated, and as Scripture fully recognizes, that there is a life we live, as well as a life by which we live. The life we live is pressed in the new system, not merely to forgetfulness of the life by which we live, but actually to the denial of it. The consequence is that the whole thought of eternal life is lowered. It becomes merely a kind of triumph over death, which when we enter heaven ceases to be even of much significance! Here is a conversation which will enlighten us in this respect:—

“Is the expression ‘heavenly’ included in the idea of eternal life?”

“No, I don’t think so. I think eternal life refers to earth. I don’t think we should talk about eternal life in heaven.

“Only we have it there.

“I don’t think the term will have much force there.

“The thing will surely be there.

“WE shall be there.

“I will have to get this clear, for I don’t understand it. How do you explain as to eternal life? I have understood that a sphere is included.

“I think it implies a sphere of relationship and blessing, but that is not necessarily heaven. I don’t

see much sense in connecting the idea of eternal life with heaven.

"Well, I don't, but still I have understood that it is connected with heaven also.

"I don't know the connection. The point of eternal life is that it comes in where death was. I think it stands in Scripture in contrast to death."

In another place an objector questions, and is answered thus:—

"I don't understand; do you mean that when we go from this earth eternal life will cease?

"I don't think the term has any longer force.

"Is it only the term then?

"What the term expresses has not any more force." (!!)

So man's "thoughts" (of which there are plenty here) belittle and degrade everything they intrude into. In new birth we are taught that no life is communicated. Life itself is not to be understood as anything "substantive" that *can* be communicated. "Nature" disappears in this way along with life, as we find in the following:—

"Have we not had a wrong idea as to what 'nature' means?

"It is the looking upon nature or life as something substantive: any *substance* is characterized by its nature; but you cannot talk of the nature of a thing till the thing is there." (!).

So as we (like the "murderer") have no "eternal life abiding in" us, we cannot, of course, talk of a nature as attaching to what does not exist. The argument is demonstrative if the basis is sound; but it shows how far a false step may carry one. Let us listen again:—

"I have sometimes said that Scripture does not recognize two natures in the Christian: the *flesh* is the nature in an undelivered man; when he receives the Spirit he is not in the flesh but in the Spirit, and the Spirit is not a nature but a Person." (!)

Poor Christian! when undelivered he has nothing but the flesh; when he receives the Spirit, it would seem he must have no nature at all; for the flesh is no longer that to him, and the Spirit is not a nature, but a Person! No doubt there is some way of filling up the void eventually; but with that we are not here concerned.

But this leads us on to what is before us now, the question of our standing in Christ, which according to Scripture is connected with the life we have in Him. Our natural life in Adam has involved us in the fall of the old creation; our spiritual new life in Christ has given us what we have been accustomed to call our standing in Him. The very term (although they use it) seems offensive to those who accept the views we are considering: "ecclesiasticism, *standing*, ground, and such ideas," we are told, "have almost ruined us." Yet, as I have said, the term is retained; perhaps it is only in accommodation to the weakness that has been induced by it: "If you talk about standing, I am a justified man, who have received the Holy Ghost." When it is asked, however, "But what about being in Christ?" the answer is, "The moment you bring in 'in Christ' it is new creation." And again:—"The moment you come to 'in Christ,' you get the revelation of God's purpose in Christ, and the work of the Spirit in the believer according to that purpose; that is new creation, it is not a question of standing."

Yet it is allowed that "the presentation of my justification is in Christ: He is my righteousness." One would think that to be in contradiction to what has just been stated; however that may be, it is only what is needed for the earth: "in heaven he will not be a forgiven or a justified man. He will not need that in heaven: nothing enters heaven but new creation."

Of necessity then the being in Christ has nothing to do with any thought of His being our Representative. Our Substitute in death, it is allowed, He was, and His resurrection therefore for our justification; but this does not involve any thought of representation in glory. "In Christ" is my state, as we have been told, a state which God has wrought by His Spirit, true, but still my state, and nothing else. So thoroughly is this maintained, that a Christian is said to be "in Christ as he is formed in Christ;" and "in Christ is the measure of our spiritual state."

