

T H E
Christian's Helper.

“By love serve one another”—Gal. v. 13.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S HELPER.



“THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS.”—Exod. xxxiv. 6.

GOD's ways should ever be instructive to His creatures. Since the fall He has been revealing Himself and His purposes, purposes concerning His Son, purposes concerning His saints, purposes, too, concerning heaven and earth. Purposes these, all must admit, that would never have entered into the heart of man to conceive.

His Son, the heir of all things, is to have heaven and earth, and all in them, gathered together in one under Him (Eph. i. 10). This is the revelation of the mystery of His will as that passage states, elsewhere called, we believe, the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 2-3). Saints are joint heirs with Christ, to reign with Him (Rom. viii. 17; Rev. xx. 4), all of them redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Eph. i. 7). Creation too, God has thought of. It shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21). Sin, which now weighs as a heavy incubus on it, will be wholly removed, when the new heavens and the new earth shall be made, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 5).

Much, then, of the purposes of God revealed in His Word yet await their accomplishment; for even that first revelation vouchsafed after the fall, has as yet only been partially fulfilled. The heel of the woman's seed has indeed been bruised, but the serpent's head awaits its predicted bruising (Gen. iii. 15). God has not forgotten it, He will surely effect it.

But not only can we mark divine grace as manifested in the revealing of the divine mind. The time when different unfoldings have taken place are also instructive to the atten-

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tive reader. It was in the first hour, when Adam and Eve began to realize something of the ruin induced by their fall, that God spoke to the serpent in the prophetic strain just referred to. A word it must surely have been to cheer the guilty pair, who had been seduced by his wiliness. Paradise was to be no longer their home. The fruits of the trees were no more to refresh and delight them. New experience awaited them. Labour and toil would be Adam's portion. Sorrow in child-bearing, with subjection to her husband was to be the woman's lot. But how gracious for them must they have felt, were the words they were permitted to hear addressed by the Lord God to the serpent. He had tempted them as their professed friend. He had seduced them from their allegiance to their God. Then he left them to bear their punishment. But the woman's seed should bruise his head. He made his attack through her. Her seed should deal in power with him. God is the God of hope. He gave the pair a hope on the day of their fall.

To another, a very sorrowful occasion also, would we now direct our reader's attention. Centuries later a further revelation was vouchsafed. The golden calf had been made. God had been insulted by such a professed representation of deity. The covenant Israel had broken, so henceforth could claim no blessing under it. And the people now stripped of their ornaments felt they could do nothing. All depended for them apparently on the mediator, who had said, "peradventure, I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Exod. xxxii. 30). Could he do that? With what interest must they have watched his disappearance, as he ascended afresh the mount. Anxiously too, we can well believe, did they now wait for his reappearance. Days, weeks passed, yet they saw him not. At length, after the expiration of another forty days he reappeared, and with two fresh tables in his hands, the tables of the covenant, and with his face r splendent with the glory of God.

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He had been in the divine presence. His face showed that. Returning to them they knew that he was accepted before God. Hence as a people they were accepted too. Had he made atonement? Ah! no. That he could not do. But he came with a message, a revelation unheard of before. What could be the tenor of it? What could they surmise? He came with a revelation of the name of the Lord, and could communicate it to them: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod. xxxiv. 6-7). They deserved no favour, but on the contrary might have looked for final abandonment by God. They heard however, that which must have surprised them, not a terrible sentence of rejection, but what their God was, as His name could set forth.

Did it strike any as they heard the opening sentences, "merciful and gracious," that such He *was*; not what He could be, not what He might be, but what He *was*; and we can say what He *is*. A sinful people, transgressors in deed, could learn that their God was merciful, and gracious likewise. Just that it was which could meet them. He was merciful, so would have compassion on them. He was gracious, so could show favour. God, their God, in government could be that, for in connection with government was this revelation set forth. Hence that could be pleaded with Him whatever the national failure might be. And this saints in subsequent ages felt they could do, Moses leading in the matter. God meant what He said, and said it without conditions annexed regarding men's way to modify it.

Shortly indeed after this, the first occasion arose in which the law-giver pleaded the revelation of Jehovah's name, in mitigation of judgment going forth against the people. He

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did not plead it in vain. "I have pardoned according to thy word," was the Lord's immediate answer to the mediator's intercession (Numb. xiv. 17-20). Moses could thus plead with God on ground which he could never have done before that second ascent of Mount Sinai. And he could plead on ground which never could become obsolete, for that name is unchangeable. Further on behalf of a failing people he could thus plead, their ways, their greivous sin, could not make any change in the divine name.

For the nation he thus pleaded. Could individuals take up that revelation with their God in time of need? Yes, indeed. David knew that, and made use of it in his trouble, as Ps. lxxxvi. 15 makes plain. It is part of the divine character, that God is full of compassion and gracious. The king had experienced deliverance at the hand of God in the past (13), he prayed for it again in the present (14), resting his confidence on the revelation vouchsafed at Sinai. So Psalm lxxxvi. is called a *prayer* of David. Then in another psalm ascribed to him, *viz.*, cxlv., which is called "David's Psalm of *praise*," and the only one in the whole book so described, we find him, near the close surely of his life, recalling the unchangeableness of the divine name. His heart evidently full of thankfulness, he hymns the praises of God the King, and views as still true, that which Moses had been the first to hear, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (8). The aged monarch, the first of his dynasty, had proved its truth, and puts it on record to be remembered by coming generations. Nothing that he had experienced in his chequered life had led him to speak otherwise of his God.

Many years rolled by, kings of Judah had come and had gone, and Hezekiah was now on the throne. Great changes had taken place in the world's history. The Hittite empire had probably succumbed to the increasing might of Assyria, and Egypt, though still a kingdom, had now a formidable

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rival in that of the Assyrian empire. Captivity too, had overtaken many of the kingdom of Israel. At this juncture an invitation went forth from King Hezekiah to all Israel and Judah, from Beersheba to Dan, to congregate at Jerusalem to keep the Passover. Such an invitation had not been issued, nor could it have been issued, since the disruption of the monarchy. The good king wrote to all Israel to assemble at the capital, urging them to turn to the Lord, and reminding them of His name. "The Lord, your God, is gracious and merciful," he wrote. After all their failure and the rejection of their God, He would be true to His name, if they turned really to Him. He was unchanging. To the king's invitation divers hearkened, and humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxx. 6-11). Surely we may believe the reminder of what God was touched those hearts, brought them to His altar and His temple; and the remembrance of that revelation to Moses encouraged the king to ask the people to accept his invitation. He could count on that which God would show Himself to be, if the people really turned back to Him.

And this confidence animated other saints in Israel. Of this Joel is a witness. In view of the invasion of the land by an enemy which none could resist, the prophet, as a true watchman, summons all to repent, conveying a message from their God, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil" (Joel ii. 12-13). This, a message from God, would assure the faithful that in Him there is no change.

And of this there are, and will yet be witnesses. The returned remnant in the days of Nehemiah were witnesses of it, and publicly confessed it (Neh. ix. 17, 31). And the godly remnant at the commencement of millennial times will confirm it (Ps. ciii. 8).

But all that we have quoted concerns Israel. Can Gentiles hope to prove it as well? Jonah here steps in and speaks—Gentiles can prove the unchangeableness of the divine name (Jonah iv. 2); for the Ninevites, outside of whose city Jonah built a booth to see what would become of it, could say that in their case it had been illustrated, God was merciful indeed.

In national unfaithfulness that name can be used, as a plea with God. In times of personal trial a saint can take it up in prayer. In political danger it can still be relied on by those who humble themselves before the divine majesty. What a plea to urge! What a revelation in which to confide! And whilst we can now approach our God as our Father, assured of His Fatherly interest in all that concerns His children, yet in trouble of whatever kind—the consequence of failure, whether personal, national, or political, we too can turn to our God and Father, and remind Him of what He Himself declared at Mount Sinai, that He *is* merciful, and He *is* gracious. Surely this is truth for the day, a word too in season, at our present national juncture. C. E. S.

N E E D.

THIS is “the time of need.” “Need” has varied measures.

The wilderness journey has its cares and sorrows. There are trials from various quarters meeting the saints of God as they journey through the world. All sufficiency is found in the Great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God. He gives timely help, and when sorrow fills the cup, He is always at hand to sustain.

But “need” has another measure. “Need,” if we in some degree have been apprehended by the blessings bestowed upon us will be discerned by us.

We are the children of God. We are sons of God. We are members of Christ's body. We are the habitation of God by the Spirit. These are some of the blessings bestowed upon the saints of God. All of them waken up in the soul, where faith is simple, the sense of need, and the heart learns to inquire what is suitable to the Father and to Christ from one in such wonderful relationships. The relationships exist—conduct flows from the relationship.

Let us remember and consider that we are called *to walk worthy of God*. D. S.

IMPORTANT POINTS IN EXODUS XII.

“AND the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt.” So opens our chapter. Jehovah, Israel’s God, had something to communicate to His people. Many times had He already spoken words calculated to convince the Israelites of His deep and abiding interest in them. An interest not founded on their faithfulness to Him, nor in anything that they had done or could do; but in faithfulness to His own promise. Hundreds of years had passed away since that promise was made; and Abram, Isaac, and Jacob had been removed by death. Their descendants, what were they? Poor and afflicted, slaves, suffering cruel hardships under their taskmasters. The cry of anguish had often been forced from them, and that cry was unheeded on earth. But there was a God in heaven looking on, who had not, and could not, forget His own word; nor could He be indifferent to the sufferings of His sorely tried people. Wonderful words are those found in chapter iii. 7, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.” He had seen; He had heard; He knew. Further, He had come down to deliver them. Pharoah, Egypt’s king, may challenge Jehovah’s right. Who is the Lord that I should obey Him? and set himself in opposition to the divine command. Vain man! he did his very worst, distressing the Israelites by added burdens, till they cry out against God’s chosen leader Moses, and add unbelief to their other sins. In nine different ways had Jehovah shown His power in judgment on Egypt and its king; and now in chapter xii. the last, and the most severe judgment, was about to fall; and on this occasion the Israelites themselves would suffer exactly the same as the Egyptians, unless they believed and acted upon the special word of God to them as detailed in this chapter. We have seen how deeply He felt for them in their bondage.

How His heart went out to them! How He remembered His promise to their fathers! Pharoah's power He would crush, and break the pride of Egypt. But there was one thing even Jehovah could not do. He could not be indifferent to their sinful condition. He was holy. They were sinners in no wise better than their oppressors. Good news, He would make known to them, the great truth for all times, that blood alone can shelter from Divine judgment. In their case the blood of a lamb. In ours the blood of God's Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. The first point I would notice is found in verse 2: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." Their past must be wiped out. They must have a new beginning—henceforth, then, reckoning of time would be from the month of their deliverance. In type how this speaks to us of what we call conversion to God, and what a beginning it was to many of us, what a right about face. What a day was that when we learnt our own deep need, and God's rich grace in meeting it by the death of His Son. A new beginning indeed. Next we learn that they were to take to them a lamb according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. Should the household be too small to eat the whole of it, arrangements could be made with the neighbour next unto his house; for the whole had to be eaten. The passover lamb pointed unmistakeably to Christ. So we read in 1 Cor. v., "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The paschal lamb, however, gives a very limited and contracted view of Christ's great and precious sacrifice. There was nothing for God in it (save the blood to stay his avenging hand). All was for the people. There was no altar; no priest; no sweet savour. The blood, too, did not speak of a purged conscience, nor of liberty to enter into the holiest. Nor of its own excellence as abiding under God's eye on the heavenly mercy seat. It told of solemn judgment going on outside,

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and of shelter from that judgment for those inside. There was no joy. Have we not too often glided lightly over the deeply solemn subject of what God is against sin? Surely the more this is felt the greater will be the joy that follows, when deliverance is understood. Of the significance of the lamb being taken on the tenth day and kept up until the fourteenth day I say nothing, save that it was calculated to impress their minds with the solemn gravity of the whole thing. Next we get directions for dealing with the blood in verse 7; and then the eating of the entire carcase of the animal. It was not to be eaten raw, nor boiled; but roast with fire. Surely this teaches us that the Christ which we are called upon to appropriate has passed through the fire of the holy judgment of God. Thus, and thus only, can we rightly appropriate Him. All was to be eaten ere they started on their journey out of Egypt; and to be eaten with bitter herbs, and with unleavened bread. The meal was an ample one, but far from pleasant. With loins girded, with feet shod, with staff in hand, they were to eat it in haste: it was the Lord's passover. Of the typical meaning of leaven we can speak with certainty, for Paul teaches us in 1 Cor. v. It does not refer to the evil nature in us, but to the allowance of sin in our conduct. Malice and wickedness, says Paul. These are not the corrupt tree, but rather its fruit. How keep the passover as sheltered by blood from divine judgment, eating Christ as having borne the holy judgment of God, and yet allow evil actively at work? God's word to Israel was (verse 15) "for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day that soul shall be cut off from Israel." No individual then must on any account partake of leaven; but that is not all: neither must it be found in any of their houses. This for us points to the assembly. Individuals must eschew leaven. The Assembly must not contain any. "A little leaven (little, not much) leavens the whole lump." Many would

be particular about the individual view, but indifferent to that of the assembly. God's word presents both. It will not do to say, as some do, that leaven does not defile until it is known. The point is, God has forbidden it. He sees it; He knows it. The assembly is His house, and He cannot tolerate evil actively at work where He is. Assembly action in putting out is to clear themselves. They are, then, defiled. They are responsible. *They cannot act without knowing of course*; but to say that leaven does not defile until it is known is not the truth. Of old God knew of Achan's sin. "Israel hath sinned," said God; and Israel must bear the consequences. God would not be with them until they had found out the sin and dealt with it. Nor will it do to say, "Oh! that is Old Testament teaching, we have nothing like it in the New." We read, "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning." Those who so say should show that the principle of assembly responsibility so clearly set forth in the case just referred to, has been changed; and give their authority from the New Testament for so teaching. All is in force that has not been set aside. Unleavened bread may not be so agreeable to eat, but there is nothing in it really unpleasant. With bitter herbs—how different! very pungent! very disagreeable! still they must accompany the Lamb at the paschal feast. If the absence of leaven teaches us, as it does, that active sin there must not be; the presence of bitter herbs surely speaks of bitter sorrow and self-judgment. The holiness of God, learnt by Moses at the burning bush, must be learnt by every soul who is sheltered from divine judgment. Let that lesson be well learnt, and the whole after life will be affected by it. Any shallowness in this, any passing lightly through it, and feebleness ensues. Much of the difficulty found here and there is caused by this very thing. Are not those of us who preach the gospel, to be blamed for the lack of depth

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in so many; and especially in the young amongst us? May it not be that there has been too much of eagerness to press souls into peace, instead of seeking to deepen and enlarge the souls feeling and understanding of what sin is in the sight of God? Haste marked the occasion—"Ye shall eat it in haste." Standing, it would seem, just waiting for orders to start, they were about to leave Egypt for ever. Happy would it have been for them could they have left their liking for some of Egypt's things behind them. Happy for us, as God's people to-day if we had left all our likings for vanities of this evil world behind us—for its fashions, its pleasures, its aims. Israel, redeemed by Jehovah's power, had a prospect. That prospect was the land of Canaan. Saints of God to-day have a prospect, and that prospect is the heavenly Canaan. Israel ate the passover, with loins girded, with feet shod, with staff in hand, all suited to a pilgrimage, not for ease and repose. At the word of command they started, never to return. God by His power opened the Red Sea to allow His own to pass through. We, too, have passed through the Red Sea of Christ's death, out of the bondage of sin, out of this evil world, to be God's freemen, to serve and live for Him, and to rejoice, as Israel did, in the grace and mercy of God, who gave them the victory which His own right arm had gained for them. They saw, on the morrow, all their enemies dead upon the sea shore; and we through grace can say, Divine judgment^t has been borne by Jesus for us; and all the power of the enemy has been overthrown. Israel sang. We, too, sing. Nor must we allow (as Israel did) wilderness circumstances to quench our joy, and stop our song; but feed our joy on recollections of redeeming grace and blessed anticipations of future glory. Our past was misery; our future is glory; our present is the loving care of our God, to whom we owe our deliverance, and who has planned our eternal future. His love is doing its own

blessed best for us to-day. Praise Him, Praise Him, Hallelujah.

An interesting point I have omitted. Viewing the house as a type of an assembly, one can see the fitness of the command, "In one house shall it be eaten." To have divided the pascal lamb between two small families, would typically teach that small assemblies only had a half of Christ, which of course could not be. However small the assembly, an entire Christ is theirs. E. R. W.

CAUSES OF SHIPWRECKS.

MANY and varied are the causes of shipwrecks. Untrustworthy charts are responsible for some; for no amount of skill and experience can keep a ship from striking a rock of whose presence the mariner is unaware. How thankful is the storm-met mariner for a reliable guide. It begets confidence and fearlessness in meeting the tempest.