The complete denial of all the positive side of representation in glory is made plainer perhaps by a quotation I have elsewhere given, which for its importance I shall give again here. It relates to the meaning and value of the burnt-offering, and I quote it fully that there may be no possibility of mistake:—

"*The blood of the burnt-offering never went inside; but that of the sin-offering did.* I have thought this remarkable. The blood of the burnt-offering is connected with acceptance *down here*, but the blood of the sin-offering goes in to meet and vindicate God's glory—all His claims met and vindicated, and on the ground of this we can enter. We go in *in the life of Christ*. It was on the day of atonement that the blood of the sin-offering was carried in; we go in in

a life which needs no acceptance, but the burnt-offering being all burnt on the altar is the ground of acceptance for man here on earth, and that will be equally true in the millennium. We get it set forth in figuré in Noah's offering. There is *no ground of acceptance for man down here* save the death of Christ."

Let us look now at what is here presented to us as the scriptural and beneficial truth, in opposition to the well-nigh ruinous idea of "standing." Since it is allowed, however, that we may use the term as applying to our justification, and that Christ is our righteousness, the idea so far cannot be ruinous. Acceptance as symbolized in the burnt-offering is allowed also, and that "Christ has gone into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us representatively, *that we may reach there.*" How far acceptance differs from justification is not apparent in this scheme, and the representation which brings us to heaven must have to do with the sin-offering aspect of Christ's work simply, as is plain: for the blood of the burnt-offering, we are told, never went inside the sanctuary, and avails only for man down here.

Now at the outset, whatever may be conveyed to us by the burnt-offering becomes, in this way, of comparatively small account. The sin-offering is competent for the removal of sin, and to bring us to heaven. When we are once there, we need it no more. If a man were taken to heaven immediately upon believing, he would not, so far as appears, need it at all. Israel as an earthly people will somehow need it till the close of the millennium; the heavenly

people (*as that*) never need it, though as in the meantime upon earth, they do.

What does it symbolize? It seems to be answered in the quotation given, "the death of Christ." But the death of Christ is shown forth in all the sacrifices, and the sin-offering is as competent to express that as the burnt-offering. The evident point of contrast between the two is not found in this, but that in the one the necessary judgment of sin is set before us, in the other the peerless obedience of the Sufferer. For this reason it is that, in complete contradiction to the place assigned it in what we are examining, while the sin-offering is offered in the outside place, and upon the ground without an altar, the burnt-offering gives its very name to the altar upon which it is offered, and upon which it all goes up as a sweet savor to God! The one is for the removal of sin; the other is for positive acceptance of the offerer. Thus while the one had indeed its absolute necessity with a holy God, the other was His delight, and was continually to be burning upon the altar, never to go out. The work which Christ had to do to put away sin was seen in the one case; in the other the glory of Him who knowing all that was to come upon Him, could say, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

Did this avail merely for the putting away of sin or sinner from before God? and was there no overplus of value to give corresponding blessedness to our acceptance in the Beloved? Is this to be lost when we enter heaven? left as an old garment no longer needed, to be inherited by the millennial saints? "We go in in a life which needs no acceptance," is

to be our comforting assurance; and in consistency with this we are informed that the "best robe" which is put upon returning prodigals is "really new creation, Christ formed in the Christian!"

After the millennium, therefore, it is to be supposed that the sweet savor of an infinite sacrifice will go up no more. With the saints' state perfected, they need no more that which covered them for a time until they could shine out in their own beauty! Is this your thought also, reader? and does this song please you better than that we used so lately to sing:—

"Jesus the Lord, our righteousness!
Our beauty Thou, our glorious dress!
Before the throne, in this arrayed,
With joy shall we lift up the head.

"This spotless robe the same appears
In new creation's endless years,
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new."

There are some, we trust, who if they are offered this so called advanced and heavenly truth as the new wine, will say with their whole hearts' approval still, "The old is better."

"If any man be in Christ, it is new creation:" for that we have the full authority of Scripture; for it is by a new creation alone that we come into relationship with Him who is its Head. Adam, says the apostle, "is the figure of Him who was to come" (Rom. v. 14). Our connection with the fallen head is by our part in the old creation, and so by the life communicated to us. According to the type the communication of spiritual life from the Last Adam who is a quickening Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45) brings with it consequences in blessing more than commensurate with the inheritance of sorrow entailed by our rela-

tion to the first. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (ver. 22). In Rom. v. the apostle carefully develops the heritage on each side of the many from the one, before he goes on to enlarge upon the results to us of that death with Christ which frees us judicially from our place in Adam. The sixth and seventh chapters cannot be understood aright until we have made our own the teaching of the latter half of the fifth. The study of it ought to assure any one of what is a riddle yet to the leader in this new departure, "where the idea of standing comes from." As in our former head we fell, so in our present One we "stand;" and "in Christ" means identification with our new creation Head. Thus the apostle can say, "If any man be in Christ, old things have passed away," as he could not if merely the inward change were contemplated: for the new life does not accomplish in itself this passing of the old things; but looking at the new place which accompanies the new life, it is absolutely simple. Identified with Christ before God, the flesh is gone: we have our part in His perfection. "In Christ," in its natural force, neither speaks of Christ in us, nor of association with Him, with both of which these teachings confound it; and this is seen in the very text which is claimed by those who hold them as conclusive in their behalf.

The simple fact that there are two opposite modes of expression for these two opposite ideas, we in Him and He in us, ought to be convincing: they surely do not mean, as they are made to mean, only the same thing! The Lord puts them together for us in His parable of the Vine and the branches. We have only to remember in the application of it, that no

one is naturally in Christ, and that the scriptural figure which takes in this fact is that of grafting. This prepares us for what has stumbled some, that in a parable of vital relationships there should be branches that are taken away because they bear no fruit. It is simple enough if we only realize that they are grafts which have not *struck*. The Lord does not speak of grafting, because He is not showing how the connection of His branches with Himself is begun, but only the necessity of fruitfulness, and how it is realized: but the difficulty suggested is accounted for by what we know to be the truth. That the branch should abide in the vine is needed for fruit, and the graft that does not abide has formed no vital connection. That vital connection is that by which alone, the branch being *in* the vine, the vine (in its sap) comes to be in the branch, needs no demonstration.

Living connection is that which, as we have seen, subsists between the Last Adam and those to whom He has become a quickening Spirit. The nature of the parable forbids more than a certain idea of the results in blessing of the identification of the living soul with its Head of supply; but there is the same limitation in all parables. The parable of the Vine is found in the midst of such expressions as those we are considering, and shows, if there were otherwise cause to doubt, the essential difference of the two things which are vainly sought to be made identical.

It is simple enough that the new creation "stands" in the sufficiency of its glorious Head, and that our standing individually results as part of this; while our acceptance in Christ is much more than the putting away of sins or of the "old man;" it implies the

positive value of the wondrous person of the Man Christ Jesus, of which our place before God is the due recompense. And this is expressly declared in the apostle's statement, that "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the *righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. v. 21).

So far then as we have gone, the system we have been examining is negative and destructive wholly. New birth is robbed of life; life is nothing substantive, and can have therefore no "nature" attaching to it, for there is nothing for it to attach to; eternal life will have no particular force just when you have fully reached it; standing (if you talk of standing) is merely that you are a justified man who has the Holy Ghost; the best robe in heaven is just the change wrought in yourself; you may need to be accepted in Christ until you get to heaven, then you will be so perfected as not to need it; your being in Christ, and Christ being in you are only equivalent expressions: and so, like the blast of a simoom the work of desolation moves along.

F. W. G

(*To be continued.*)

THE SUFFERING HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

THE suffering of the household of faith is on the increase: trials abound. But the moment of release is at hand. The heavenly shore is in sight. Weak, broken up, and troubled as God's people are on every hand, yet God is for us, all along the way from ruin to glory, and in counsel from eternity to eternity. We are treasure to Him (Matt. xiii. 44), yea, "one pearl of great price" (v. 46). We are compared to

the most precious and costly materials—silver, gold, and pearls. We are predestinated according to the eternal purpose of God, to be conformed to the image of His Son in glory (Rom. viii. 29)—a blessed purpose which no power can possibly frustrate. To be *like* Him and *with* Him is our sure destiny. But the furnace in the meantime is needed to purify and purge from dross and grit the precious metals. The breaking and bruising is a painful process, but it cannot be dispensed with, if the divine refiner would see in every bit of silver the reflection of His own image (Mal. iii. 3).

He sits at the mouth of the furnace, while Christ Himself, absolutely pure and as tenderly sympathetic, takes a place in company with the sufferer in it (Dan. iii. 25). Wisdom, divine wisdom, superintends every detail. There will not be a blow of the hammer too many or one too severe: nor will the furnace be heated one degree beyond what is absolutely necessary. The duration and intensity of the fires of affliction are limited and controlled. God measures our difficulties, prepares and heats the furnace, and carries on the disciplinary process till the final result is reached—moral conformity to Christ on High. All, all is under a Father's hand and *He* "will never cause His child a needless tear."