Well, the Christian is on a voyage indeed; but he is provided with a perfect chart, even the inspired word of God. Every information requisite for a successful voyage, and that an entrance may be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is therein vouchsafed. How thankful ought we to be for such a chart! Ought it not to inspire us with confidence as we go forward? Now hidden rocks have often been discovered by some ship stranding on them; and their presence, hitherto unsuspected, has been revealed. In the word we have recorded the experiences of others that we might profit thereby; and so be kept from stranding on the same dangerous points. In this connection let us refer to the 1st Epistle to Timothy. It contemplates "the latter times" when there would be the evident desire to discard the word; and hence refers to shipwrecks, reveals hidden dangers, and shows the path through all the shoals. The plain safeguard which the Apostle brought before Timothy was the maintenance of true, practical Christianity. Where this is lacking a saint may be said to be simply *drifting*; and will certainly become,

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sooner or later, a wreck. The possession of knowledge merely will not save from this. The young servant was sent to the saints with a definite charge from Paul, the end of his command being "love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (ver. 6). This points to a heart in touch with God on everything. Truth had reached such an one, and was known in power. Love had flowed in and must flow out; actions must be weighed in His presence, and so truth applied to the inward parts would lead to the holding of a good conscience; and there was to be unfeigned faith. A pretended thing is nauseous. Hypocrisy is hateful always. There is power in reality, but none in pretence; and faith is personal. These things must be held tightly. Looseness about either leaves the soul unstable and unfortified, and at the mercy of all that is human; for such is like a leakage in a ship which renders it unseaworthy. Some there were, who had been satisfied with a lower standard; and then, like a blinded sailor, they lost the power to rightly read their guide, and were thus liable to strand at any moment. Was it a wonder that some did? If love is not active; if truth is not applied; if faith is not real, where may we not get? In verse 19 the Apostle repeats again wherein Timothy would find his safeguard; and summing it up we learn that he had to hold fast to the truth, and to have the truth holding him. Who would deny the need of this to-day? Grace active in the soul produces that which will be satisfied with nothing less than the truth. The denial of the need of holding a good conscience produced total wrecks then; and so it does to-day. The two things mentioned are the very essentials of *the faith*, and where maintained the power of the word is known. Ah! much of the unrest and error prominent to-day is traceable to this very cause; for the keeping a good conscience has not only reference to moral evil, to which we are liable to restrict it, but to every form of insincerity and wrong. Paul

spoke of Judaizing teachers as those that did not walk uprightly (Gal ii. 14). Looseness in walk soon leads to a light value being set upon what is of God; and soon it is reckoned as not worth contending for. After the return from captivity, when Jerusalem's walls were again being erected, it was Judah who spake of "much rubbish," and remarked because of this, "We are not able to build the wall" (Neh. iv. 10). But the sequel shows that Judah had taken sides with the enemy; and so failed necessarily to appreciate the character of what was going forward. Momentous consequences hang upon this, then, so let us see to it that, knowing Christ as the Object for faith to gaze upon, we seek to maintain a good conscience; which indeed demands the *application* of truth leading to self-judgment first, and then to the full enjoyment of all that the faith reveals. Neglect this and shipwreck will follow. May God give us grace to earnestly heed any exercise of soul which He may send, and to allow such to have a deep meaning to us.

Now passing on to ch. vi. we have another fruitful cause of failure mentioned in verse 10. Some had struck upon this rock and had erred from the faith, and brought many sorrows upon themselves. What grace to point this out! Verily we are thoroughly furnished by the Scriptures! Contentment becomes the saint; for he has the word of His God that He will never leave him (Heb. xiii.); and the fact revealed that the Father knows what is needed. Will *He* fail to provide? "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*." Sad, then, is the sight of a Christian really scrambling for the things of this world, forgetful of the high privilege given him to have for *his purpose* here, the seeking God's things. Money is almost worshipped to-day. Men crave it. Some of God's saints *desire* to be rich, and thereby lose what money can never purchase. Such a desire leads them out of their course into one full of hidden rocks, upon which

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alas ! they too often strike. What will not one do when possessed with the love of money ? With the greed of Balaam, and later the terrible sin of Judas before us, must we not say that there is no limit to which such will not go. But by bitter experience they learn that they have lost much, and gained nothing but sorrow and bitterness. God make us wise, and help us to steer clear of such a dangerous bank. Let our purpose be to cleave to the blessed Lord, and learn of Him, who, standing faithful in the hour of trial was cared for by His Father. Where is the wisdom in sowing much and reaping little ? So we must speak, for the hour demands it. Blessing, joy, and rest in communion is to be our portion now, as well as a happy anticipation of a glorious future. Shall we lose this present bliss for empty husks and aching hearts, as well as His commendation by and by ? But there is yet another cause mentioned in our chapter as one that has led to some erring from the faith. They had been taken up with the oppositions of falsely-named science. Is not this warning (verse 20) also urgently needed now ? Bold are the assertions of men. Conjecture is rife about almost every subject ; and conjecture, too, that questions the verity of God's Word. Strange, is it, that any of His own should give credence to theory, and doubt His Word. Now nothing is knowledge that is not fact ; and from Him who made that about which the fact is stated did the word emanate. So they must agree ; and they do. Bring forward any ascertained fact and show wherein disagreement lies. No ; falsely-named knowledge is conjecture, theory, supposition ; and in this abyss many of God's professing people are floundering now. And yet, oh ! the uncertainty of so-called science. Theory after theory is propounded, until if all were studied the mind would be bewildered with the maze. Contrast it with the certainty of God's Word. It is at one with every known fact ; and from it we learn, and receive by faith, what is

beyond the reach of science. The conscience is reached by it; and by it, too, the fulness and reality of God's love is known; so that it breathes peace and joy to the heart and mind. May God in His exceeding rich grace preserve and keep us from the snare of oppositions of science falsely so called, and give us the simplicity of babes which means a deep trust in His revealed Word. Now just to retrace let us enumerate the points. We have been instructed about the *giving up* of a good conscience; of *having* a love for money; and of the *acceptance* of man's theory which denies the Word. Each has proved to some professedly God's what the sunken rock oft proves to the sailor. But for us they are now plainly marked; and may we as wise heed them all; and so be found, both now and presently, acceptable unto Him.

H. F.

BEHOLD MY SERVANT!

"SEARCH the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." Such words were addressed by Him who never erred, during His brief ministry, as correctives, when questions of vital moment were discussed. He, full of grace and truth, would dissipate the darkness of superstition and tradition in which most were shrouded. He, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, viewed the burdens put upon creatures already groaning under their load of sin; whilst leaders of the people were unabashed by their impotency to recover lost ones, or dismiss disease from those afflicted. Alas! hypocrisy was common, for piety was absent. Truth, not being intensely loved, had long since been exchanged for tradition which made nothing of God's word. Children, even, could grow up heartless under such changeful unauthorised utterances; and show the same indifference to God's most implicit commands as the leaders to whom they submitted. "Like priest, like people—like people,

like priest ;” and this was what our blessed Lord was face to face with constantly during His sojourn here. Not that idolatry was the common practice of resorters to temple and synagogue—though covetousness, which is idolatry, was by no means absent. Little, was there, to relieve the darkness and low estate of those whom, in lowly grace, He came to seek and save. We do read of a wealthy young man, who approached Him on this deep theme of eternal life, saying that he had from his youth given honour to his father and mother; yet how far was he from becoming a lowly follower of our adorable Lord and Saviour, who had so immediately before Him the scriptures which told of unparalleled suffering ere returning to the glory from whence He came. He only could ask, “Glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” Glory proper to the eternal Son! Do we meditate upon Him, and His perfections in service and suffering? The theme of eternal life might well be attractive to such as tasted for the most part the galling yoke of a pagan power; and the deeper cruelty of such as would give stone for bread, and mock the need and misery ever present. But a deep sorrow in the cup of our Lord was the fact that God’s word was surrendered; and dishonour to parents, to masters, to rulers, was part only of the sad picture—there was “no fear of God before their eyes.” Even to His own He uttered, “O senseless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” They can say as they recall His words, “Did not our hearts burn . . . while He opened to us the scriptures?” The key, then, is Himself. This ‘Me’ whom the formal religionist would dispense with, was none other than Christ. Oh, fatal blunder! to hold scripture and leave out the Son of the Father. Ought there to be surprise that scripture is found, from beginning to close, to unerringly pay tribute to Him?

It may seem a rapid and abrupt introduction, "Behold My Servant;" nevertheless it is sublime, perfect, divine, and may well be pondered. Solemn reflection for Israel who failed to be such owing to closing of eyes and ears, and hardening of heart. But was He (Jehovah) to be misrepresented ever? dishonoured, disowned, and servantless? "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." What pen can describe, what tongue utter the glory of God's Anointed? We have a sketch, and join in wonder and praise as we group with His disciples and see such an One as the Son of God at one stage girded and giving attention to the feet of His own—He cared for their walk. Under yet another title He showed the road to greatness: "Whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Will He ever give up this character? or will our blessed God ever be wanting One in whom His soul can delight? One feels that it is but poorly we can enter into this written of Him, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." So consolation can be found in Christ; and hence the New Testament directs to this higher than human fount. May it be written to His eternal praise, "like Master—like servant," and then soon with Him, and fully like Him. "Where I am there shall also My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." He is rejected, not threatened with dismissal. What furnishings, then, do we require to uphold us from quailing before plots and death? His grace and truth are sufficient still. 1 Cor. xv. shows that the truth of resurrection carries us beyond the terrors of death and the

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grave—for how fully does resurrection place us beyond them—and the blessed Lord it is who gives victory that His work may be abounded in; and that His service sweet, with light burden and easy yoke, which brings no remorse or disappointment, but a sense of the vastness of His grace which enables us to do for Him. For we are sensible surely that we are more work-makers than workers. Yet He encourages. The blessed God enable us to behold Him who served perfectly; and may we, through grace, shape after such a model, and have grace given us whereby we may serve our God and adorable Lord with reverence and godly fear; and intelligently, too, as He giveth us faith and ability.

W. B.

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

MY DEAR A.,

You remember what —— said the other day about special providence. He did not think we could expect it, I think he said. I cannot see any difficulty, or rather, I should say it is not my concern to reconcile things which *seem* contradictory. I have only to trust God for myself, and the more simple and child-like we are the better, it seems to me. The little child who trusts his father does not concern himself as to *how* his father will take care of him, much less does he say, "Oh, my father will not concern himself *specially* about *me*, I am too insignificant." No, his father has *promised* to take care of him and the child simply trusts him. Well, our Father says, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." And, "in *every thing*, by prayer and supplication—let your requests be made known unto God." I believe He means what He says, and I just put myself in his keeping whatever I am going to do. I need not say I could not do this, if what I am about to do is "not of faith." He never fails one who trusts Him, of that I am *sure*; and He answers us too, far beyond our faith, that is certain.

But then it was urged, accidents happen to the Lord's

people as well as to others. Perfectly true, but the Lord Jesus said, "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father." The sparrows fall, but not without His knowledge and permission. And, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," he added. Then nothing can befall me but what He deems the very best thing for me and mine. As an old hymn says, of which I am very fond :—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He wills I cannot die ;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

I will try to explain fully how I look at it. It was a question of doing certain things as not safe. I have been asked about it by more than one. Well, if we are sons of God, we are indwelt by the Spirit of God. And if to Old Testament saints the promise was given, "I will guide thee with mine eye," how much more may we count on such guidance. The question arises whether I shall go to a certain place *alone*. I seek guidance from the Lord, and feel He would have me go, then I can have perfect confidence that He will preserve me; and if He gives faith, He will answer that faith. *I trust Him*. Now is that presumption? Presumption to take God at His word! I do not believe it. If what I have said is contrary to the Word of God I will willingly be corrected. It is, it seems to me, as I said before, just a question of being simple enough.

But I do feel that many of the Lord's people miss so much joy and happiness, and rest of spirit, through lack of seeing that He is concerned about the smallest thing that refers to His people, that there is nothing too trifling to go to Him about. But then, if we would live in this happy consciousness of His nearness to us, it involves giving up a good deal we like in this scene. We cannot go on with the world too, and I fear that is the reason so many of us do not know much of it. May we, you and I, at least seek it.

Yours in Christ,

R.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS I. 13-19.

THE epistle to the Colossians in common with that to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, and to Philemon was written during the apostle Paul's imprisonment at Rome. Had his enemies hoped to silence his voice, and stop for ever further ministry from that champion for the Christian faith? In synagogues in different towns, it was true, he was no longer seen ; nor by word of mouth could he, as had been his wont, speak boldly in them, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. Controversial work on his part stopped, but ministry to saints still flowed on, as epistles, written during his imprisonment (to which, besides those mentioned above, we would add that to the Hebrews) abundantly testified.

And a special feature of the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews is a ministry of Christ, such as we get nowhere else. How God triumphs over all the machinations of the enemy ! Varied, indeed, is the instruction that these epistles contain, each having, we may say, a line peculiarly its own ; but Christ in one way or another is the prominent feature in them all. The Ephesians and Colossians were penned about the same time, and as we learn (Eph. vi. 21, and Col. iv. 7-8) they were committed to the care of Tychicus to convey to those two churches in proconsular Asia, Onesimus accompanying him to Colosse (Col. iv. 9). Very probably Tychicus deposited first the letter for the Ephesians, when passing by their city, as he naturally would, to reach the somewhat distant inland town of Colosse ; and, pausing a little on his way, would communicate to the saints in Ephesus tidings of the apostle (Eph. vi. 21). Then, passing by Laodicea, which lay on the road

between Ephesus and Colosse, he at length must have reached the ultimate object of his journey, the town of Philemon, and the scene of the labours of Epaphras.

Opening the letter, the saints there would have assurance of the apostle's deep interest in them (Col. i. 3-6 ; ii. 1-3), and find therein a ministry of Christ such as doubtless they had never enjoyed. The fulness that there is in Christ for His people is the key-note of the letter. But, before treating of that, the apostle dwells at some length on the *Person of Christ*, who is both God and man (i. 13-19). To this we desire now to direct attention. We have read of God as His Father (i. 3), and of the Holy Ghost's desire expressed through the apostle, that the saints at Colosse should walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (10). It was not irrelevant, therefore, to set before true Christians, to whom the apostle had never ministered in person, teaching about the Lord, who is the Son of the Father.

And first, in prosecution of his subject, he introduces Him in His relationship to the Father, designating Him as the Son of God's love. Very special is this, marking Him as distinct from all the children of men. Christians are children of God, and sons too (Rom. viii. 16 ; Gal. iv. 6). But of Him, who is in the relationship of Son in a way none of them ever will be, does the apostle write. Now this One, we learn has a kingdom (Col. i. 13), into which all true Christians have already been translated. But this kingdom, be it ever remembered is not theirs, but His, though they are heirs of it, and will reign in it (James ii. 5). It exists therefore, that is plain, but is not manifested as yet. By and by, ere long it may be, its manifestation will be recognised by all in heaven, and all on earth. For the Son, the King, will come forth out of heaven as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and will deal in irresistible might with all opposers, whether of men or of demons.

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Power, then, belongs to Him, and must, seeing He is a divine Person, power which none will be able successfully to ignore or defeat, for He is the only begotten Son, the second Person of the Godhead.

Waiting now on high, as He does, for the Kingdom in power, He was once here dwelling amongst men. What, then, can be said of His past history upon earth? One fact we have mentioned which should call forth the homage and thanksgivings of His people. For we read, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. i. 14). This refers to His death as the parallel passage in Ephesians (i. 7), mentioning His blood, clearly shows. Then He has died. His manhood therefore is affirmed, for no angel or spirit can die. Men only die. God and Man therefore He is. Supreme in power in His Kingdom He will be, yet He entered the realms of death, having shed His precious blood, that forgiveness of sins might be procured, and enjoyed by those who are His joint heirs. He was crucified, and crucified in weakness. Who of men could ever have put such thoughts together? What creature by its own unaided powers could have surmised that such an One would ever appear? Divine revelation in the Old Testament foretold it. Divine revelation in the New Testament teaches it.

Further we read of Him, in this epistle, as the "Image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature." Again that mystery of His Person, which no creature can fathom, comes before us. He is the Image of the invisible God. For, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). And He Himself could say, and did say, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). One who is God could alone declare God, and make creatures understand in His ways and words something of the invisible God. He has done that. His

teaching, His acts too declare Him. Now observing created things we may see the effects of divine power, and mark design in that which comes under our notice. But the heart of God, His grace, His love, His tender pity for His creatures, as well as His untarnishable holiness and inflexible righteousness awaited the life here, and death of His Son fully to display.

But besides His special designation of Image of the invisible God, we learn that He is the First-born of every creature. Born of the Virgin Mary after forty decades of years had rolled by, He is nevertheless the First-born of every creature. The place, the dignity of First-born in relation to all creation is His. For *first-born* can be a title of dignity apart from any question as to priority in time. Thus God made David to be His first-born (Ps. lxxxix. 27); and Jacob gave to Joseph the privilege and the portion of his first-born (1 Chron. v. 2). The Lord then as First-born of every creature has a position as Man peculiar to Himself. In relation to all created things He is the First-born. So far wider than the confines of the earth does this announcement lead us. Of *all* creation is this said. Now no mere creature, we may boldly say, could have predicated this of one simply a man. Can it be true? The verification of the statement is at once provided, and in such a form as to silence for ever any being that would demur to it. "For," adds the apostle, "by Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16-17).

Into what depth are we here introduced! "Things invisible." A region this is into which man on earth has never penetrated, nor whilst in his body of humiliation can he visit. How small may we well feel! Things invisible to us owe

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their being to Him. Ranks of angelic hierarchies there are, with the existence of which God's Word alone has made us acquainted. "Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," in this order are they enumerated. "Principalities, and power, and might, and dominion," so are they mentioned in Eph. i. 21. We may talk of star depths as we examine the heavens with the most powerful of telescopes. We see then much but we feel we have not seen all. The depths of the expanse above us no instrument of man's devising has fathomed. But in Colossians we read of ranks upon ranks of angelic intelligences, having rule and sway where mere human feet have never trod; and on which no mortal eye has, except in a vision, ever gazed.* Then, too, where they rule, or the extent of the universe, no child of Adam has beheld. Yet all was created by the Son of God, who is, and must therefore be before all. By whom, too, all things consist. The Son, the King, the Image of the invisible God is the Creator of all that we do see, and of much, how much, that we do not see. A depth, an immensity is involved in "things invisible," which to us is immeasurable.

Isaiah's description of the might of the God of Israel attracts attention to things visible (Isa. xl. 12-28), and is enough to make the human creature shrink, as it were, into its shell. But the revelation of Col. i. goes far beyond it, and the careful reader dwelling for a moment on the thought of "things invisible," cannot fail to be impressed with a sense of the vastness of creation. All created by Him we learn is "for Him," seeing that all of it in heaven and earth is the inheritance which is His. This world then of ours, how small!

*John in vision saw *many* angels round about the throne. Their number he tells us was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (Rev. v. 11). But that vast host is not said to sum up all the angelic throng. On another occasion, vii. 11, he writes of *all* the angels round about the throne. Their number then is not stated.

The human race how puny compared with the ranks upon ranks of intelligent creatures, far greater than men in power and might (2 Pet. ii. 11), whose delight it is to wait upon and do the bidding of the Almighty! But then to remember what is the portion of the heavenly saints—to be nearer to God in position on high than any of the angels (Rev. v. 11; vii. 11), and in a relationship to Him, which we read not that angels will enjoy, even that of His sons and daughters, His heirs, and also joint heirs with Christ. What grace to believers! And all this the fruit of the atoning sacrifice of Him, who is both Creator and upholder of the universe, is wonderful indeed.