Would we seek to escape the present and painful discipline of the Lord, as we reflect on the distinguished place we are each to occupy—a discipline, moreover, which is only for a season, and for which there is a needs be (1 Peter i. 6)? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. xxx. 5). The Valley of Baca (Ps. lxxxiv. 6) wet with the tears, and its silence broken by the sobs

of the Lord's redeemed, leads on to the rest and worship of the House of the Lord (verse 4). Tribulation is God's appointed path for *all* His sons and daughters, but it ends in the Kingdom and fulness of joy. Besides, there are present lessons as well as a grand future. We are yet in the school of God, which is necessarily more or less one of sorrow. Our richest lessons are taught us in the *shade* which we never could have learnt in the *sunshine*. There are in the best of us many hidden roots of evil and it is a mercy when these are exposed to ourselves. "My soul is even as a weaned child" expresses a ripened condition of soul. A broken and chastened spirit is of priceless value.

"My times are in Thy hand" (Ps. xxxi. 15). Is it a safe hand? An Almighty hand? An infinitely tender hand? Ah! yes. The hand that holds you up is one of divine love and of omnipotent strength. Our times, whether dark or bright, whether of sorrow, desolation, poverty, or death are in Jehovah's hand, and that is enough, methinks, for weakness to lean upon. Our life seems a tangled web. Who can unravel its mysteries or explain its apparent contradictions? But faith's confidence is this—that *our* God holds the thread of life. All is perfect light before *Him* if dark and inexplicable to *us*. "He knows the way He taketh." Ever interpret His actions, however in themselves insolvable, by His love, well known to our souls. The character of His ways is simply the reflex of His nature—light and love. "All things work together for good" (Rom. viii. 28). Trace all up direct to the source which is God—the God who gave His only Son; there rest. Occupation with second causes or agents and instruments

shuts God out of the scene. No sorrow can reach you till He bids it come; poverty cannot touch you till He allows it; friendships cannot be severed unless He permits; loved ones cannot die till He withdraws His hand; and hearts cannot break till He sovereignly allows. "As for God, His way is perfect."

Christ was "a man of sorrows." God had only one Son without sin, but He never had one who was without sorrow (Heb. xii. 8) "whereof all are partakers." The Blessed Lord is with us in the wildest storm, in the darkest night. The most awful hurricane can no more engulf *us* than it can *Him* (Mark iv. 37-41). He who walks on the sea (Matt. xiv. 25) as the Lord of the raging elements, sleeps in the midst of His own, whilst winds and waves dash around.

Tribulation cannot separate us from the love of God, but the love of God will by and by separate us forever from tribulation and set us in eternal felicity. In the meantime the love of Christ leads us on and through life's trials "more than conquerors" (Rom. viii. 35-39). Do not allow yourself to be wrapt up in selfish sorrow. God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends (chap. xlii. 10) and gave him "twice as much as he had before." Wilderness lessons are meant for others as well as yourself; see to it, that you learn them well, and hand over the fruit of them to fellow-pilgrims (1 Cor. i. 3-6). The trying of your faith (James i. 3) will soon be over, then the trial of it "more precious than of gold" will be publicly recompensed in the coming day (1 Peter. i. 7).

W. S.

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH.

*(Continued from page 298.)**(Chapter ii. Continued.)*

OUR Lord never leaves a seeking soul to hunger, and in the provision for Ruth's refreshment we see His hand of bounty, even for one who little realizes the fulness of His grace. She is welcome to dip her morsel in the vinegar, to receive along with her feeble apprehension, her bit of bread, the strength and refreshment suggested in the wine. Have we not in like manner, in the days of the beginnings of our faith, brought our little mite of truth, our little glimpse of Christ, and found it made delicious and strengthening by the sense of a love which we did *not* bring? Surely that wine must speak of Him whose love is "better than wine," and who cannot have any near Him but He makes them know something of that love.

"And she sat beside the reapers." Food and rest must go together, and our Lord will have none take their food like the beasts, standing. The first command for the multitude who were to be fed was that they should sit down. What a foretaste of the gospel itself, which invites all who labor and are weary to come to Christ for rest; and what a foretaste of that eternal rest at the marriage supper of the lamb, where each will be "the disciple whom Jesus loved," with our heads upon His bosom.