But this leads on by divine teaching to further revelation concerning His Person. We have read of Him in relationship of Son to the Father, and as the King of God's kingdom. We have read, too, of His relation to God as the Image of the Invisible One, and have learned of His relation to all creation, being its Creator and Sustainer. Now we are told of His intimate connection with Christians, and of His relation to all who enter the under-world. "He is the head of the Body, the Church," a sphere this is far more circumscribed than that of all created intelligences, but a connection with Christians closer than with any angel, or indeed, other saints. He has a Body. Of it He is the Head. And this Body is composed of, and confined to real Christians, all of whom are His members. What a place with Him! What nearness to Him indeed! What creature, we may well again ask, could have invented such a thought?

Then, too, another title is His, for He who is the First-born of all creation, is also the First-born from among the dead. Again we mark a more limited range than that of all creation; for men only die, and all men even will not die (1 Cor. xv. 51). But whilst the title of First-born in relation to creation is one of dignity, and not

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of priority in time, this latter in relation to the dead speaks of priority in time as well. He was the first to rise from the dead. He is the First-fruits of resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 23). Of this John too reminds us, as he recounts some of His titles (Rev. i. 5).

But more is unfolded, He is the beginning, He heads a race. Headship of the body, and headship of race, both are true of Him, and the race to which we refer is that which He Himself has expressed and His connection with it. He is "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14), "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." What second place in creation and amongst men could He rightly have? And just one statement more completing the teaching as to His Person confirms it, and clenches it. "It pleased all fulness to dwell in Him" (Col. i. 19). Nor is this confined to the past; for we read (ii. 9), that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "*Dwelleth*," let us mark the word. What was true of Him when in humiliation is true of Him still.

Such then is He who is both the Christ and the Son of God's love, God and Man in one Person. And though the two natures can be distinguished, as to neither is there any uncertain sound. Perfectly to be distinguished, yet united are they in one Person. How His death too comes before us! Redemption by His blood tells of it, and His title First-born from among the dead will ever remind all of it. Image of the invisible God, He has also been down into death. Heaven, earth, and the underworld have all known His presence. He lives too, victorious over death, and will yet reign to subject all to the sway of God. All things created by Him and for Him, what power has He in the past displayed? All things by Him consisting, what constant thought, supervision, and energy is implied.

A deep subject this of the Person of Christ. Too abstruse

would any think to present to ordinary readers? It was not too deep for slaves at Colosse to hear about. It is not too abstruse for simple Christians to grasp by faith the revelation of it. To analyse it, to dissect it, is beyond the power of the creature. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). To bow to the revelation of it becomes us, and with glad hearts to confess, that He who is the Image of the invisible God, became a Man, died for sinners, has brethren of the human race, and has a Body, of which all true Christians form the members. C. E. S.

PSALM XVI.

CONDUCTED along the path of faith with its many vicissitudes, commencing with trust in Psalm xi., and ending with the characteristics of those who were to inherit Zion, Jehovah's holy hill in Psalm xv., we have now brought before us, for the first time, the Messiah as a man associated with the faithful. Here we begin to learn of the wonderful grace manifested by Him who deigned to be found with those who had to confess sin and failure before Jehovah. This is, as it were, the opening page of His experience. Preservation is asked for, and His trust is pleaded as the reason why it should be granted. There was no measure of confidence reposed in men by Him; all centred in Jehovah. Was it an exalted place He took? "Thou art my Lord," at once reminds us of His subjection; and when He speaks from that position, so thoroughly did He identify Himself with those He came to, that He says, "My goodness extendeth not to thee." (2.) Truly He was meek and lowly in heart! There was one that once addressed Him as man, and Christ in answering replies, "Why callest thou me good," etc. But, precious portion! of those with whom He linked Himself He says, and this they were to Him, "the excellent of

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the earth.” Who would have predicated this of them but Him? Unworthy in themselves, yet faith worked in their hearts, and they aspired to Jehovah; and this it was that made them to be to Him “the excellent.” And so true was this, that He found His *delight* in them. What a blessed verification we get of this in His pathway here. “They are the excellent,” fills us with wonder; but, “in whom is all my delight,” increases it. It reminds us of the value He sets upon those who had faith Godward. His disciples might be slow to learn, unresponsive, and often acting in a fleshly way; yet was He deeply attached to them; and from them He never turned. His delight was in them. And standing upon Jordan’s bank at His baptism by John, we see Him entering upon what is here brought before us. There those wonderful words fell from His lips, “Thus it becometh *us* to fulfil all righteousness.” Who were the “us”? Those, who in sincerity had come confessing their sins, and were baptised unto repentance. Well might John, knowing the greatness of the One before him demur; but, no, He would have it thus. This was the moment when Jesus was saying, “My goodness extendeth not to thee;” and this was the very time that the Father expresses *His delight in Him*. No unworthiness attached to Him, nor could do so; but fulness of grace and truth manifested themselves in His blest Person. How eloquent is the testimony thus rendered to His spotlessness (Matt. iii. 17). His emerging from the seclusion of Nazareth and associating Himself with those who owned their low condition, provided a fitting moment for the Father to declare His undiminished joy in Him. Thus everything was in season. And now it is shown that Jehovah was to be the alone God; and sorrow would be increased for those who turned to idols. With such He would have no connection, neither presenting their offerings, nor yet be found interceding for them. His portion was Jehovah, and Jehovah maintained His lot for Him. Enemies

might seem to bar His way to it; but possessing it in Jehovah He can exclaim, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Praise is now rendered, and His inmost being moved. Likewise Jehovah was *always* before Him. It was His joy to have it so. Others in measure might have known the meaning of this, but only in Him did it display itself to perfection. It was the moving motive of His life. Deep is the dependence shadowed in "I have set the Lord always before me." Entire trust gives unshaken assurance and confidence, whatever the intervening circumstances may be. Hence the bold assertion which is ever the language of faith and dependence, "Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Jehovah was both with Him and for Him. From this a deduction is drawn: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth;" and from Acts ii. we learn, that prophetically, David was speaking of his greater Son, and anticipating His death and resurrection. But what an absence of fear! He could foresee the end which was glory. Death might take place, but, "my flesh shall rest in hope." Corruption He would not see, though His body might be laid in the grave, and His soul be found in Hades. This for Him was Paradise, as we know from His words to the dying thief. But the bands of death had to be burst. How could they hold Him, Jehovah's Holy One? No; in Him were the mercies of David to be made sure. He looks beyond death and sees the path that leads to the throne, the path of life. In His presence fulness of joy was to be found. "Thou wilt make me glad with thy countenance" (Acts ii.), reveals what the source of it will be; for what delight to bask in the sunshine of His smile. Here joy has its alloy; here pleasures are fleeting; but there, in the eternal scene, entered upon after resurrection, are fulness of joy and pleasures for *evermore*. What an edifying occupation to trace His path of humiliation, and note its end. He fills the throne above. May we

through grace, grasp the reality, and with Him look on beyond death to that eternal weight of glory which we shall presently inherit with Him. H. F.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

THE teaching of the Lord recorded by the evangelist Luke in chap xvi. of his gospel, v. 19, affords material for serious reflection and instruction. How sad that those who are most in need of it are those who entirely neglect it. Believers at least should ponder well this solemn portion of holy Scripture, that they may be proof against the wretched theories invented by deluded men to turn aside the edge of the Word of God; and also that knowing the terror of the Lord they may persuade men.

To deny future punishment for the unsaved, or the severity of its character, or the duration of it, is to undermine the authority of the Word—of Christ's own words—and weakens the sense of responsibility to God, of the evil of sin, and of the atonement accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ. It strikes a blow at the love of God in the gift of His Son. If God's judgment of the wicked is simply their ceasing to exist, or if it be only a temporary punishment, then, of necessity, Christ had not overmuch to bear; and the love of God in sending His Son, and the love of Christ in giving Himself, are proportionately enfeebled. Plausible reasonings about the love of God, forgetting that He is holy, have led many astray. But the God of whom such speak is not the God revealed in the Son; not the God of either Old Testament or New; but a myth, a fancied being, such as the ungodly love to make Him. Would that the solemn truth of everlasting punishment could be borne in on the consciences of unbelievers, that in very truth they might flee from it, to Him who is *willing, waiting*, and longing to save them.

We will now turn to our Scripture. Two men are brought before us, the one rich, the other poor. It is no proof of wickedness to be rich, nor of goodness to be poor; but he who has riches is able to gratify his tastes, and live to please himself in a way a poor man cannot. This rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Lazarus, on the contrary, lay at his gate full of sores, sick, poor, and hungry, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. Pitiful condition for any human being to be found in. But in this case we see a son of Abraham, better still—a child of God, an heir of glory. Who would so judge, looking at his outward circumstances? Those were no sure guide at that time, and even less so now. Death, the common lot of men, whether rich or poor, overtook both. Who will lift the veil and let us see what is beyond it? Jesus did, and shows us Lazarus at rest and comforted, occupying the most privileged place in keeping with the dispensation then in existence. He was in the bosom of Abraham. This, to the mind of an Israelite, would be perfect bliss.

To-day we know a greater than Abraham, who since then has ascended up to heaven, even Jesus. To Him the dying Christian turns. To depart and be with Christ is bliss indeed! "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." What of the rich man? He died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Both had done with this life. Men buried the rich man, angels ministered to Lazarus. Both are seen in the separate state in Hades. The one, perfectly comfortable and at rest; the other, tormented in this flame. Both will be raised again. Lazarus will have part in the resurrection of life, while the rich man will be in the resurrection of judgment (see John v.). Is there any danger of Lazarus losing his repose and comfort when so raised? Clearly not. Can he after all find himself in misery

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such as the rich man is experiencing? No. A great gulf is fixed, and there is no passing from one to the other.

The rich man could see a blessedness in which he could have no part, and from whence no sympathy would come, and no help be granted. "Send Lazarus," was his urgent request addressed to his father Abraham, "with a drop of water to cool my tongue, for," says he, "I am tormented in this flame." The answer was, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

No injustice can Abraham see, or ground afforded for the least relief. What he was enduring he well deserved, and could have escaped had he so desired and paid attention to the guidance granted. Nor does he say one word to excuse himself, or find any fault with the judgment meted out to him. The judgment was just; hence he is silent, save to show concern for his five brethren still alive. He asks that Lazarus may be sent to his father's house to testify to them lest they also come into that place of torment. This request is as promptly refused as the first. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." To the written Word he is referred. Had he paid heed to it he would never have been where he was. This, then, is the ground of his condemnation. First, he had lived for himself in disregard of both God and his neighbour; and second, he had neglected the written Word of God within his reach. The sufficiency of the latter he seems to doubt. That it was ample Abraham asserts. Those who neglected the word of God would equally neglect the testimony of one come back from the dead.

A crushing blow this deals at the notion that the spirits of the departed can pay visits either for good or ill, to those alive in this world. If the rich man could have communicated with his brethren it is plain enough he would have done so. He could not leave his place of misery, nor could he send to them, or warn them in any way. His appeal to Abraham

to send Lazarus shows that he had no notion that the spirit of Lazarus could do so either. Could his request have been granted, Lazarus would have to come back in person again to this life, like his namesake in John xi. Any attempt to learn about the future through any medium but the written Word of God, is to play into the hands of Satan, the father of lies. Christians should shun all such practices, assured that enough is revealed in the Scriptures. To them may we all turn. On them may we implicitly rely. Idle curiosity must not be encouraged. Faith in God, in His holy Word, in the Christ who lives for us on high, who is coming soon to receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also, is necessary. This hope enjoyed sustains and preserves the soul, while vain imaginings lead very far astray.

No countenance is given to the thought of a gospel to be preached to the lost after death, nor of their ultimate escape or salvation from torment. Quite the contrary. The gulf twixt heaven and hell is impassable. We learn the character of the punishment entered into at death here and elsewhere, but no scripture gives any hope to the lost. Matt. xviii. 8, teaches us that it is better to enter into life with the loss of some of our members rather than having them to be cast into *everlasting* fire. In Luke xvi. our Lord is speaking of the separate state, and shews the torment entered on after death, in which of course, the body does not share. This lasts until the resurrection of the wicked spoken of in Rev. xx. 12. Then in their resurrection bodies, they will stand before the great white throne, and be judged by Him who is seated thereon, according to their works. The future of such is the lake of fire. The character of the judgment remains the same, but the entire person enters into it, *body, soul, and spirit*. If we look at verse 10 of the same chapter, we shall see two persons, the beast and the false prophet, who have been there during the whole of Christ's millennial reign (a thousand years); and they, with the devil, shall be tormented day

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and night for ever and ever. We read also of a number in Matt. xxv. who share the same doom. The Son of Man having come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, sits on the throne of His glory, gathers the nations before Him, and separates one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left (see verse 41). "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, "depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (verse 46). "And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Disregard of the writings of Moses brought the rich man into "this place of torment." Disregard of the Word of God to-day will result in the same way. And what a word have we! The gospel of God founded upon the death of His Son tells us how we may escape from the wrath to come; and more far more, it shows us a God full of compassionate tenderness, allowing His servants to beseech sinners to be reconciled to Him. Opening a view of surpassing blessedness and glory in heaven to all such as truly repent and return to Him, with the comforting word that the very same blessed One who died for us upon the cross is coming to receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also.

Whilst behind us is sounding the great bell of eternal damnation, there is before us the clearly revealed prospect of eternal glory. He who neglects this great salvation will deserve what he will get. Men may reason as they please, but Scripture is too plain. Would it not be wise to give up carping criticism and flee to Christ for salvation? Eternal life for the believer; eternal punishment for the unbeliever. Touch the one, you touch the other. Another point and I have done. The Lord authenticates the writings of Moses. He owned them to be such. What if some learned critics deny it? Is the Son of God in error, or are they? What Christ owned is enough surely for us. From His judgment in the matter we need not go.

E. R. W.

LETTER ON ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

I TAKE it the *destroying* in Matt. x. 28, is in contrast to the enjoying everlasting life and salvation, and not in contrast to mere existence; for Gehenna, translated hell, of which the Lord speaks in that passage, clearly does not bring about the cessation of existence of those cast into it, as Mark ix. 48 awfully teaches. He who spoke in Matt. x. 28, spoke also in Mark ix. 48. I refer only to verse 48 in this latter chapter, because it is probable that the same words in verses 44 and 46 should be struck out. The awful statement stands unchallenged, I believe, in that place in the chapter.

Then to *destroy* is used in the original of temporal death, whether of saints, or of other men. Of saints in Matt. xvi. 25; Luke ix. 24, "*lose* his life;" xi. 51, "perished;" xiii. 33, "a prophet *perish*." It is used of the death of men—Matt. xxi. 41, "destroy;" xxii. 7, "destroyed;" xxvi. 52, "perish;" Luke xiii. 3, "perish;" Acts v. 37, "perished." It is used also of the Pharisees consulting to put the Lord to death—Matt. xii. 14, "*destroy* Him;" Luke xix. 47, "*destroy* Him."

That verb *to destroy*, used of temporal death, we can understand its application to the second death. And as temporal death touches not the existence of the individual (Luke xvi. 23), for all dead to us live nevertheless to God (Luke xx. 38), no more will the second death, Gehenna, the lake of fire (Rev. xiv. 11; xx. 10). The verb *to destroy* is never used of people, in scripture, to indicate cessation of existence.

2 Thess. i. 9, teaches, as you say, the being driven away from the presence of the Lord in punitive dealing, and if "destruction" there meant annihilation, what need to add "everlasting" to it?

Matt. xvi. 18, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," means, I take it, that the under world will have no power over it. In Ps. ix. 13; cvii. 18; Isaiah xxxviii. 10, we have the same figure—Hades, or death—viewed as

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a fortress, whose gates open to receive those going to the under world. I do not think it is a question of *outlet* in resurrection, only of *inlet*, which those entering have no power to re-open to get out. C. E. S.

CHRIST PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

1 PETER III. 18-20.

By turning to Scripture quoted above we see what Peter, and the Spirit by him really *does* state. And now we will ask, and answer from God's Word, three questions, viz :

- 1stly. What is meant by the Spirit of Christ ?
- 2ndly. To whom did that Spirit preach ?
- 3rdly. When did that Spirit preach ?

Now, with regard to our first question, we shall find that this is not the only passage in which Peter refers to the Spirit of Christ, for he has already, when speaking of the sufferings and consequent glory of Christ (1 Pet. i. 11), told us that the Prophets of Old Testament times sought "what or what manner of time the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify," proving that it was Christ, not corporally (for Christ had not, of course, then come in the flesh), but by His Spirit, who actuated the prophets of old in their inspired utterances. So that, by the Spirit of Christ thus spoken of, we understand Christ, by His Spirit *before life down here*, and *not* Christ by his Spirit after death.

Having got this clear, let us ask our second question, viz : To whom did Christ, by His Spirit, so preach? To this Peter gives the plain answer, that it was to certain imprisoned spirits who were sometimes, or rather heretofore, disobedient. We may now ask our third and last question, viz : When did Christ, by His Spirit, so preach? This question Peter also answers for us, telling us that it was *in the days of Noah*, when the long-suffering of God waited while the Ark was-a-preparing.

And now let us turn back to the Old Testament narrative of these facts for a confirmation of what we have seen in Peter's Epistle, and we find in Gen. vi. 3, the Lord declaring that "My Spirit (and, as we know from Peter, this was the

Spirit of Christ) shall not *always** strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be 120 years." Thus, during that period of 120 years while the Ark was-a-preparing, Noah, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter ii. 5), preached, by the Spirit of Christ, to those persons who were *then* disobedient, and whose bodies, in consequence, perished at the Flood (2 Pet. ii. 5), but whose spirits are *now* imprisoned, awaiting the judgment of the Great White Throne, when the sea shall give up its dead (Rev. xx. 11-13). Briefly, therefore, to recapitulate, what Peter now teaches is that Christ, by His Spirit, but, through the lips of Noah, preached to the ungodly before the Flood, who, in the flesh, refused his testimony, at the time when God, in long-suffering waited 120 years while the Ark was-a-preparing, but whose bodies, when that preaching of Christ, and that long-suffering of God, had proved alike in vain, perished at the Flood, and whose spirits now in prison await the Judgment.

GENTILE POWER. ITS END.