But of this Ruth knows nothing, nor of the relation she is soon to hold toward this kindly man. It is simply the shadow of what is to be. But though a stranger and an alien, no distinction is made between her and the reapers. They are gathering in the golden grain and adding to the wealth of their

master, while she, practically a beggar, is the very picture of poverty. But there can be no difference in such a presence. Grace obliterates all lesser distinctions, because it emphasizes the one — man's nothingness and God's fulness. All other distinctions are lost sight of in that presence. There the richest is poor and the poorest is rich. It is not merely, "The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all"—which levels distinctions in the presence of the Creator. It is, "this Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." All who partake of His feast are sinners; pharisees have no place there, nor would they have it. How sweet too it is to see that service gives no place nearer than grace. The feeblest babe is as welcome as the oldest, most faithful and most successful servant. Let us remember this as we gather about our Lord, and let it silence all thought in our heart of any right of nearness beyond that which grace gives to all who are the Lord's alike.

"And *he* reached her parched corn." She gets food from his own hand. The heart of our Lord is not satisfied till He Himself is ministering to the soul. How He longs for this personal contact, not satisfied merely with feeding, but passing the food from His own hand to the needy one. No doubt many have known what this means. It is touching to see what it is that is suggested by the parched corn. Corn is the figure of the person of our Lord, of His perfect humanity. It is what He was in His life here, in all the lowliness that brought Him to earth for man's need, to be the bread of life. But in order that He might be our food He had to die; so the fire must pass over the corn, reminding us of

that fire of divine judgment which fell upon Him in our place. It suggests also the delight of God in Him even in His death. It was a sweet savor to God. More than this, the parched corn was part of the first fruits (Lev. ii. 14), and as such recalls our Lord in resurrection, "the first fruits of them that slept." Thus from His hand we get the reminder of His person, His work and His resurrection. Dear brethren, how He yearns to impart these precious things to our souls!

Who could fail to enjoy such open-hearted bounty? So we find Ruth profits by it: "She did eat, and was sufficed and left (thereof)." There is an ascent marked here: she ate, but she might only have eaten what would have stayed the pangs of hunger for a little. She was sufficed: all her hunger was satisfied and she wanted no more. This would have suggested the sufficiency to meet her individual case, but beyond her need, there was a sufficiency for the needs of others; she left. We are reminded again of the multitude fed by our Lord, of whom it is said, "They did all eat and were filled and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full" (Matt. xiv. 20). This is the way of grace; there is always an abundance beyond our need, no matter how great that may be.

Still is she pursued by the kindness of Boaz, all unknown to herself. He commands his servants to let her glean wherever she will, even among the sheaves, without reproach. The natural thought for a gleaner would be afar from the reapers. She would only glean the ground where they had been, and from which all the sheaves had been collected. It would look like presumption for a gleaner to follow

too closely, a presumption very likely to meet a sharp rebuke. But this is all anticipated and guarded against. She is to go where she will, even among the sheaves, and gather wheat which could hardly be considered as left yet.

How like grace is this. There is no hard line behind which the needy seekers are to keep, fearing to draw near lest they might pick up some comfort which is not intended for them. Let the reapers remember this, in trying to check souls that are seeking. Let them glean: there is no limit. The whole field of grace is before them, the whole word of God, through which they may hunt at will for all they can get. All true food is for them, all they can find. What a precious thought it is that we can welcome the soul to search the entire word of God and make his own all that he finds there. To be sure there are scriptures which apply to Israel, and others which refer to the Church, but wherever he finds Christ as food for his soul, he is welcome to Him. The trembling one may say, "This is a precious thing I have found, but it applies to believers, and I am not sure I am that." Ah, glean where you will, even though it be among the sheaves: it is no presumption. A faith that gleans, is a faith that has the right to appropriate.

More than this, well knowing her need and her possible reluctance, Boaz charges his men to let some handfuls of grain fall on purpose for her. This is very beautiful, and shows the loving thought of our Lord. Have we not found just such handfuls of comfort, little suspecting whence they came? We have found some precious assurance, some view of God's love and grace. We say we *found* it, but it

was let fall on purpose for us. The word of God is full of such handfuls of grace left on purpose for the needy soul. How many a word has brought its message of blessing, which has apparently been left almost at random. "He could not be hid, *for* a certain woman" had a need which He alone could meet. That word "*for*" we might say was dropped on purpose for any one who doubted in the least the Lord's willingness to bless. "Go tell my disciples, *and Peter.*" Why those added words unless the risen Lord had in mind others who false as Peter, need his encouragement? Why are such lovely gospel pictures to be found scattered over the Old Testament history, between the denunciations of the prophets, enclosed in some Levitical ordinance, unless the Lord of all grace has let these fall of purpose for the timid gleaner? The historian may say the Bible is an unsatisfactory book, because it fails to give as full a narrative as would satisfy his curiosity; the scientist says it is not sufficiently explicit in matters upon which he desires to be informed. But, when did needy gleaner ever turn to its pages and not find just the word for himself? How it declares the heart of God, that He has scattered from end to end of His Book handfuls of blessing, messages of love and grace.

Nor is it a niggard supply; *handfuls* are strewed everywhere, an abundant supply. We will ever find that the amount is measured not by the supply, but by the faith of the gatherer. As with the manna, he that gathered much had nothing over. He gathered according to his need. Had the capacity been greater, the supply could never have been exhausted.

May we not gather a lesson for servants and minis-

try in these handfuls let fall of purpose? Do they not suggest that in all ministry there should be a word for the simplest and the poorest? No matter how high the theme, nor how wide the range of the subject that occupies us, there should ever be room for the heart of God to express itself. The gospel will be our eternal theme of praise; let us weave it into all the truth of God that is ministered to His people. It keeps one's own heart fresh and tender, while many a weary one has received the message intended for it through these handfuls of blessing let fall apparently at random. May the Lord give us the wisdom of His own love.

So the gleaner keeps on till set of sun, gathering here a head of grain and there a cluster of heads, with varying success, but ever adding to her store. It seems slow work and tedious; she may be tempted to discouragement, but it is all gain. At last the day is over, and she gathers up her little hoard, beating it out. It was about an ephah of barley. It seemed a small amount to one accustomed to fulness and plenty, but not to the poor gleaner. Of how much more too was it the foretaste. But of this she does not even dream. It is enough that her present need has been supplied.

There is instruction in the fact that she beats out the grain she has gleaned. Her labor is not ended when the fields have been traversed all day. She must now get the grain out of its inclosure and have it ready for food. In spiritual things it is to be feared that this beating-out process is too often neglected. It is not enough to gather the word of God, and to see intellectually its meaning, or even its applicability to ourselves. It must be made prac-

tically our own, be prepared for our food, so that it can be assimilated. How much exercise and diligence of soul this suggests. It need hardly be said that the word of God contains no chaff in the sense of having anything worthless in it; but it must be transferred, as it were, from the general to the personal. For instance, this case of Ruth must be applied to ourselves. One might understand both literally and spiritually all that we are endeavoring to learn here, and yet not "beat out" any of it for his own soul.

We are told that the sluggard roasts not that which he took in hunting. He may be very zealous in scouring the fields for game, and when it is caught his interest is gone, and his hunger unsatisfied. It is not likely that a hunter would impress us as being a sluggard: it requires considerable energy to go afield and spend the day in search of game. And yet Scripture describes such a man, if he fail to make use of that which has cost him so much, as a sluggard. He gets no food, and like Esau, he returns from his hunting faint with hunger, ready to sell his birthright for any mess of pottage that offers itself.

This beating out means much prayer and much meditation. It is not a thing to be passed over lightly, nor taken for granted. How many impressions to say nothing of the knowledge of the word of God pass away like the morning cloud and early dew, simply because they are not followed by the exercise of soul here suggested.

Thus we leave Ruth, with her little measure of blessing, doubtless little realizing how much was in store for her, and how the present blessing was a pledge of more and greater. So surely as the Lord

has begun to give, will He continue till our fulness of joy shall express itself in fulness of worship.

(To be continued.)

“I SLEEP BUT MY HEART WAKETH.”

(Song Sol. v. 3, etc.).

THERE are perhaps three conditions in which the soul that has got spiritually dull may find itself. We have one indicated in the above words; another, where the heart is asleep and the mind awakes; and a third, awful condition, in which both affections and spiritual discernment have gone out in the deadly atmosphere of entire indifference. It may perhaps be profitable for us to consider a little each of these three conditions, even should we be at present in none of them.