"HAVE the holders of Gentile power, from Nebuchadnezzar downwards, been any more true than others to the principle that 'power belongeth unto God?' Alas! the answer is before us, and much that is worse remains to be considered. Gentile power has, throughout, proved itself hostile to God, and disdainful of His claims; it will in the end be found in open revolt against His authority, and claiming for itself the homage due to Him alone. One there has been on this earth, the blessed Heir of all things, entitled to dominion by every possible claim, and having almighty power to enforce His claims, but who, having become man, and having taken thus the servant's place, the place of subjection and dependence, never swerved from it for a single moment. All the kingdoms of the world were offered to Him by Satan, on condition of His falling down to worship him. 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' was His reply, 'for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' The multitude would have taken Him by force, and

*This surely of itself precludes the thought of a subsequent striving of the Spirit with them after Christ's death. The Spirit was to strive with them 120 years, and no more.

made Him a King; but the modern and blasphemous doctrine that 'the people are the only legitimate source of power,' had no place in His heart. When He perceived their designs, 'He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.' No, He had come in humiliation and obedience to glorify God in this world of sin and pride, and nothing could turn Him aside from the lowly, self-renouncing, self-sacrificing path on which He had entered. 'Power belongeth unto God,' and this He owned in every step of His life below. Nay, more, it is in obedience that He has sat down at the right hand of God. 'Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' So writes the Psalmist. 'From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.' Thus writes the apostle. Ought we not to be with Him in the spirit of our minds, and with Him in our testimony, and with Him in the whole tenor of our walk, even now?" . . .

"There are two great currents in human affairs, on the bosom of which the great mass of mankind are thoughtlessly drifting onwards. Both end in destruction. The one is the destruction which awaits the harlot at the hands of the beast and his ten confederate kings (Rev. xvii.); the other in the destruction which awaits these last enemies of Christ, at the moment of His appearing (Rev. xix.) What has the child of God to do with either? Nothing. His place is to live Christ—to confess Christ—to wait for Christ—to suffer with Christ—if need be, to die for Christ—assured that ere the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world arrives, Christ will have come to receive His saints in the air, and that so when the last conflict comes, his only relation to it will be that of being in the train of Christ's glory, when He shall come to tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

"What a solemn light does this whole subject shed on what Scripture calls 'the course of this world!'

"Many have supposed that the fourth empire having been nominally Christianised, its character had undergone an essential change, and that, in consequence, Christians might now interest themselves in its politics, and occupy themselves with its affairs. What a total mistake! Ancient Babylon might establish the worship of Bel and Nebo—the Persian monarchs might enforce the more subtle idolatry of the east—Greece and Rome might both bow down to Jupiter and

his hosts of inferior deities—and the latter might, after a time, depose these, and adopt, as it did, a religion compounded of Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity—the *character of Gentile power remains unchanged throughout*. More modern nations may have come even more fully under Christian influences, and the attempted mingling of the iron and clay in these very countries may have given, nay, *has given* an opportunity to Christian people of all classes in society to mix themselves up with worldly politics, to an extent impossible in earlier times. But let not the Lord's people be deceived. The sitting of the woman on the beast has not made the latter any less a beast; and the Scriptures shows us that under its eighth Satanic head, with his ten confederate kings, this beast will unseat its rider, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. But is it a Christian's place to take any part in movements tending towards this result? Surely not. His citizenship is in heaven. His place is, as a stranger on earth, to yield hearty and unfeigned subjection to the powers that be, wherever it can be rendered without disloyalty to Christ. Then, it is his place to suffer, and take it patiently. But as to wielding this world's authority, or take part in this world's politics, a Christian has no more to do with such things than Christ Himself had. The end of all Gentile politics, whether national or international, Protestant or Popish, progressive or retrogressive—the end of all Gentile politics is the battle of the great day of God Almighty. The Lord keep His people from all the currents which lead on to such a vortex. The saints will indeed be there, but it will be as coming forth from heaven in the train of the mighty Conqueror. He is our portion, His descent into the air our hope, and when He appears we shall appear with Him in glory. The Lord bless these meditations and inquiries to the separating His people more and more from every form and character of evil, to wait only and patiently for Him.” W. TROTTER.

“The Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

COMFORT FOR SORROWING CHRISTIANS.

(1 THESS. iv. 13-18).

THE earliest apostolic and canonical Epistles are the two addressed to the Thessalonians. Of St. Paul's entrance there, and labours amongst them, we have but a short account by Luke in the Acts (xvii. 1-10.) And never does that historian tell us of any further ministry among them, though doubtless, when the Apostle, after leaving Ephesus (xx.) revisited Macedonia on his way to Achaia, Thessalonica was not passed by. Dear to him were the converts there (1 Thess. ii. 8). In simplicity, and with readiness had they received the word (ii. 13), though surpassed by the Beræns in the study of the ancient oracles. These latter searched daily the Scriptures for confirmation of the Apostle's teaching (Acts xvii. 11).

Macedonia, into which the Apostle and his company had now come, was a new field of labour, virgin soil we may call it, for no Christian missionary had previously visited that country, and laboured amongst the Jews and Greeks who dwelt therein. Shamefully beaten at Philippi, as Paul and Silas had been, and their feet made fast in the stocks, God had suddenly interposed by the earthquake, converting too the jailor. And the magistrates, having had time during the night for reflection, were ready on the following day to release them from their imprisonment. The crime laid to their charge, on the ground of which they were beaten, was viewed very likely in a different light, when morning had dawned on the city of Philippi. For the magistrates, without one word from the prisoners, sent to let them go (Acts xvi. 35, 36.)

Then Paul and Silas made known to the astonishment and dismay doubtless of those who had sat in the judgment seat, and had issued to the lictors their orders, that they indeed were culprits, and liable for their ill-treatment of them to be made amenable to Roman justice.

It was after this, with their backs still feeling, as they must have done, the effects of the beating with the lictors rods, that, taking their leave of the brethren, they left Philippi, and journeyed southward along the great military road through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the capital of one part of Macedonia, and the court of a Roman Proconsul. At Philippi there was no synagogue. At Amphipolis and Apollonia there were probably few, if any Jews to detain them, so they pressed on to Thessalonica, a hundred miles distant from Philippi.

Here was *the* synagogue of the Jews as Luke probably wrote (Acts xvii. 1). An opportunity would thus be afforded Paul of labouring among his countrymen, to whom in the first instance it was his wont to address himself. Three Sabbath days labour in the synagogue evinced the general state of the Jewish community. Some of them, however, believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas. But of devout Greeks, *i.e.*, proselytes, a great multitude embraced the Christian faith, and of the chief women not a few.

Souls therefore confessed Christ, and hearts were drawn to Paul (1 Thess. iii. 6), his heart too having gone out to them (1 Thess. ii. 8), amongst whom he must have continued labouring for some little time. It was no ordinary interest in converts. As a father he exhorted them, as a nurse cherishes her own children he was gentle among them. Happy seasons these must have been. Profitable times indeed (ii. 12), till the uproar raised by the Jews caused the two to move on to Beræa. Persecution was experienced during the stay of Paul (i. 6). It continued after his departure (ii. 14; iii. 5).

Anxiety therefore the Apostle felt as to their continued steadfastness, now that he was absent. Nor was that unnatural. We know how easily unstable souls are upset by a little trial. Here was no little one. Their countrymen had turned against them (1 Thess. ii. 14). They were suffering

for the faith. Ease and quietness they had enjoyed as idolaters. Now persecution of no mean order were they called to endure. Hence Timothy was sent back from Athens to get news of that infant assembly. And cheered was the Apostle's heart by the tidings with which Timothy returned. Steadfast were they keeping. Their faith shone. Their love abounded. The tempter had indeed tempted, but in vain. The work stood. The converts kept true. Apostolic labour had not been thrown away. We read of no defection. No hint is there of a single gap made by that in their ranks.

True brotherly love in a marked way actuated them (iv. 10). But that very love was the cause of real sorrow. They mourned concerning their brethren in Christ who had fallen asleep. It was not *their* bereavement which overwhelmed them; not their loss, but, as they feared, the loss that the departed ones would sustain. For themselves they had no doubt, that, if the Lord should come before they died, they would be with Him, and see Him in His glory. But their friends who had died in the faith, what of them? must they by death be losers? Would the day begin without them? Would death deprive them of something in which, if they had continued in life, they would have shared? True brotherly love was manifested by such anxiety. They sorrowed, as we have said for others, not for themselves. It was unselfish sorrow indeed.

To this the Lord was not indifferent. So the Apostle wrote to allay their grief. Timothy, to whom they must have communicated the cause of it, could not meet the difficulty. It required a fresh revelation, and Timothy was not a channel of inspiration. All uncertainty, however, the Lord would have removed. Their minds should be set at rest.

The heathen around them might indeed sorrow for departed ones as those who had no hope. And what such

might feel, and how they might express themselves, a Greek poet has put on record* in plaintive and touching language. All nature around him he saw revived each year, but men when they died slept an unending sleep. The tomb never opened for them again to come forth. Hope, then, as to the departed, there was none. Resurrection by the heathen was unknown. What comfort could such an one have, as he thought of those dear to him who had died?

But for Christians thus to sorrow would be a mistake. Language in which the Thessalonian saints might have indulged before their conversion, and thoughts, which now troubled them, were to be theirs no longer. For if they believed that Jesus died and rose again, them also which sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thess. iv. 14). The Lord already raised, the sleeping saints will be raised likewise. He has come out of death. They will come out of it. Death cannot hinder His coming day of glory. It will not therefore prevent the now sleeping saints being with Him then. Moreover God, their God, will charge Himself with that. No room for uncertainty was left as to this. They will come with Him. What Zechariah, we believe, foretold (xiv. 5) the Apostle's testimony distinctly confirms.

But the later revelation explains how it will come about. The saints in their graves must first be raised, ere they can come with the Lord. It will not be as disembodied saints that they will come. The Lord is risen. They will be raised likewise. And this, which no Divine revelation had previously unfolded, the Apostle Paul was privileged to make known. The order of events on the resurrection morning should no longer be a matter of uncertainty. Of two resurrections the Lord when on earth had spoken (Jno. v. 28-29). The two conditions also, in one of which every Christian

* We refer to Moschus of Syracuse, who lived about B.C. 200, and to his lines in his epitaph on Bion of Smyrna.

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will then find himself He had also revealed (Jno. xi. 25-26). That Christians should, whilst alive on earth, wait for the Lord's return from heaven, the Thessalonian saints had learnt, and were practising (1 Thess. i. 10). But, till the Apostle indited this epistle, the order of events on that coming morning had not been placed on record. Thenceforward those to whom he wrote, and all saints alive till that day, were to comfort themselves and one another.

God would not have His people unduly depressed, so the Apostle wrote to them in the following words, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore," adds the Apostle, "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 15-18). With what certainty did St. Paul write. It was no *perhaps*, or *it may be*, but *it will be*.

Now on this passage we would remark. And first, how interesting it is to note the different activities here set forth, as engaged in caring for the saints. God, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are all mentioned. The Apostle gave forth this revelation, as he declared, by the word of the Lord. We know who inspired the sacred writers. They spake, we elsewhere read, in words taught of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. ii. 13); the prophets being moved, as Peter writes, by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter i. 21). The *Holy Ghost's* activity was evidenced by the revelation then given, and preserved in the written Word for our edification. God, as we have said, was not indifferent to the sorrow of His people. He comforted the Thessalonian saints in that day. He still

comforts bereaved ones in this, providing ministry for the present need. Then of *the Lord's* activity we read. He will descend from heaven to call up His saints, both those sleeping and those then alive upon earth, to meet Him in the air. For this of course all of them now wait. After that, when He comes to reign, *God's activity* will be displayed in bringing with the Lord all the sleeping saints.* Not one will be wanting. Precious are they all to God. Comfort indeed was this.

Next we would direct attention to the *certainty* of the rapture, as it is called. Centuries have rolled by since the Apostle first made it known. But time has not made this record to become obsolete. The rapture will have indeed its fulfilment, whenever the appointed time shall arrive, the full tale of Christians being then complete. The Lord will not forget His own, as His last words in the book of Revelation assures us.

Thirdly. We observe that the Apostle, not knowing the moment of the Lord's descent into the air, and being of course alive upon earth when he penned these words, classes himself with those who might be here in the body at that glorious moment—"Then *we* which are alive and remain" he writes. The vessels of revelation were not omniscient. Later on he learnt that he would enter the tomb (2 Tim. iv. 6). Spared on earth for a time for the help of saints (Phil. i. 25), his earthly services would at length draw to a close, and he was duly made aware of it (2 Tim. iv. 6). But till then he could class himself with those who might be on earth at the rapture. And Christians, till conscious of the approach of their end here, should do the same. It is proper Christian expectation.

* We would add, that whilst the revelation was addressed to Christians and concerned Christians, when God brings the sleeping saints with Christ it will include undoubtedly those martyred after the rapture.

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Fourthly. We would draw special attention to the fact that none but *real saints* are viewed as within the scope of this prophetic utterance. All others of the human race who will have already appeared on earth are outside it, as much as if they had never existed. There is no mention of them, no hint about them in this revelation (1 Thess. iv. 14-17). Surely this is ominously awful. Exist they do, and will; but in that morning when it comes—the resurrection morning for the sleeping saints—they will have no part. The sleeping saints awakened by the shout of the Lord, and summoned by the trumpet to meet Him, graves opened, tombs, not as now at times rifled, but emptied, the air filled with those risen, and with the living ones caught up, the ungodly dead will be slumbering on, no summons as yet calling them forth. Saved ones, and unsaved ones now lie in the same burying place, and at times it may be in the same grave. Then a final separation of their bodies will take place, never to be in close proximity again. On earth too what separations, when every living Christian caught away, to be found here no more, will leave behind those, who having misused their opportunity will never have one again (2 Thes. i. 8 ; ii. 10). Solemn indeed is this.

Fifthly. The Lord's first care will be for His sleeping saints. Gracious indeed is this. How many of them have been unknown to fame, and the very place where their dust was deposited has been for ages forgotten by man. But He knows where the body of each one was buried, whether on land or in the sea. Each saint with Him now, if disembodied, will find his own body on that day, and rise in it to bear for ever the image of the heavenly.

What an answer, then, was all this to the difficulty and sorrow of the Thessalonian Christians. Those alive on earth at that moment will have no advantage over those already departed. Comfort, full and unchanging, was thus administered, and these sorrowing ones must have rejoiced at it.

But who save God could reveal such a future for men and women to be comforted by it? Beyond death no mortal, unaided by Divine revelation, can possibly see. Fancy may work, but it can only picture a continuance in the other world of something like that which men have experienced, or have enjoyed in this. What real comfort can that minister? And no man, we may boldly say, could have conceived of the Lord Jesus coming from heaven for His own, to receive them unto Himself. But He will come. His last words in the book of Revelation assure us of it. May the writer, and each reader, ever welcome that hope, and be ready to echo the answer of John to the Lord's gracious announcement of "Surely I come quickly," responding in the words of that Apostle, "Amen: come Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

C. E. S.

RESURRECTION—DELIVERANCE—GLORY.

"If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This is our present state. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii.) A vivifying of these mortal bodies, declared thus to be dependent on the fact of the previous indwelling of the Spirit, is surely what none can anticipate but those who are partakers of this wondrous grace. But this is not the whole. Salvation itself is seen in the light of the verse just quoted to have a two-fold character, and this the apostle proceeds to trace out in the verses which succeed. There is a sense in which we believers are already saved, and there is a sense in which salvation is still the object of hope. "The spirit of adoption" we have already received. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, *that we are the children of God.*" This is our present

known relationship to God, of which the indwelling Spirit bears full testimony. But "if children," the apostle argues, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Our present relation to God as His children associates us in hope with all the prospects of Christ Himself as the "appointed heir of all things." *Now* it is our privilege to partake of His sufferings; *ere long* we shall participate in His glory. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." The anticipation of this makes present sufferings easy to be endured. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." What the apostle reckons upon is not a state of happiness for the departed spirit (true as that expectation is in its place), but *a glory to be revealed*, and to be revealed, mark, *in us*. It is the glorification of the body of which he treats. Its glorification he exultingly counts upon, as the infallible result of present relationship to God as His children, and as the counterpart to the sufferings of Christ which at present flows from this relationship.

But when are these hopes to be fulfilled? When are these mortal bodies to be quickened? Ask many Christians, and they will reply, "At the last judgment and consummation of all things, when the heaven and the earth shall flee away from before the face of Him who sits upon the great white throne." But what says the apostle here? Is this his doctrine on the subject? No, he speaks of creation's groans and travail; he foretells creation's deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and he connects creation's unintelligent yearnings after renewal and repose, with our own intelligent hope of being glorified together with Christ. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The whole creation, of which man was part, but over which he was placed as lord, became subject by man's sin to vanity and to the bondage of corruption.

Misery, decay, and death, are the fruit to all creation of the apostacy of Adam, its responsible head.

But these results of sin are not to remain for ever. The groans of creation are to be hushed, and its travail to be succeeded by glad and peaceful repose. Who that has read the Old Testament can fail to be reminded of some of its joyous predictions? Does it not witness of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid? of the calf, the young lion, and the fatling being led, and led together, by a little child? And does it not call on all creation to rejoice in Jehovah's reign? "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Ps. xcvi. 11-13). The removal of the curse under which the sin-blighted creation groans, is well known to be associated in Old Testament prophecy with Messiah's reign.

And with what does the apostle associate it in the passage before us? *With the quickening and glorification of the bodies of God's children*—with "the adoption—the redemption of our body!" Oh, yes! if it was by the disobedience of the first Adam that all creation was involved in the consequences of his fall, the obedience to death of the last Adam secures for creation the blessings of His reign. If by man came misery and ruin, by man shall also come deliverance and joy. If the groanings of creation have proclaimed the defection and condemnation of the first man, the songs of that creation shall celebrate the worth, the faithfulness, the glory of the second. And when creation itself shall be delivered thus from the bondage of corruption, and be subjected instead thereof to the beneficent rule of the Prince of Peace, it will not be *alone* that the blessed One will reign. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the

manifestation of *the sons of God*." It is for "the liberty of the glory of *the children of God*," that is, the liberty which their glory will bring to creation, and diffuse over its whole extent, that creation waits. When Christ reigns the saints are to reign with Him. But this must surely be in glory.

In point of fact our mortal bodies form part of the creation which at present groans, and it is by means of our bodies that we are linked with its present condition. Already we possess "the first-fruits of the Spirit;" but this hinders not our groaning in ourselves. Nay, it gives to our groanings what those of creation lack—the intelligence of that for which we wait, and which is to bring deliverance. Then will creation be delivered. The dismal pall with which sin has overspread it will be exchanged for bridal garments and songs of joy; hallelujahs and hosannas resounding through heaven and earth shall replace the universal wail which will then for ever have died away; and the glory of the Lord, not merely revealed in the Word, made known by the Spirit, and discerned by faith, but openly manifested in the person of Christ and of the many sons whom He will then have brought to glory, shall fill the whole earth with blessing.