The last is a position into which God rarely permits any of His own to fall, and from which, they can be awakened by the stroke of judgment alone, or else that awful premonitory voice “that speaks in thunder” and before which they that fear the Lord must surely tremble. Across the pathway the angel of God must stand with drawn sword, not merely to threaten but also to strike. Such are saved as by fire, which burns before that of the wrath to come, and by judgment bars the path to judgment.

This too is God’s mercy; but mercy that speaks through the pestilence and the whirlwind. God grant that none of us be found in need of it. The path that leads thereto is entered upon only when the lamp of His word is no longer used, and prayer has ceased. Are you, reader, in this condition?

We may next speak of that condition in which the

mind alone is awake. Affections have got dulled. We loathe the oft given manna and though spiritual discernment cries aloud that we need more of it, our appetite is gone, and we need to cry to God. Prayer surely is the great helper here. He is able to give grace to *help in time of need*, and scarcely ever is grace more needed than in such a crisis. God surely must answer. We are responsible to set our "*mind*" on things above, and if we do, the drying fountains will gush forth once more and God will fully restore.

We have, thirdly, the state disclosed as in the words quoted at the beginning. There is one blessed advantage in it. We are able to hear the voice of our *Beloved* and it *knocks*. "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying open to me." Let us consider a little.

The soul has probably been undergoing some great testing in which the adversary steals in and sows seeds of doubt and questioning. These bear fruit in various dark problems which although successfully met, hover before the mind and cloud it in a way that soon causes spiritual apathy and a gradual weakening of the powers, that leaves the soul a wreck of its former self. Finally it may be truly described as asleep; and here no strong intellectual and spiritual giant is able to remove the cobwebs that have gradually been enwrapping it and binding it as a victim for the demon of despair.

It is *love* that must now haste to the rescue and filling the soul with fire endow it with energy to burst these bonds. "It is the voice of my Beloved that calleth saying open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." It is the voice of Jesus we must hear addressing us in that tone which we know

so well, and in that manner, which is just His own way, unique with Him. When that voice is heard how soon the visions of the night begin to dissipate in the morning sunlight.

But He says that He too has been through the night. "For my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night." Here is the "key of promise" which unlocks the "dungeons of Despair." You think you have it in some golden saying of prophet or psalmist, and so you may, but Jesus, the One who discloses God, drawing aside the curtain of the ages, is the key to all mystery, the revealer of all secrets. "*All* the promises of God, in Him are yea and in Him amen."

His head is filled with dew and His locks with the drops of the night.

He was ever the Watcher. You have not been alone in the battle through which you have gone. He has been up all night in the mountain to pray, and as He returns you are still His "undefiled." Are not these gracious words for one to speak who knows all about you? It is not His way to do otherwise. He sympathizes with you in the trial through which you have been. Reproach would dishearten, discourage; *love* will revivify, and *love* it is that recalls the soul to its allegiance. Was not that the way He acted with Peter? When the Lord arose from the dead, Peter it is that seems to be specially remembered. What an encouragement for those in trial to think that *they* above others must now be the objects of His thought!

But let us follow the writer still further in His description. The voice of the awakened sleeper is now heard. What a pitiful answer to such a message!

"I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet how shall I defile them?"

There are difficulties in the way and although a desire to go to Him has been awakened, these obstacles act as a deterrent. "The sluggard saith, there is a lion without." The Lord sees this dullness and determines upon still another token of His grace. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door. I rose to open to my beloved and my hands dropped with myrrh and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the door."

It is said to be a custom with lovers in eastern countries, thus to cover the handle of the door with precious ointments, which shall long leave their savor upon the hands of her that seeks to open them. How indefatigable is His love. It finds an entrance some way. It got into Peter's heart, through His eye, when the Lord turned and looked upon him, and he went away weeping bitterly. The tears were bitter and I think the bitterness may serve as a measure in some sort of the sweetness of the love that drew them forth.

Perhaps some one of us has become dull and cold towards Him. Friend, if there be but a hole through which He can pour in His sweet ointments, He'll fill the musty rooms within with all the fragrance of Heaven. He will not wait until "you fling the heart's door widely open." The ivy has grown up all around and the door is fast closed! Is there then no hope? Look near to that now useless latch, which preaches so sadly of neglect, covered with rust and dirt, and behold a small opening but enough for some hand to steal in with its token of love. *Jesus will enter there.* And as the precious "savor of His

good ointments" begins to impregnate the air you will arise from your bed of sloth and forgetfulness to find that another Hand has been upon the latch, that yours may drip with sweet smelling myrrh. Such are the ways of God! No wonder then that the psalmist speaks of some, "in whose heart are the ways." Such can truly say,

"O banish from me all I love,
The smiles of friends, the old fireside;
And drive me to that home of homes,
The heart of Jesus crucified."