—*From "Papers on Prophecy."*

"WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS."

1 COR. xi. 24.

IN thinking lately of our Saviour and Lord sitting with His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem on the night of His betrayal, and giving them His own supper after He had eaten the passover with them, I paused over these words, "When He had given thanks."

The atmosphere had been cleared by the withdrawal of Judas. We read in John xiii. 31, "Therefore when He was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God

shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." Perfect darkness retired before Him who was the Light, even the living Son of God. Judas went His way—a way that led 'to his own place,' to carry out that deed of darkness for the accomplishment of which Satan had been fitting him during those wonderful days that began with his call by the Messiah of Israel. The triumph expressed by those words just quoted from John xiii., was completed when the prince of this world sought to turn Him aside by presenting death before Him. And here at this time, with all that He was to endure from God who alone could fill the cup, He, the sinless One had to drink in order that God, His God, might be glorified about sin, and might be the righteous God in bestowing on the guilty one His favour, He gives thanks.

He gave thanks, because He knew that there would be nothing left in that cup of judgment that He was about to drink. The flood gates of Divine love would open freely. There would be no longer a straitened heart. The eternal basis would be laid for removing the sin of the world by His power in a day yet to come.

But what a thanksgiving rose to the ear and heart of the Father that awful night! What words for His disciples to hear! The words themselves have not been given to us, but the spirit of them is found in those words we have already referred to, and in chap. xii. of the same gospel, where at verse 28 we read, "Father, glorify thy name."

He will ere long sing to the Father in the midst of the congregation. What a climax to our joy! What a hope to fill our souls, to hear the Son of God give utterance to His joy in having the fruit of the travail of His soul around Himself!

We read, "His delights were with the sons of men." How could He have the love of His own heart satisfied (a love which was the same as His Father's), without the blood

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which would purge and cleanse the objects of His delight? Therefore, as He took the bread and the cup into His hands, those hands to be so soon nailed to the tree, He gave thanks.

We little get beyond the mercy that has visited us and saved us. Great that is surely, but to sing on the same note with Christ the Redeemer, is, surely we may say it, what He desires for us. A page in the Divine word opens at Rev. v., and we read that on the day when the results secured by the Lamb taking the sealed book from the hand of Him who sits on the throne are accomplished, one universal song of praise will rise to Him, who as the Lamb, has won the title to open the Book and make good all written therein.

We shall sing on the right note on that day. But it will not be our greatest joy that *we* are redeemed, but that the Lamb has *redeemed to God* by His blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. There will be nothing formal or commonplace in our utterances then. Every vessel of His love will be fully filled to sing His praise.

Now, as we assemble together in His name we need to remember that we are in His presence, and that our calling is to sing to the Father of Him. Who is then sufficient for this? Only the Holy Spirit of our God. He alone can order and bring out of such broken vessels notes of praise suitable for such a retrospect and prospect as, “His death until He come.”

D. S.

“Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Such was the language of Paul, and this blessed truth it was that made him what he was. “*He*,” the blessed Son of God, “*Me*,” the chief of sinners—love linked them together. Paul became a dear devoted servant of his Master, and no wonder. The warm sunshine of Christ’s love can melt a heart of stone, and keep it all aglow with love to its glorious Benefactor.

E. R. W.

THE UNCHANGEABLE ONE.

THE angels in announcing to the men of Galilee the truth of the Lord's return, spoke of Him as "this same Jesus." (Acts i.) He had been here ministering amongst men; and in His life we see, as it were, His yesterday. So, in retracing His path as given us in the Gospels, we are privileged to behold just what He was. And what glorious sights present themselves. The compassionate tenderness of that great heart of His shines out so fully that we are at once attracted. Note, for instance, the beautiful scene in Luke iv. 40, where, though it was the fading of the day, yet not one of the sick folk brought to Him went away unhealed; and not only so, but expressive of that deep sympathy which He had for His suffering creatures, He identifies Himself completely with them, for "He laid His hands on *every one of them*." This was not an absolute necessity, for He could heal with a word; but in all their affliction He was afflicted, and therein was the prophetic word fulfilled "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sorrows" (Matt. viii. 17). Deep and personal was the interest which He manifested. Could any doubt it?

But now He is in the eternal glory. Is He changed? Prophecy draws aside the veil, and we are permitted to see Him "the same to-day." So to the prophetic book of the New Testament, the Revelation, we would refer. In chap. i. John, in vision, gets such a sight of Him who is there described as "like unto the Son of Man" (v. 13) that he falls at His feet as dead (i. 17). Glorious was the spectacle which met his eyes! Clothed in garments which spoke of official glories belonging to the Wearer, and His Person all radiant with divine majesty and dignity too bright, indeed, for human eyes to gaze upon, for "His countenance was as

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the sun shineth in his strength" (v. 16), such was the One whom John beheld as he turned to see the voice which spake to him. Do we wonder that he fell prostrate? But how will the One thus portrayed now act towards His servant? On earth He had been, for He was the Son of Man; and whilst here He had cared for and sustained His feeble disciples, dispensing fulness of grace as He ministered to them, and bore with them in their failures. But very different are the circumstances under which Lord and servant now meet. Earth has been exchanged for heaven, humiliation for glory, and the place of subjection for the place of authority. But He was unaltered. Exaltation may change the aspect of His Person, but not His heart. Infinite in power, He was still infinite in compassion. This we learn from His action, for upon the one lying at His feet He lays His right hand, not to crush with the power which was there, but to lift up and uphold; and at the same time He speaks the suited words to reassure and set John at repose in His presence banishing every element of fear. "Fear not" were His first words. This was not, however, the first time He had uttered these words, for He had spoken them when anxiety had to be dispelled (Luke xii. 7, 32); but their repetition under these changed conditions does reveal that He is "the same to-day."

But He further vouchsafes a revelation of who He was, affirming, first His divinity, "I am the first and the last," and also His humanity; for He, the living One had died, but was now alive, never more to die. Victory over death and hades was His. So then, there was nothing beyond His power to cope with, He was the Almighty; nor could there be any circumstances into which He could not enter. Such was what He would make His prostrate servant to know. Fear must take its departure for ever. Blessed Lord! most truly Thou always art the same (Heb. i. 12).

But another scene comes before us in chapter vii., and in

the precious character of Lamb does our Lord there appear. This is, of course, in keeping with what will then be transpiring. We have a bright millennial picture. A great multitude of redeemed Gentiles are there depicted as standing before the throne and the Lamb (v. 9). One of the elders explains that they had come out of the great tribulation (v. 14). Every one had suffered; but now that was forever over. Trial, difficulty, want, they would know no more. And why? He who had endured the intensest of suffering, the Lamb whose blood had been shed, was interested in them, yea, and more than that, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters" (v. 17). What a ministry of love! An ignorant spectator might have assumed, judging from appearances, that during the time of their affliction they were utterly forsaken. But, no. Now He would personally care for them, and shepherd them, again manifesting that time makes no inroads upon His affections, but that the tenderness and love that so fully displayed themselves in Him as He trod Galilee of old remained undiminished; for, we can repeat, He is the same for ever.

But we will pass on to chap. xiv. 1, where we again see the Lamb, and now directly associated with the sealed hundred forty and four thousand on Mount Zion. In our former incident we saw a Gentile multitude; here a remnant of Israel. But it is this we would note that the Lamb associates Himself with sufferers. These glimpses of Himself scattered through this book, whose main feature is judgment, are fraught with rich lessons. In chap. i. we have His power and grace; in chap. vii. His love and compassion; and in chap. xiv. His association with those He will indeed own to be His brethren (Matt. xxv.) *What He was He is and ever will be.* When what is here prophetically unfolded (ch. vii. and xiv.) has become history, we, the saints of this day shall be in the glory with and like our

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Lord and Master ; but there is consolation for us in any study of Himself and His blest ways. Are we not often prone to question His perfect sympathy with His own now. All that Scripture discloses we may learn from. We can surely then profit by this that the Word shows us He is unaltered and unalterable. We must trust Him more, and what we learn of Him now will bear fruition presently.

But to one other point we would draw attention. No vision had ever equalled in magnificence or importance the one beheld by the Seer of Patmos. He had more than once been overawed by the grandeur of what he saw, and the fulness of what he heard. At the feet of the angelic messenger he would fain have worshipped (ch. xxii. 8 ; xix. 10). But now John receives this personal testimony which would convince him of the verity of what he had seen and heard, and would likewise assure his heart of the unchangeableness of his Lord. "I, JESUS" (xxii. 16) were the words which came to him. Glory had not changed Him. How much these words would convey to John none can tell, but they would instil confidence into the heart of the beloved disciple ; for he would realise that the One who had walked this earth in humiliation, named Jesus, was, though possessing all power, and soon to hold undisputed sway over all the works of God's hands, the same Jesus with whom he had held sweet intercourse. Does it occasion surprise that the cry of "come" is raised? He is "the bright and morning star ;" and through the dark night He is as interested as ever in the welfare of His own. Let us remember this for it will cheer us often when all on earth seems breaking up. But we shall soon hail the advent of morning lit up by the radiance of the "Morning Star," and then, there in the eternal glory with Him, we shall recount again and again the sweet story of His love as we gaze upon the face of this same Jesus, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

H. F.

THE OFFERING OF PRAISE.

GOD loves to hear His children sing ; and so, to use a familiar figure, cages His birds, finding for them all the food they require that, having leisure, they may pour forth their melodious strains while He listens with pleasing interest to every note. To one He gives the cage of suffering, to another that of busy toil ; or it may be losses and vexatious circumstances. It is too often the case that the captive spends much time and efforts to effect its escape, beating itself against the bars of "ifs" and "buts." When the lesson of submission is learnt, and the wisdom of the incarceration seen and accepted, then the song begins. I will relate an incident. One day I had the pleasure of taking a distinguished servant of Christ, a very bright and pious Christian, to see a poor woman. She was most painfully afflicted, and was unable to do anything for herself. A kind neighbour gave her all the attention she could by day, but at night she was entirely alone. I was expecting that a good word of cheer would be given to her by my companion ; but to my great surprise he said very little. He asked in particular if she did not find the nights long and tiring. She smiled so sweetly and replied, "Well no sir, I cannot say that I do, the Lord is so good to me. I feel as if He were in the room with me all the time, so I am never lonely, nor do I find the nights long." On leaving he said, "Thank you for the lesson you have taught me." When we left I said, "Why you scarcely said anything to her." "How could I," he replied, "it was such a treat to see a saint in suffering quite superior to it." Sing then ye songsters, and croak no more. Your song is not only welcomed on high, but cheers and helps many a one here below, who catching up the strain, will begin the same thing, and thus God will be glorified ; for has He not said, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me."

E. R. W.

P R A I S E.

O God, Thou now hast glorified
With glory, Thine eternal Son ;
He who became a man and died,
And all thy holy will hath done.
To Him we bow, our hearts adore,
And worship, now and evermore.

He, once despised, the Nazarene
'Mid cruel scorn, went meekly on,
Till on the cross, two thieves between,
He fought our foes and victory won.
God's wrath sustained, our sins He bore,
Death's past—He lives for evermore.

O God we praise Thee, He who died
Is seated on the throne above ;
With honour, crowned and glorified,
In righteousness, as well as love.
O Jesus, heights and depths declare
Thy loveliness and beauty there.

In yonder scene of endless bliss,
Thy Father finds in Thee His joy ;
But love and glory such as this,
Cannot thy every thought employ.
Thy heart and hands are busy here,
Thine own beloved ones to cheer.

Thou wilt not rest till each and all
Thy saints are with Thee where Thou art ;
They crowned before Thy feet will fall,
And worship with united heart.
O Jesus, Lord, what will it be,
For evermore to be with Thee.

E. R. W.

“The touch that heals the broken heart
Is never felt above.
His angels know His blessedness,
His way-worn saints His love.”

PSALM L.—Because God had kept silence in long patience, the world may fancy He is to be dealt with as man is, with outward forms, sacrifices, ceremonies, and no conscience, and that God sees no farther; but God sets before man *what he has done*. He who so knows God as to praise Him, who owns what He is, blesses Him for what He is, and orders his conversation aright, he will have the governmental blessing of God. He who makes offerings as though he would quiet God so, and goes on without taking heed to Him in His conscience, He will reprove, and set in order before him all he has done: if here, for salvation; if in judgment, there is none to deliver. J. N. D.

THERE is nothing that can possibly give such energy and persevering power as the consciousness of acting *for God*, and that God is acting *with us*. This removes every obstacle—lifts the soul above all human influence, and brings it into the very region of power omnipotent. Let us only be fully assured that we are on the Lord's side, and that His hand is acting with us, and nothing can drive us from the path of service and testimony, conduct us whither it may. "I can do all things," said the apostle, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." . . . The very weakest saint can do all things. C. H. M.

FAITH ever honours God, and God ever honours faith. David . . . put himself into the hands of God, and the happy result of doing so was victory—full, glorious victory. "David prevailed over the Philistines with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; *but there was no sword in the hand of David*." Precious fruit of simple faith in God! How it should encourage the heart to cast away from it every carnal confidence, and cling to the only true source of power. C. H. M.

THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS.

1 THESS. v. 1-11.

THERE are times and seasons which as yet have never dawned on this earth. They will, however, in due course arrive. Many a one will witness that whilst still in this scene; some hailing their approach with gladness as the fulfilment of their hope (Luke xxi. 28); others on their arrival will mourn, overtaken then with an irrevocable fate (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7).

Of those times the Lord had spoken in the prophecy delivered to His disciples, as He sat with them on the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem and the temple on the third day before His crucifixion (Matt. xxiv.; Mark xiii.) To these times He again referred in the farewell word to the eleven on that same mount, but this time near Bethany and just previous to His ascension. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" had been their question. To this He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses (as we should here read), both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 6-8). The times and the seasons would certainly come, but the Apostles were not to be waiting for them. They had their work set before them, service distinctively Christian. The times and the seasons we learn are not included in the Christian dispensation, which must pass away before they commence to run their course. For the present dispensation ends with the rapture foretold in 1 Thess. iv. 15-17. Then every true Christian alive on that morning will disappear from earth, and the Holy Ghost, and the Bride will no more sojourn here below (Rev. xxii. 17). The times and the seasons belong to another epoch, connected in the closest way both with the

Lord's manifestation, or epiphany in glory, and with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

We can understand therefore the point in the Lord's answer to the question of the disciples. They were thinking of the coming kingdom, when He, the true Messiah, will reign. That will come without fail according to the Father's good pleasure ; but this dispensation of grace must first run its course, so with it they were to be primarily and especially concerned. And, what was to engage them in service and interest, is that which should engage Christians still. The proximate hope of the Christian is to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv.), and then to come with Him out of heaven, when the times and the seasons shall be running their appointed course.

"Of the times and the seasons," said the Apostle, "ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. v. 1-3). In a previous paper, entitled, *Comfort for sorrowing Christians*, we have pointed out (p. 47), that none but real saints are viewed in 1 Thess. iv. 14-19 as within the scope of the Apostle's prophetic utterance. Here, on the contrary (v. 1-3), no Christian is contemplated as being then alive on the earth. By the rapture all of them will already have been gathered together to be with the Lord on high. And this the Apostle's language fully confirms. In chap. iv. he writes only of *we* (15-17). In chap. v. he writes only of *they* and *them* (3).

We have said no *Christian*, for there will be saints of God at that time here below and remaining for the Lord's appearance in power (Rev. vii. ; xiv. 1-5). But not being Christians, *i.e.*, saints having the Spirit of Christ (Rom viii. 9), they come not within the range of this revelation by Paul. Those

only are contemplated who have heard the gospel of God's grace, which now goes forth, and shall not have obeyed it (2 Thess. i. 8). All such then alive, and going on in fancied security, like those who perished at the flood (Matt. xxiv. 37-38), will be overtaken with sudden destruction, from which there will be no escape (1 Thess. v. 3). As a thief in the night that day will dawn on them, the sign of the Son of Man then appearing. For the Lord Jesus will come forth out of heaven to the dismay of all the ungodly.

The times and the seasons then to which the Apostle refers are not, as we have said, the Christian's proximate expectation. He will see them coming on this earth, and see them from their commencement to their end. But He will see them from above, when seated on a throne, and in the presence of the throne of God; for the Lamb will then, having taken the book, proceed to break the seals of it. Very important is this for Christians to understand, and surely we may say it is but little apprehended. For many seem taken up with questions, as to how far current events are fulfilling the divine predictions set forth especially in the book of the Revelation. Would that such better understood what is their proper expectation, as well as their security from being involved in the judgments coming upon the earth. Their proper expectation, we say, which is to meet the Lord in the air. Their security we speak of, for they are members of the body of Christ, who must then be taken out of this scene ere these times and seasons commence. This, which the Lord has promised in the epistle to the angel of the assembly in Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 10), will receive at His hands in due course its consummation.

Of the times and the seasons therefore the Apostle did not on this occasion dilate, yet the subject is pregnant with instruction for us all. The Thessalonians knew well about the coming of the day of the Lord, and already had he referred to that event (ii. 19; iii. 13). Then his work among

them will be manifested, and his hope with reference to them be abundantly fulfilled. Further, he desired their heart's establishment unblameable in holiness before God their Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. For then, and not till then, will the Christian be discharged from his responsibility as a servant, his account being finally settled by the Lord on the throne (1 Tim. vi. 14), who will reward each one according to his works. Of this the Lord had spoken, when near Jericho He uttered the parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 11-27). The nobleman, who will come back from a far country, having received the kingdom, will take account of his servants and reward each one according to his service. No one therefore is to think he has no concern with that day, because he will previously share in the rapture. Every servant of Christ will find that he has to do with it, a time of joy seeing the Lord arrayed in all the emblems of sovereignty, but a day too of reckoning with each one to reward them according to their works. Rewards for faithful servants, sudden destruction on enemies of the Lord then alive on earth, solemn issues these are to be decided then by the Lord Jesus Christ. He once stood before the bar of judgment here, and was condemned. All must stand before His judgment seat at one time or another to hear His decision as to each one—a decision against which there will be no appeal. So, as the rapture testifies of grace for Christians, the day of Christ reminds all, who give heed, of the account, as responsible creatures, that must then be rendered to the Lord.

But instruction in a different line also arises, and this it is which the Apostle teaches us in that chapter of the Thessalonians.