But now love has another lesson to teach. *First*, it says, "I love," and afterwards it is faithful to teach another lesson, the gist of which we have in the following quaint old couplet,

"Temptations hurt not though they have access,
Satan o'ercomes none, but by willingness."

"I opened to my beloved, but my beloved *had withdrawn himself* and was *gone*."

But why has He gone? Has He changed? Does He love no longer? Nay what brought Him to thee, then? What sweet odor is that upon thy hands, and dropping, in its abundance, to the ground? Dost know how much it *cost* to get it?

"I sought Him but I could not find Him; I called Him but He gave me no answer." Ah soul, what have you done? You have despised His love; and now faithfulness demands that you learn that the treasure which He gave is not a garment lightly to be put off and on.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

F. C. G.

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

IN a few more days, we will have ceased forever to date our letters 18—. In that sense we will have completed the century. How rapid is the flight of time, and how all things are hastening on to the end. It is surely fitting that we should pause at the close of a period of time, and look about us, meditating a little on the solemnity of life, and asking ourselves what lessons God has for us at this time.

The world is going on rapidly, they tell us in the direction of happiness, improvement and universal peace. And yet there has been, and is at this present time, more war and bloodshed than for many years. Who that looks at the spirit of war, the desire for conquest, the jealousy among the nations, can think we are upon the verge of an era of peace and good will?

This restlessness among the nations is accompanied by a most awful spirit of infidelity. Never doubtless in the history of the professing church has the world, to say nothing of professors, shown such absolute unbelief. The fear of God has been lost. His voice seems unheard by the masses of men. Can that state continue long, and is it not the strongest indication that the end of God's patience is near at hand? How this should quicken us in declaring the gospel, persuading men as we realize how soon the day of grace will end.

And what is the attitude of the Church, the vessel of testimony which our Lord has left here to witness for Him during His absence? Tears might well plead that we are not censorious in saying that the profess-

ing church is more worldly, more careless than ever. There is a loss of confidence on the part of the masses, in the reality of those who have been looked up to as guides. The old landmarks are being removed, and new ones are not put in their place. There is a general break up, which gives indications of proceeding at even a more rapid rate. The word of God is not believed, and its truths are despised by many who occupy "Moses' seat." Religious teachers are encouraging unbelief in God's word. On the other hand, false teachings of every kind are being introduced under the name of Christian doctrine, and multitudes are being led astray.

Passing to those who are truly the Lord's, can we say that they exhibit a devotedness and love which should mark them? Ah, it is too sadly true that the saints need awakening, reviving as a whole. So long as we are left in the world it seems as though the bulk of the Lord's people were being degraded by their surroundings. Their love grows cold. Happy are those who have no need to reproach themselves on this score.

Our hearts will never be at rest till the Lord come. Nothing here will be permanent, even among His saints, in the sense that it will suffice the heart. How He longs for His Church, to have her with Him as His bride! Shall not our longing respond to His? Can we be at rest where He is not? What a wretched failure we have made, individually and corporately. We will not better it permanently by remaining here. This poor groaning earth will never be happy till He begin His reign. Why then should our hearts linger here? May our love for the Lord

be so intense that we cannot but long and wait for Him.

But let us be patient till He come. Let it be a patience of service and of communion. One and another is called home. Servants rest from their labors in the presence of the Lord. Who among us is taking the place of those who go?

Let it be the patience of steadfastness. It is a day of freedom from restraint, of following paths of men's own choosing; let us be loyal to our Lord. It is hard for the flesh to be firm, to resist the inroads of worldliness and free thought. Let us stand fast, remembering our Lord's words, "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

Let it be the patience of love, seeking to minister the precious things of Christ to all His own. Let us be channels for His love to flow out to the members of His body, bringing joy and refreshment to many a lonely heart. Thus may we wait, with pilgrim hearts, occupying the time faithfully, happy in His love, but one thing ever before us—the coming of our Lord.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).