What Christians are, and what becomes them in their lives as true saints, should be remembered and practically acknowledged. Let the Apostle then tell us. "But ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you

as a thief. For ye are all sons of light, and sons of day: Ye are not of the night nor of darkness" (4-5). True Christians belong to the day—sons of light and sons of day. Before all men then should their lives be in character with this, and not as once it was, in character with the night and with darkness. A word this was, and is, to exhibit things in their right aspect, and to act as a reminder for Christians when reading it.

Hence comes naturally the exhortation, "Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (6-8). How wise was this; for principles are often wider in their application than mere commands. The latter may forbid some act, or acts. The former can give guidance for the path. We belong then to the day. So what is seemly for the day should be cultivated. Sobriety in every sense of the word becomes us. Watchfulness and sobriety, on these the Apostle insists. How this speaks of that from which we are all in danger, the same evil nature being still in the Christian as in all others in the world. A sinless *state* to be reached here? Is that the teaching of the Holy Ghost? No. Sinful *practice* should be avoided (1 John ii.) But why exhort as to that, if one could be free from sin whilst in the body on earth? Had Paul attained to a condition from which the old man had been eradicated? His words, "Let *us* watch and be sober," give an unqualified denial to any such teaching, which comes not from God, whatever be its origin.

Then, too, surrounded with a hostile power ever ready to take advantage of the Christian, and with a nature within which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, we need armour in which to be arrayed, even a breastplate and a helmet—the breastplate of faith and love, and

for a helmet the hope of salvation. Faith, love, and hope, these three had already characterized the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 3). Faith, love, and hope were to characterize them still. Very real had been their conversion. Ample proof had been given of it. Could they then settle down into carelessness and indifference? Watchfulness became them. To be watchful were they exhorted. Surely all this should speak to us? Would any boast of attainment, or of special growth in the knowledge of the truth? Who might have done that with some show of reason more than the Apostle? Yet he needed as much as the most recent convert the armour of which he here speaks—the breastplate and the helmet; and we believe that the most advanced really in grace and truth will be the most ready to echo his exhortation, “Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

Of the hope are we reminded. Does that imply uncertainty as to the issue for the true Christian? The Divine Word gives a definite answer to such a question, “God hath *not* appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (9-10). The future is sure. Let us show by our lives that future to be ours.

A little more exhortation, and this subject closes. When writing of the rapture (iv. 15-17) the apostle ended with the exhortation to comfort one another. Departed Christians would lose nothing by death. Here again (v. 11), he would have them comfort themselves *together*. But more, they should edify one another as well. Opening up the truth as to the rapture they were to comfort each other, and not to sorrow for departed saints as those that had no hope. Here, where Christian walk and practice are treated of, they were to edify one another as well. Care one for another was to

be in healthy exercise. That the Thessalonians were exhibiting. They edified one another (11). How does this exhortation affect us?

What care too was manifested on the part of the Holy Ghost, to assure the Christians that none of them would be involved in the coming judgments. Both negatively and positively was this stated. They were not in darkness that that day should overtake them as a thief (4). "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (9).

May the word of God have its due place in each heart !

C. E. S.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

THE two grand elements of Christian worship, are the presence of the Holy Spirit and the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the Supper.

But in this worship, the affections, which are connected with all our relationships with God are developed. God, in His majesty, is adored. The gifts even of His Providence are recognised. He who is a Spirit is worshipped in spirit and in truth. We present to God as our Father—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the expression of the holy affections which He has produced in us ; for He sought us when we were afar off, and has brought us near to Himself, as His beloved children, giving us the spirit of adoption, and associating us (wondrous grace !) with His well-beloved Son. We adore our Saviour-God, who has purged us from our sins, and placed us in His presence without spot ; His holiness and His righteousness, which have been so marvellously displayed in our redemption, being to us a source of joy which passes not away ; for, through the perfect work of Christ, we are in the light, as He Himself is in the light.

It is the Holy Spirit Himself who reveals to us these

heavenly things and the glory which is to come, and who acts in us so as to produce affections suitable to such blessed relationships with God. He it is who is the bond of union between the heart and these things. But in thus drawing out our souls, He makes us feel that we are children of the same family, and members of the same body ; uniting us in this worship by means of mutual affections and feelings, common to all, towards Him who is the object of our worship. Jesus Himself is present in our midst, according to His promise. In fine, worship is exercised in connection with the very sweetest recollection of His love, whether we regard His work upon the cross, or whether we recall the thought of His ever fresh and tender affection for us. He desires our remembrance of Him. Sweet and precious thought ! O how joyous to our souls, and yet, at the same time, how solemn ought such worship to be ! What sort of life should we be careful to lead in order to render it ! How watchful over our own spirits ! How sensitive as to evil ! With what earnestness should we seek the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to render such work suitably ! Yet it should be very simple and truthful ; for true affection is always simple, and at the same time, devout, for the sense of such interests imparts devoutness.

At times the Lord Jesus will be more specially before the mind : at times thoughts of the Father will be more present. The Holy Spirit alone can guide us in this ; but the truthfulness and spirituality of our worship will depend upon the state of those who compose the assembly. Effort in such things has no place.

It is of the utmost importance that delicacy of spiritual feeling should be cultivated and maintained, and that we should not habituate ourselves in worship to but little sense of the presence of God and of the power of the Holy Spirit. If there is true spirituality—if the Holy Spirit fills the assembly with His presence, evil of every kind is quickly discov-

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ered. For God is a jealous God, and He is faithful. A single Achan was discovered at the commencement of the history of Israel—a single lie in Ananias in the beginning of the Church's history. Alas! what things afterwards occurred in Israel: and what things afterwards took place in the Church without any one having even the consciousness that evil was present! May God make us humble, watchful, and true to Him, and enable us to bear in mind that His Spirit abides with us, in order that we may be able to render spiritual worship! It is by the Spirit's powerful testimony to the efficacy of the work of Christ, that we can abide in the presence of God, without blame and full of joy, and thus present to Him worship, which is a witness before the angels of heaven to God's gracious and unfathomable love, and which presents to God Himself the most acceptable proof of the efficacy of that work which takes from us all fear in His presence, and which opens a channel, otherwise eternally closed, for the outflowing of that love in which He finds His delight.

J. N. D.

THE PROPHET DANIEL.

OF all the individual saints brought before us in the pages of Old Testament history not one stands out more strikingly than does the prophet Daniel. We cannot claim him for a type of Christ in the way we can Isaac, Joseph, and Moses; but in moral qualities, in saintliness of character, not one, I think, can surpass him. It was his lot to live in troublous times when the fortunes of God's people were at their lowest ebb. Just on the verge of manhood, when life, as we say, was all opening out before him, at that period when dreams of future happiness are indulged in, he finds himself, with others, a prisoner, taken captive by the King of Babylon.

Fulfilled in his case, and in that of his friends, was the

judgment pronounced by Isaiah upon Hezekiah, King of Judah (see 2 Kings xx. 18). His lot was indeed a hard one. Suffering deeply—a suffering his personal piety would only serve to render more acute—yet we do not read of any complaining as with Job, no cursing of his day, no impugning of the justice of God. On the contrary, our first introduction to him in chap. i. of the book that bears his name, presents him to us as filled with the holiest purpose, and the loftiest aim. He would preserve himself from defilement at all cost. He might have pleaded the difficulty of his situation as an excuse for non-fulfilment of the Mosaic ritual as to food, etc. Such weakness was no part of his character; to it he would not descend. The God of Israel had commanded and that was enough. Daniel could, and would obey. Studying consequences was not his business—obedience was. Happily he had three companions who were ready to pursue the same course as himself. Is it any wonder, then, that God should shape the circumstances round about His servant, and so help him to accomplish his purpose, which was so thoroughly in keeping with the Divine mind (chap. i. 8)? “Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (v. 9). This it was that disposed the prince to accede to Daniel’s request for pulse for food, and for water to drink, by way of experiment for ten days. Here again God helped him by blessing the food, and at the end of the days these four captives were fairer and fatter than all the children that were of their sort. Then again (in v. 17), “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” As true now as then is this, “Them that honour Me I will honour.” Nor shall we have long to wait for a striking example of the truth of the scripture just quoted. Nebuchadnezzar may be, and was, the king of the world; whilst Daniel and his fellows were in exile from their own land, and

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exposed to the caprices of this proud and ignorant man. The God of heaven was known to, and was on the side of Daniel and his companions. Nebuchadnezzar knew no one above himself. The knowledge that is of eternal value he did not possess. Riches, power, and glory, he had in abundance; yet was after all but a poor, feeble, contemptible creature. Thinking himself above all, he was all the time, sleeping or waking, in the hands of Daniel's God, who could turn him whithersoever He would.

“In the second year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.” The trouble remained, but the dream had fled, and his memory could not recall it. God, we may surely say, took it from him. He would teach the king that there is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets. He would also show that the man who knew Him, and did His will, was in every way superior to earth's proudest monarch. Human wisdom would utterly break down. The king commanded to bring the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans before him. From them he imperiously demands that they shall make known the dream and its interpretation, or be cut in pieces, and their houses be made a dunghill. They have to confess their inability, and assert that there is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter. The gods alone can do this, and their dwelling is not with flesh, they say. Nebuchadnezzar is full of fury, and commands to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel and his fellows are sought that they might be slain. With counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch the captain of the guard, and soon appears before the king to ask for time, and he would show the interpretation. He then requests his three friends to desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that they perish not with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. That secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed

the God of heaven. Happy man! his life is now secure; but of that he does not speak. His soul is filled with the sense of what God is. Wisdom and might are His; He is supreme over all. Times and seasons He changes. Removes kings and setteth up kings. Moreover He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with Him. Well was it for Daniel that he enjoyed the favour of this great and all-wise Being.

Daniel's first concern now is for the lives of the wise men of Babylon. The king had commanded Arioch to destroy them all. To that same man Daniel says, "Destroy them not," and that word was not disobeyed. Next we see him in the presence of the king, giving all the glory to God. "There is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets." "As for me this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart." God was, then, caring for those captives from Judæa, who were faithful to Him. The dream is soon told, and its interpretation given; and then the proud monarch falls upon his face and worships Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. Nebuchadnezzar worships his captive, and owns the moral greatness of the man. Daniel on his part knew, and owned, that he owed all to God. "Of a truth," says the king, "Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret." The effect upon the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, it would seem, passed quickly away. Chapter iii. is evidence enough of that. In his vain attempt to compel all (save one) to bow down and worship the golden image that he had set up, he well nigh succeeded; for three of his subjects alone refused, and those were the friends and

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companions of Daniel. Those three flatly refuse to obey. In vain the king threatens. "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image that thou hast set up," is their reply. Cast into the burning fiery furnace, a wonderful deliverance is granted them, and the king is compelled to acknowledge that there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Nebuchadnezzar has more to learn, for God has not done with him yet. Again he dreams, was afraid, and troubled; but does not turn to Daniel. He sends, as before, to the wise men of Babylon, whose incompetency is afresh made apparent. At the last Daniel came before him, and the visions are told to him. He is silent, troubled, and astonished for an hour. Was it because he did not understand it? No. He understood well. It was concern for the king, for whom he had some regard. Bidden by the king not to let the dream or its interpretation trouble him, he says, "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." As a friend, as one who had the king's interest at heart, he gives him counsel. "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." Bold, indeed! The king was a sinner, and one who had practised iniquity. Who would remind him of that? Daniel, the one who feared God, and not the wrath of man. The counsel given was not followed, and the threatened judgment came. Nebuchadnezzar learns his lesson, "I praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." With this acknowledgment he passes off the scene, and so does Daniel—but only for a time.

Chapter v. brings us to the last year and the last day of Belshazzar's reign. The son, or rather the grandson, of Nebuchadnezzar, makes "a great feast to a thousand of his

lords, and drank wine before the thousand (ver. 2, 3, 4). Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Overwhelmed with fear, he cried aloud to bring in the wise men of Babylon; but they could not read the writing, nor make known the interpretation thereof. Daniel appears to be forgotten. The queen reminds the king of what he had done in the days of his father Nebuchadnezzar. Brought in before the king, how differently he comforts himself to what he had done in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar. To Belshazzar's offer of rewards he answers, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." Without a particle of pity he solemnly charges home upon the conscience of the guilty monarch his terrible sin. He knew of all that had happened to Nebuchadnezzar, who had been forced to learn that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and appointeth over it whomsoever He will. Nevertheless, Belshazzar had not humbled his heart; but had lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven. He had profaned the vessels of His house. He had praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hands his breath was, and whose are all his ways, he had not glorified.

What a terrible indictment! How faithful and fearless was Daniel! God had passed sentence: Daniel reads it. He had numbered the kingdom and finished it. Belshazzar was weighed in the balances and found wanting; and his kingdom was divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. God had settled the whole matter. That very night Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom.

It was about 60 years since Daniel and his friends were taken captives by Nebuchadnezzar. He is now an old man, having lived through four reigns. He had occupied, in that of the first king, the highest position. Hence he had been tested by prosperity, which is always a severe one, and by which many have been ruined. On the accession of Evilmerodach to the throne, who is mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 27, we lose sight of Daniel. He reappears upon the scene on the last day of Belshazzar's reign; and comes before us as one who is still thorough for God after all the changes he must have passed through. He had lost nothing morally. Prosperity had not spoiled him. What will adversity do? We shall see.

King Darius exalts Daniel and sought to set him over the whole realm. This fact awakens jealousy in the hearts of the presidents and princes, who sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. In this they failed, becoming powerful witnesses to his integrity. His public character was unassailable. A scheme is then concocted to entrap Darius into passing a decree to forbid any one to ask any petition of either God or man for thirty days, save of the king. Darius fell into the snare, and signed the decree. What will Daniel do? Just what he always did. Here we may learn the secret of his success. He was a man of prayer. He was often upon his knees for he felt his need of God. So three times a day he prayed, and gave thanks. He will not change his practice, nor be careful to keep this a secret. What he had done all along, he does still. His

watchful enemies soon find him thus employed, and think that the hour of their triumph has come, and of Daniel's destruction. They claim from the king the fulfilment of the statute, who, with reluctant sorrow is compelled to comply. He would have delivered Daniel, but could not. He was cast into the den of lions. But Daniel's God was looking on; and even Darius felt that his God would deliver him. That night the king could not sleep; no instrument of music was brought before him; and he arose early in the morning and went to the den of lions, and cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Then said Daniel unto the king, O king live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." The king had passed a wretched night. Not so Daniel. Quiet and composed, he had the testimony of a good conscience, and of God's approval of his conduct. With exceeding gladness the king commanded to take up Daniel out of the den of lions; and now the wicked men, who plotted his destruction, are cast therein; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came to the bottom of the den.

We must now pass on to chapter ix. 2, where we read, "I, Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Having learnt the mind of God upon the point before us, we are permitted to see the deep longings of his heart. There are some preliminaries, and what are they? We are told in v. 3, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Daniel was intensely in earnest. That he was a righteous man we have abundant proof. James tells us,

chap. v. 16-17: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." Daniel had the necessary qualifications for success. He had practical righteousness, and intense earnestness. Then the fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, were no unmeaning things in his case, as he approached the Lord his God. For God's people he would supplicate, not as one apart from them, but as one of them. He made their sins his own. And what a confession he makes! How he justifies God in all His dealings with his people! God was righteous. We have sinned; have committed iniquity; have done wickedly; have rebelled by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. What a sense of sin Daniel had. How completely he condemns the people. We may wonder what plea he can put forward after all this. On their side nothing can be said. On God's side it was different. He was righteous, but that was not all. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him" (9). Here, then, comes a rift in the clouds. Here was (v. ground for hope! "Mercies and forgivenesses"—precious words! whether for an individual sinner or a company of failing ones. Again Daniel justifies God; and again he condemns the people. Still they were God's people. Had He not brought them forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and had gotten Him renown as at this day? If it was a righteous thing on God's part to punish those who sinned and had turned their backs upon Him, could He not be righteous also in looking after His own name? Jerusalem was His city, His holy mountain. There also was His sanctuary, which was desolate. "Cause thy face to shine upon *thy* sanctuary, which is desolate, *for the Lord's sake*."

O my God, incline thine ear and hear ; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name ; for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive ; O Lord, hearken, and do ; defer not *for thine own sake*, O my God ; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (18-19). God's great mercies, and the glory of His own name, are the pleas urged by this remarkable man, and such must ever succeed. The angel Gabriel was despatched at once to give to Daniel skill and understanding and better still to let him know that he was greatly beloved. Could any words be sweeter, or more welcome? Never before had they been addressed to him. What grace to choose the moment of Daniel's deepest humiliation and distress, to let him know that he was greatly beloved of his God.

We shall meet with the same words again in chapter x. 11-19, uttered some years later, and by another messenger, accompanied with these words, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words" (v. 12). The answer to his prayer recorded in chapter ix., we shall find in the Book of Ezra, two years before the vision in chapter x. Who is it that now visits Daniel, whose presence affects him so immensely? Nothing of the kind occurs when Gabriel visited him. Now his comeliness is turned into corruption, and he loses all his strength. The description given in v. 6, and the effect on Daniel in v. 8, point pretty clearly to the fact that it was the Lord Himself. His glory produced fear and prostration. His grace removed the former, and a touch, from one who had the appearance of a man, met the latter.

We are nearing the close of the life of this interesting man, with reluctance surely. In chap. xii. we read, "But go thou thy way till the end be ; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy

lot at the end of the days" (v. 13). Till then farewell, we shall meet by-and-bye.

In the love he bore God's people, in his identification with them, making their sins his own, we are reminded of One, far, very far, greater than Daniel, who had no sins of His own, but who in grace made others His, and felt the shame of them, confessing them to God, and, blessed be His name, making, what Daniel could not do, atonement for them. In His presence all Daniel's virtues, and they are many, pass into the shade. Still we would profit by the history of this dear, devoted man. May the Lord enable each reader of this paper so to do.

E. R. W.

SIMEON was satisfied. He held in his arms that little child by whom salvation would be effected. In the temple court he expressed his satisfaction as he blessed God. How instructive and significant! . . . He was occupied with the infant child of a poor mother, of whom, as we know, all the sacrifices offered upon the altar were but types. The Lord's Christ was before him. He was permitted to have Him in his arms. His desires were fulfilled. Salvation would be effected; Israel's blessing would be wrought out; he could then in peace, though he would never witness this side of death the glory of that kingdom, to which there is no end.

C. E. S.

SON of Man Jesus was. All who saw Him were sure of that. He was also God's only begotten Son. Those who recognised the latter were blessed indeed. Jesus said, "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." To see the Son, what a sight! To believe on Him, what rest and satisfaction! To have eternal life now, with the guarantee that the body shall share in the blessing at the last day, is to be truly blessed.

E. R. W.

SURELY I COME QUICKLY.

“SURELY I quickly come,” words sweetly sounding
To weary, aching hearts who’ve waited long
Thy promised advent. Now the day draws nearer
When we shall greet Thee with a gladsome song.

With glorious burst of hallelujah praises,
From myriad voices trained by Thine own hand.
No weakness then, no jar, nor note discordant
Shall mar the perfect peace of that blest land.

“Surely I quickly come.” Creation groaneth
And travaileth in pain together now ;
Then shall each groan be hushed, each cry be silenced,
When Thou shalt reign as King, and only Thou.

“Surely I quickly come.” E’en this may be Lord
The last hour’s toiling, and the last hour’s pain.
The next, the trumpet sound—caught up—for ever
To be with Thee, and with Thee, Lord, to reign.

“Surely I quickly come.” Thy bride makes answer,
Amen. Come, even so, beloved Lord.
We long to see Thee, rest with Thee for ever,
When Thou shalt be by all beloved, adored. A. S.

ADAM and EVE had the word for their day. Eve knew it, and quoted it ; but they did not keep it. Had they done that, it would have kept them. The second man found, and brought forth from the written word, all that was needful for one in His day in the wilderness with the devil. God does not send any to warfare at their own charges.

C. E. S.

G O D ' S R E S T .

HEBREWS III.-IV.

BUT what is this rest? He will explain. It is *God's* rest, as the Psalm declares. "My rest." It cannot, then, be rest of conscience. Who could associate that with God? True the sinner needs rest of conscience, and that Christ gives to the weary and heavy laden who come unto Him. Nor is it rest of heart by the way. That is promised to us, if we take Christ's yoke and learn of Him (Matt. xi. 28-30). But God's rest is rest from all toil and labour. This character of rest we read of in Gen. ii. 1-3. God then rested from all His work which He had created and made. The fall took place and God's rest was broken in on. Since that as the Lord has taught us, the Father worketh, and He too works (John v. 17). Hence the resting of God from all that He created and made is not the rest intended in the Psalm for us, though that illustrates the character of it.

In due time the people under Joshua entered the land, and rested after all the wilderness journey, and their wars too in Canaan. In measure, of course, that was rest for the nation (Deut. xii. 9), but is not the rest held out to us. Nor, it is equally manifest, is it the rest held out to Israel in that Psalm, which was composed centuries after they had entered the land, and which spoke of the rest as still future. And as nothing since David's day had taken place before our Epistle was written that could be viewed as the fulfilment of the Psalm, and nothing certainly since, the rest of God of which it speaks must be future still. "There remaineth therefore a rest (or better, a Sabbath rest) for the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from His" (iv. 9-10).

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His* rest. Whose rest? We think that “His rest” here, as elsewhere (iii. 18, iv. 1), is to be understood of God’s rest, which is held out to us in prospect. And hence follows the exhortation: “Let us labour (or give diligence) therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (iv. 11).

Thus step by step the reasoning proceeds till the conclusion is reached, which none can gainsay. The rest intended was not that of Canaan. It was future in the days of David. It is future still. But the character of it as God’s rest was delineated in Gen. ii., when God rested from all His work which He created and made. How interesting, we must remark, must the teaching of this Epistle have been to the receptive Hebrews! Scripture was opened up in a way they had never before perceived; and passages, we may safely say, appeared in a new light to those who had read them before their conversion. Who would have supposed that Gen. ii. 1-3 had a voice for Christians, and has a voice still? To Israel it showed the ground on which the institution of their Sabbath was based (Exod. xx. 11). To us it foreshadows that Sabbatic rest, which, once entered upon, will never be interrupted. God will rest when the new heavens and the new earth are made. His people will also rest as they cease from their own works of toil and labour down here.

C. E. S.

“WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?”

SUCH were the words addressed by the angels to the women on their visit to the sepulchre of the Lord. Of their love and devotion to Him there can be no question, for very early in the morning, when it was yet dark (John xx. 1), they were carrying the spices, which they had prepared, to the sepulchre.

*It is questioned to what the pronoun *his* refers—whether to the individual or to God.

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But it may be asked, was this zeal according to knowledge (Rom. x. 2)? “He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you.” The remembrance of Christ’s words would have saved them all their trouble in preparing their spices and their early journey to the tomb. Beautiful and blessed work some might say, for were they not seeking to do honour to Him whom they had learnt to love and adore? Yet in language, clear and unmistakable, it stands written: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” True love, true devotedness, true zeal, is shown in obeying God’s word. All else, however lovely, however admirable, profiteth nothing. So these women found, when Christ’s words are brought to their remembrance (ver. 8-9). They unhesitatingly retrace their steps. Their spices were not needed, however much time, trouble, and love had been spent upon their preparation. No longer was it necessary to linger round an empty tomb. A deep and striking lesson had been taught them, that it was not with a dead Christ they now had to do, but with a living One. Gladly, therefore, might they turn their backs on the grave, assured of again beholding the face of Him whose death they had mourned. New hopes, new joys, would break in upon their souls as they contemplated the astounding truth: “He is risen.” The knowledge of this truth would lead them to the realization of other truths. “If ye loved me, ye would *rejoice*, because I said I go unto the Father” (John xiv. 28). Their sorrow would be turned into joy. They would no longer look back upon a departed Lord, but would be looking forward to a coming One (John xiv. 3).

How many devout Christians at the present time are like these women of old, seeking a dead Christ, and endeavouring to honour Him in a similar spirit and with perhaps equal zeal? Their thoughts are fixed upon the cross with its attendant sorrows, and blessed indeed as it is to have reached

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this place, yet to remain here, to be seeking the Living One among the dead is to ignore the brightest and most blessed portion of Christianity. Those so remaining are beguiled with the idea—the false idea, that Christianity is a sorrow-engendering thing. Did Christianity end with Christ's death, what but sorrow could be the result? To think that our sins brought the Lord of glory to Calvary's shameful cross, and this to be the end—all of what Christianity has to give us while here on earth, surely tears, and nothing but tears, would become us. Thanks be to God, it is not so. The cross is the starting-point, not the goal, of the Christian. The death of Christ, not His life on earth (as so many think), forms the basis of Christianity, for Christ (blessed thought) is no longer on the cross or in the grave. He is the Living One, who once was dead, and is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, crowned, not with thorns as He is so often represented to be, but with glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9).

Ye sorrowful Christians take note of what these honoured women were called upon to learn, and permit Christ's Word to govern your actions. And then, not a dead Christ, not His tomb, not His cross, but HIMSELF will be the all-consuming, all-absorbing desire of your hearts. Would that this might be the case with all who call themselves Christians!

While, however, the women showed a want of knowledge, the disciples manifested a want of belief (Luke xxiv. 11). None seemed to give full credence to His words, else would they have been looking for the risen Lord; for had He not often told them of His rising again from the dead on the third day? Yet amid all their unfaithfulness, He would remain faithful, and satisfy their doubting hearts. To the women He first presented Himself (Matt. xxviii. 9)—the weaker ones, who ever have His first care; and afterwards He appeared to His disciples (John xx. 19). And what a

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wonderful scene must this have been : the first meeting of the risen Lord with His beloved disciples! No frown upon His face, no reproach for their cowardice in forsaking Him (Mark xiv. 50); no rebuke to Peter for having denied Him (Luke xxii. 55-62), or to the disciple who was known to the high priest (John xviii. 15) for remaining silent when men were witnessing falsely against Him. But fresh (may it not be said?) from the untold agonies of the cross; fresh from the dark, deep waters of death, with man's brand-marks of infamy indelibly stamped upon Him, He speaks peace to their fearful hearts. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John xx. 20). The past, with all its sins and shortcomings, is (and will be) forgiven and forgotten. In the presence of such an One, shame, sorrow, and all kindred feelings vanish. Who, that truly believes, needs fear to meet so gracious a Saviour? Then, to look forward, not backward; to rejoice in the Lord, not to be continually grieving over sins committed, is the proper attitude and condition of the Christian. Peace, joy, praising, blessing, worshipping, should characterize him.

How different is the Christianity which we meet with all around us! Churches, chapels, and other "places of worship" stud the land. They are, in many cases, the pride and glory of their votaries, being adorned and beautified by the lavish skill of the architect, artist, and cunning artificer; while their services are rendered attractive by all that music and oratory can accomplish. Besides which, crosses, crucifixes, and pictorial representations are being increasingly brought into requisition. And what are all these things but man's "aids to religion," operating only on the carnal senses? What exercise of faith in God is there in the use of any one of these things? Faith has to do with the unseen, not with material things at all. It soars far above all that man at his best can supply, for it has to do with God alone. By it man enters God's own presence to worship and adore. And

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without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6). Faith is the gift of God, and those who receive it are solely and entirely dependant upon His grace. Man can supplement it in no way whatsoever. The death of Christ proved that man (yea, religious man, too), and all that emanated from him was enmity against God. It is the man of faith, he who is born again, who alone can render intelligent and acceptable worship to God; who only can worship by the Spirit of God (Phil. iii. 3, R.V.) The frivolous man of the world, the voluptuous Sybarite, and the most pronounced infidel, can and do find pleasure in the enchanting music of organ and choir, and in the thrilling words of an eloquent preacher. They will view with delight a gorgeous ritual, and an imposing edifice. But in all this there is no voice to the conscience, no conviction of sin, no glad tidings of God's salvation borne home to a guilt-burdened heart. It yields no sweetness to a soul delighting in a Saviour-God, and rejoicing in sins forgiven. At most it may momentarily stifle doubts and fears, or temporarily calm distressing thoughts. Nought else. The true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, on the contrary, looks away from all such things. Before him a vista of indescribable glory unfolds itself, the source and centre of which is the gracious Lord Himself, divested of all ideal trappings, Who deigned once to bow His blessed head in death, but who now lives to die no more. Other things, however ravishing to the senses they may be, are as dross and filth compared with Him who is without compeer. And—

“A little while—He'll come again :
 Let us the precious hours redeem ;
 Our only grief to give Him pain,
 Our joy to serve and follow Him.
 Watching and ready may we be,
 As those that wait their Lord to see.”

A. C. H..

LIGHT AMIDST JUDE DARKNESS.

"THY word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105) wrote the psalmist, with his soul aglow with holy intent to be obedient unto it. A blessed testimony it likewise is to the full provision contained in God's word for those who have to tread in dark places, even the valley of the shadow of death. God has never left His saints without directions; and when difficulties have arisen He has graciously deigned to reveal, for the comfort and instruction of His own, just the necessary word to cast light over the darkness, and so show them a plain path through the seeming maze.

Jude, one of the so-called catholic epistles because addressed to no particular company of saints, is eminently one of those portions of Scripture given to cheer, sustain, and exhort Christians when the tide of apostacy, even then rapidly rising, should apparently swamp all that had been introduced. How blessed to be so thoroughly furnished! God would not have His saints floating with the stream of evil, nor yet sink beneath its flood. Jude writes of apostacy. He effectually disperses, for those subject to the written word of God, the vain dream indulged in by men, now called progressive, that the gospel is to triumphantly conquer all the evil in the world and so usher in the Millennium. But God is not in all their thoughts. Apostacy from God, call it triumph if they will, is what Scripture plainly shows this dispensation to end in (2 Thess. i.—ii.; 2 Tim. iii.), and very fast indeed is this scene ripening for judgment. Does this seem sad? It is sad and solemn, but nevertheless true.

In turning to this short epistle we find that God has given much to cheer along with needful warning. Here are streams of refreshing love and grace. Dwell for a moment on his introductory word, and as the bee sucks sweetness from the flower so gather refreshment for the soul. "To

them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ" (vr. 1 R.v.) Jude at once distinguishes between the mere professor and the true Christian. The latter he is addressing ; and two things he predicates of them which speak of present blessing, and certainty as to the future. "Beloved in God the Father." The dark pall that departure from God casts over what once looked so fair, does not alter the relationship into which we are brought, nor rob saints of His love ; for we have a place in His heart. That which God gives remains for ever. "Kept for Jesus Christ." What God has done, and is doing, none can alter. Shall Satan succeed in robbing the Lord of one of His own? God has purposes about His Son, and in wondrous grace redeemed creatures are linked with Him. One of those purposes is that He shall form the centre with blood-bought ones circling round Him ; for it is written, "*Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Rom. viii. 29.) That company will be complete. Not one will be found wanting ; for all the strategy of the enemy shall be foiled, and, saints kept for Him, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. What encouragement ! And then mercy, peace, and love the Apostle desires should be always theirs. Nothing needful would they lack, for the fulness of God's provision is placed at their command.

But God looks for faithfulness even amidst corporate disorder ; and so with a great danger threatening Christians the apostle exhorts them to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Enemies had stealthily crept in, and the fundamental truths of Christianity were in danger of being set aside. Such were to be met, and the faith contended for. How that word *earnestly* would tell of the holy zeal they were to manifest in that good cause. Evidently Jude desired that each should be valiant for the truth.

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Ungodly men had found their way amongst the saints. In judging by the outward appearance only, men are often misled ; but if the real characters of these had not been discovered by the people of God amongst whom they went, God knew perfectly, and revealed what they were and what they did. Their condition He would openly declare that His own might be guarded. What a lesson this teaches of the need for constant dependence upon God for guidance. The Gibeonitish strategy is oft repeated by the adversary. The forgetfulness to ask counsel of God accounts for much prominent at present.

The Lordship of Christ these ungodly ones called in question, and grace meant to them living in sin ; for they would know no difference between the liberty of grace and the licence of an unbridled will. They followed the dictates of their lusts and were utterly dissolute. Religious radicalism is intensely hateful to God for it aims a blow at the authority of Christ. But the end of such is fixed, for judgment follows apostacy ; and to show us the portion of apostates we have in Jude references to Israel, angels, and the cities of the plain. God, by the arm of His power, had brought the people out of Egypt ; yet to it they wished to return, thus in spirit manifesting apostacy. They lacked faith, believing not ; and perished in the wilderness. Angels, we are told, "left their own habitation," and are now reserved in chains of darkness awaiting the judgment day. For them there is no redemption ; for Christ "laid not hold of angels" (Heb ii. 16), but having apostatised their doom is irrevocably fixed. What an exhibition of wilfulness these fallen angels showed ! And then of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha. They stand forth as a distinct testimony of the future and fate of apostates. Is not this exceedingly solemn ?

And in the same class does Jude place these shameless and unblushing men. The truth they had never received. They were dreamers, and all the terrible things just enunciated

seems headed up in them. They defile the flesh as did the sinners of Sodom; despise dominion like the angels; and speak evil of dignities, of which Israel was guilty. No words seem forcible enough to sum up the characters of these professors. They might pose as champions of the truth, lifting their voices high for right and liberty, but they are followers of the devil, and give a clear exposition of his ways. Alas! that saints should be so unconscious of what is of God as to be deceived by them. What simplicity and power there is in the answer of Michael the archangel to Satan's disputation. He leaves the issue in the hand of God. To-day thrones are attacked, and dignities have sentence passed upon them under the specious plea of standing for justice. Let us not forget from whom these things emanate.

But more is yet told of them, for these ungodly dreamers rail against what they understand not; and what they do understand by nature in that they corrupt themselves. And in connection with this we learn that evil principles live long. What actuated men of old move men now; and so we get a threefold cord of evil. (1) Cain is still found to have a following. He presented to God the fruit of his toil, thus ignoring the truth that approach to God could only be by sacrifice. Men are not wanting to-day, are they? who deny the need of atonement for sinful men. (2) Balaam was willing and eager to curse the people that he might obtain the reward of unrighteousness. In Jude's day, and likewise now, there are those who will pander to the corrupt tastes of men for filthy lucre's sake. Christians are to know what it is to speak *the truth in love*—how different! (3) Core is yet found to have a company, who exalt themselves against the authority of God. What stages we here trace. Men refuse God's only way of salvation substituting one of their own devising, throw over the faith, and then rise against God Himself. But woe is pronounced upon such. Figure after figure presents in a homely, forcible way the shallow-

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ness of both their character and profession. Judgment is their doom, and this according to the prophetic word. Enoch had spoken of the Lord's coming with His saints to execute judgment. Conviction they will then know, as they have their ungodly deeds, and hard words spoken *against Him* brought vividly to remembrance. Observe here that nothing takes God by surprise. Enoch's prophecy carries us back over the ages, yet "he spoke of these" (14); and so, at this the opportune moment, Jude is led to record it. Do we desire further information about such? Grapically our apostle pictures them. Of the joy of satisfaction they know nothing, for they are murmurers, complainers, evil doers, with no thought of doing God's blessed will. Bold speakers too, they are, sounding forth boasting words having man as their idol, and personal advantage as their object.

Dark is the sketch thus drawn. Is disappointment to seize hold of the saint? The heart may be saddened at the thought of the havoc wrought amongst God's people, but God knowing all beforehand has provided against this. "Remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." All has been anticipated, and it is of moment to our souls to realize this. "Who-so hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. i. 33). Conflicting thoughts do at times present themselves to us, and on occasions harass the mind, but the lamp of God's Word casts its bright beams before us, and things then assume their true bearings. God has foretold what would happen.

However, not only are we instructed about the dark details of apostacy for our guidance; but as surely as the sun shines behind the clouds, so in an evil day there are always God's resources for the Christian. God's side is ever bright if man's is dark. First, then, there is the "building up yourselves on your most holy faith." If disorder is rampant Jude contemplates this as amply sufficient. He speaks of

no additions, but to it refers the saint. Each one was, and is, to become acquainted with the faith in a practical way and find in it a source of strength and joy. Ever building up they would become more and more firmly established, and be fitted to truly contend for that which they had proved the sufficiency and value of. Therein is God's provision for every day and hour, every trial and danger. In it we have revealed God's mind about His Son, the present and the future, about things seen and unseen. It unfolds the truth about the sinner's need, the sinner's redemption, and the saint's pathway. In fine God's word contains all that the creature is required to know.

But along with this there was to be "praying in the Holy Ghost;" for the word and prayer go together. By prayer dependence and humility is expressed. The necessity for this is apparent. What a sense it gives of the grace of God to know that if there be revolutions in the religious world below, that throne of His is accessible still to the saint. There peace reigns, which no disturbing element can reach or ruffle; and that holy calm will pervade the heart of the saint when there is the "praying in the Holy Ghost"—prayer with power. How evident it becomes that there is that of which not even Satan can rob the Christian. Let this truth disperse the mists, and, adding courage to faith, let us press forward consciously enjoying the love of God in which we are exhorted to keep ourselves. What is it that causes the heart to glow and kindle, and warms our spirits through and through? What but the love of God which remains in all its immensity, undimmed, undiminished, as when its activity was seen in His giving the Son of His love for ruined creatures. Abounding evil has not chilled it. In it we are to *keep* ourselves; and, beloved saint of God, doing this it will prove an effectual barrier, amidst the gloom, to the setting in of despair. It ever abides, and as we consciously enjoy it, so will its preciousness increase. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian saints in their moments of persecution was

that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God (2 Thess. iii. 5), and this marks its value as a preservative for saints. Jude exhorts called ones, in days of declension, to keep themselves in it.

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Glory lies before us, but our introduction into it will be all of mercy—mercy from first to last. And this is blessedly precious to be clearly shown that upon that mercy we can rely right unto the end. As we get a deepened sense of the grievous failure of the church the need of mercy for the individual is brought into prominence. Such a truth, that there is mercy, exalts Him, but casts His own in real humility before Him. It gives a savour to our service likewise, that God would not have lacking. Others are to be thought of, sought, and helped, even to pulling them out of the fire. To mix up with what they are associated with that calls for judgment will not help. To help out, not to go in, is the teaching of Jude. And along with this there is to be a holy abhorrence of the garment spotted by the flesh; and without it in dealing with evil is to find ourselves as in a whirlpool that draws all gradually to its centre, and finally overwhelms there.

Light amidst darkness we here perceive as we recount what remains to the saint of God. Already we have read of the Word, prayer, love of God, and the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now in his closing doxology the apostle introduces God Himself, and what He is able to do. His almighty power can keep all along the pathway, and eventually, spite of all the machinations of the devil, present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. What a triumph! “With exceeding joy” tells of the perfection of it; and then there in that unsullied light, when the sorrow of the night has vanished and given place to the joy of the eternal morn, shall we adore Him who is the “Only God, our Saviour, to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

H. F.

THE PREACHER.

God's word is like God's world, it combines unity of pervading principle, with endless variety in detail. The whole Bible, considered as one book, stands entirely apart from all other writings; and yet every several portion of it is distinguished from every other portion, as much as one merely human writing is distinguished from another. This combination results from the manner in which it has pleased God to make known His will. One Divine Spirit inspires, hence the unity of the whole. Men of diverse age, taste, and attainments write, hence the diversity of the parts. Although the books are written by Moses, David, Solomon, they are all alike the Word of God; therefore they exhibit a complete separation from all other writings, and a perfect consistency among themselves. Again, although they are all one as being the Word of God, they are as much the genuine product of different human minds as the ordinary writings of men are the works of their authors; therefore, there is in matter and manner, an unconstrained, natural, life-like diversity. It was God who "spake unto the fathers," but it was "by the prophets," that He spoke; not by their tongues only, but their understandings, memories, tastes; in short, all that constituted the men. There is as much individuality in the books of Scripture as in other books. . . . As are the articulating lips of the soul whose thoughts they utter, so are the prophets to the Holy Spirit whose mind they reveal.

Every writer was chosen by God, as well as every word. He had a purpose to serve by the disposition, the acquirements, and experience of each. The education of Moses as one of the royal race of Egypt was a qualification necessary to the leader of the Exodus, and the writer of the Pentateuch. The experience of David, with its successive stages, like geologic strata, touching each other in abrupt

contrast, first as a shepherd youth, then as a fugitive warrior, and last as a victorious king, was a qualification indispensable to the sweet singer of Israel. God needed a human spirit as a mould to cast consolation in, for every kindred in every age. He chose one whose experience was a compound of meekness and might, of deep distress and jubilant victory.

Solomon did not, like David, pass his youth in pastoral simplicity, and his early manhood under cruel persecution. Solomon could not have written the twenty-third psalm—"The Lord is my Shepherd;" nor the fifty-seventh—a psalm of David when he fled from Saul in the cave. His experience would never have suggested the plaintive strains of the nintieth psalm—a prayer of Moses the man of God—"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place." But, on the other hand, Solomon went through a peculiar experience of his own, and God, who in nature gives sweet fruit to man through the root of a sour crab, when a new nature has been engrafted on the upper stem, did not disdain to bring forth fruits of righteousness through those parts of the king's experience that cleaved most closely to the dust. None of all the prophets could have written the Proverbs or the Preacher; for God is not wont, even in His miraculous interpositions, to make a fig tree bear olive berries, or a vine figs; every creature acts after its kind. When Solomon delineated the eager efforts of men in search of happiness, and the disappointment which ensued, he could say, like Bunyan, of that fierce and fruitless war, "I was there." The heights of human prosperity he had reached; the paths of human learning he had trodden, farther than any of his day; the pleasures of wealth and power and pomp he had tasted in all their variety. No spring of earthly delight could be named of whose waters he had not deeply drunk. This is the man whom God has chosen as the schoolmaster to teach us the vanity of the world when it is made the portion of a soul, and He hath done all things well. The

man who has drained the cup of pleasure can best tell the taste of its dregs.

The choice of Solomon as one of the writers of the Bible, at first sight startles, but on deeper study instructs. We would have expected a man of more exemplary life—a man of uniform holiness. It is certain that in the main, the vessels which the Spirit used were sanctified vessels—"Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But as they were all corrupt at first, so there were diversities in the times and degrees of their sanctification. Some were carried so near perfection in the body that human eyes could no longer discern spot or wrinkle ; in others the principle of grace was so largely overlaid with earthliness, that observers were left in doubt whether they had been turned to the Lord's side at all. But the diversity in all its extent is like the other ways of God ; and He knows how to make either extreme fall into its place in the concert of His praise. He who made Saul an apostle did not disdain to use Solomon as a prophet. Very diverse were the two men, and very diverse in their life course ; yet in one thing they are perfectly alike. Together in glory now they know themselves to have been only sinners, and agree in ascribing all their salvation to the mercy of God.

Moreover, although good men wrote the Bible, our faith in the Bible does not rest on the goodness of the men who wrote it. The fatal facility with which men glide into the worship of men may suggest another reason why some channels chosen for conveying the mind of God were marred by glaring deficiencies. Among many earthen vessels, in various measures purged of their filthiness, may not the Divine Administrator in wisdom select for actual use some of the least pure, in order by that grosser argument to force into grosser minds the conviction that the excellency of the power is all of God ? If all the writers of the Bible had been perfect in holiness, if no stain of sin could be traced on their

character, no error noted in their life, it is certain that the Bible would not have served all the purposes which it now serves among men. It would have been God-like indeed, in matter and in mould, but it would not have reached down to the low estate of man—it would not have penetrated to the sores of the human heart. For engraving the life-lessons of His word our Father uses only diamonds; but in every diamond there is a flaw, in some a greater and in some a less; and who shall dare to dictate to the Omniscient the measure of the defect that binds Him to fling the instrument as a useless thing away?

When God would leave on my mind in youth the lessons that the pleasures of sin are barbed arrows, he uses that same Solomon as the die to indent it in. I mark the wisdom of the choice. I get and keep the lesson, but the homage of my soul goes to God who gave it, and not to Solomon, the instrument through which it came. God can make man's wrath to praise Him, and their vanity too. He can make the clouds bear some benefits to the earth, which the sun cannot bestow. He can make brine serve some purposes in nature which sweet water could not fulfil. So, practical lessons on some subjects come better through the heart and lips of the weary repentant king, than through a man who had tasted fewer pleasures, and led a more even life.

Two principles cover the whole case. "All things are of God," and "All things are for your sakes." We can never be sufficiently familiar with these two:—(1). The universality of God's government; and (2) the special use for His own people to which He turns every person and every thing. All Solomon's wisdom and power, and glory and pleasure, were an elaborate writing by the finger of God, containing a needful lesson to His children. The wisdom which we are invited to hear is Divine wisdom; the complicated life-experience of Solomon is the machinery of articulation

employed to convey it to the ears of men. In casting some of the separate letters, the king may have been seeking only his own pleasure, yet the whole, when cast, are set by the Spirit so that they give forth an important page of the word of truth.

The thought recurs that the king of Jerusalem was not from his antecedents qualified to sit in the chair of authority and teach morality to mankind. No, he was not; and perhaps on that very account the morality which he taught is all the more impressive. Here is a marvel—not a line of Solomon's writings tends to palliate Solomon's sins. How do you account for this? The errors and follies were his own; they were evil. But out of them all the All-wise has brought good. The glaring imperfections of the man's life have been used as a dark ground to set off the lustre of that pure righteousness which the Spirit has spoken by his lips.

REV. WILLIAM ARNOT.

INQUIRING SAINTS.

I WAS asked the other day whether I had had any recent meeting for inquirers. I replied that I had not—that there were few inquiring sinners in the congregation; and I judged the reason to be, that there were few inquiring *saints*. “Inquiring saints! that is a *new* phrase. We always supposed that *inquiring* belonged exclusively to sinners.” But it is not so. Do we not read in Ezek. xxxvi. 37: “Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be *inquired* of by the house of Israel to do it for them?” *By the house of Israel*—that is, by His people—by the Church. You see that God requires and expects his covenant people to inquire. It is true that the saints do not make the same inquiry that sinners do. The latter ask what they must do to be saved, whereas the inquiry of Christians is: “Wilt thou not revive us again?” It is a blessed state of things when the people

of God are inquiring. It is good for themselves, and it has a most benign influence on others. When the people of God inquire, presently the impenitent begin to inquire. That question: "Wilt thou not revive us?" is soon followed by the other: "What must I do to be saved?" Yes, when saints become anxious, it is not long ere sinners become anxious. The inquiry of three thousand on the day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" was preceded by the inquiry of the one hundred and twenty, who "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Generally, I suppose, that is the *order*. First saints inquire, and *then* sinners; and whenever, in any congregation, religion does not flourish, one principal reason of it is, that the saints are not inquiring. *They* do not attend *their* inquiry-meeting appointed for them. The saints' inquiry-meeting is the prayer-meeting. In that Christians meet together to inquire of the Lord "to do it for them"—that is, to fulfil the promise about the new heart and the new spirit, of which he had been speaking. Now, when this meeting is crowded and interesting—when the inquiry among Christians is general, and earnest, and importunate—the sinners' inquiry-meeting usually becomes crowded and interesting.

O that I could make my voice to be heard by all the dear people of God in the land on this subject! I would say: You wonder and lament that sinners do not inquire; but are *you* inquiring? You wonder that they do no *feel*; but do *you* feel? Can you expect a heart of *stone* to feel, when a heart of *flesh* does not? You are surprised that sinners can sleep. It is because you sleep along-side of them. Do you but awake, and bestir yourselves, and look up and cry to God, and you will see how soon they will begin to be roused, and to look about them, and to ask the meaning of your solicitude. O that the saints would but inquire!

—*Selected.*

LIGHT AFFLICTION—WEIGHT OF GLORY.

Narrow and straight the pathway
Thy feet must travel o'er ;
Though sharp and thorny, belovéd,
It leads to the shining shore.

Where Christ in His beauty waiteth,
Waiteth to welcome thee,
When thy work of toil and suffering
Ended for aye shall be.

Press toward the mark before thee,
And be not turned aside ;
He will be always with thee,
Whatever shall betide.

To guide, and cheer, and strengthen,
To make Himself to thee—
In storm, and cloud, and sunshine,
A bright reality.

Each fleeting hour and moment,
Belovéd, walk with God ;
So shalt thou grow in likeness
Unto thy risen Lord.

And should the cross be heavy
Thy spirit hath to bear,
Faint not, the cross but maketh
The crown the brighter there.

Live in anticipation
Of seeing soon His face,
Radiant with love and beauty,
In yonder glorious place.

Where we shall dwell for ever,
All pain and sorrow past ;
Together in His presence
Rest satisfied at last.

A. S.

THE KING IN HIS KINGDOM.

2 SAM. xxiii.

THERE are two compositions in the books of Samuel indited at different times, having upwards of a hundred years interval between them, yet when read together they appear as two parts of one whole, the work of one mind—that of the Spirit of God, though the verbal utterances of different hearts, and under different circumstances. We refer to the prayer of Hannah and to the last words of David.

Hannah burst out in praise to God after years of heaviness, sorrow and reproach (1 Sam. i. 6); but when it had all passed away, and the Lord in answer to her cry had granted the desire of her heart (1 Sam. ii. 1-10). It is the first, though we can well believe not the last effusion of her heart in praise to God, yet in Scripture the only one of her's that is recorded.

Of David's utterances we have many, but this (2 Sam. xxiii.) is his last. Hannah might look forward to years of happiness now that she devoted her child to the Lord, and entrusted him to the care of Eli to train up for her God. David had nothing then before him but death. She looks back on all God's dealings with her and rejoices. David looks forward and hopes. Hannah speaks because of a salvation already accomplished. He is occupied with that which was unfulfilled, though all his salvation and all his desire.

Accordingly she celebrates God's ways of sovereignty and grace with the afflicted: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: He bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory"

(1 Sam. ii. 6-8). David's words have for their burden, the character and work of the king—the Lord's Christ. But no celebration of God's intervention in grace and goodness on behalf of His people could be complete, without a reference to that for which He had been all along working, viz., the establishment of the kingdom : so Hannah goes on to speak of the King, although the kingdom had not yet been set up in Israel. "He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His anointed."

It is at this point where she ends that David begins, and speaking by the Holy Ghost, as he expressly affirms (2 Sam. xxiii. 2), he treats first of the King, and then of His work. And so the whole chapter gives us a slight forecast of the King in His Kingdom from "the pen of a ready writer." Hannah's prayer, deliverance having come, is full of brightness ; David's last words are full of beauty, yet tinged with sadness.

The priesthood, which in the days of Hannah was God's appointed form of Government in Israel, had, ere David reigned, become displaced (*) and the kingdom was in his person set up. But *the* King was yet future. So, in speaking of Him, David declares that he speaks by direct inspiration—"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2). Nor that only. It was to him that God revealed the character of the One who should permanently sit on his throne. This is only in harmony with the rest of God's dealings with David. It was to him that the form and character of the House was revealed. It was by him that the Levites and priests were arranged in their order and courses. It was he who appointed the choir, and set apart the different officers of the intended House for their

* The high priest was still the representative before God of the people, but the king had now the first place in Israel. The prosperity of the kingdom depended on the faithfulness of the king.

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respective positions. And if Solomon was to execute justice on Shimei, and on Joab, it was David who charged him to do it. So now it is to David that the character of the King is first revealed. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (3, 4).

If such was to be the King, David was not the man. Tried by this standard he had failed, and that grievously. That Saul, made king by the people's request to Samuel, should have proved himself unfitted for the office might not seem so surprising; but that David, the man of God's choice not selected because of outward appearance (*i.e.*, after the judgment of men) should have been tried and found wanting, might indeed surprise some; proving, as it does, that fallen man, even if renewed in heart, is unfit for universal sovereignty. David's adultery, followed by the murder of Uriah, and his manifest partiality for Absalom, though that son's hands were stained with the blood of Amnon his brother, were proofs that he had not been always just, ruling in the fear of God. But might not his son, beloved of the Lord (2 Sam. xii. 25) be the man? Ah, no! David saw his family and confessed; "Although my house is not so with God." Young and tender, his hands free from blood, an untried sovereign was Solomon, yet the dying prophet could see that he would not answer to the description of God's King.

There is something touching in this statement as to his house. Death was near him. He was uttering these his last words, yet God's Covenant with him was unfulfilled. Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, these were of David's house, but the just King was still future. God had promised, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house,

and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in Mine house, and in My kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore" (1 Chron. xvii. 11-14). With this David was satisfied. It is beautiful to see the faith of the dying monarch stayed on God's word. He looks forward, not because he discerned in Solomon a promise of the coming brightness, but because God had told him that the light should shine. Sorrowful it must have been to his heart to own that his sons were not so with God; but comforting to remember God's Covenant which nothing not even the sinfulness of his family could annul (Ps. lxxxix. 35-37).

Hence he can express himself guided of the Spirit, and how beautifully! If the thought of his immediate family introduces a vein of sadness, the description of Him that shall come sheds a beauty and a brilliancy over everything. "He shall be as the light," etc. Brightness would characterize Him. What is brighter than a morning without clouds? What is fresher than the young grass after rain?

Following this we have the work He will accomplish; punishing the wicked, and rewarding the faithful. The first David views as future, he never could effect it. The second he did in measure, thus it has its place here as a foreshadowing of that which the Lord will do when He comes. For to Him only will the dominion over men in its fulness belong. "The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands" (6). Useless as thorns whose only power is to injure, David had often smarted under their thralldom. Joab whose hands were twice stained with innocent blood was still captain of the host. David well knew that such could not be taken with hands. His efforts to remove him were fruitless. "But the man that shall touch them must be fenced (or

fitted *i.e.* fully provided) with iron and the staff of a spear : they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place " (7). To one only of David's offspring will this really apply, to Him of whom it is written. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron" (Ps. ii. 9). "Thine hand shalt find out all thine enemies ; Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger ; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, the fire shall devour them" (Ps. xxi. 8, 9). He will "baptize with fire," and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. iii). The punishment of the wicked is the Lord's "strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21) ; and yet He will do it (Matt. xiii. 41-42).

To David it was a work of insuperable difficulty. For with the exception of the Amalekite, killed for having asserted that he had slain Saul the Lord's anointed (2 Sam. i. 15) ; Rechab and Baanah his brother, the murderers of Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. iv. 12) ; and Sheba, the son of Bichri, who lifted up the standard of rebellion against David, none of the others in Israel whose deeds of iniquity are recorded, are spoken of as punished by the king's commandment. So the language of Psalm ci., following on the series of Psalms xciii.-c., which foretell the establishment of the kingdom in power, can only really apply to the future. David's impotence in this respect appears in his pathetic exclamation, "I am this day weak, though anointed king ; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me ; the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness" (2 Sam. iii. 39). Against the enemies inside and outside the land of Canaan, within the limits of his kingdom he prevails ; but against the sons of Belial, among the people, he owns himself impotent. He had felt their power, and knew his weakness.

The rest of the chapter gives us a different subject, closely connected with the kingdom—the reward of those who had

been faithful. Viewed historically this catalogue of mighty men might have been placed much earlier in the narrative, for these were those "whom he had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel" (1 Chron. xi. 10). They had owned, and fought for and with him, when Saul hunted him as a partridge on the mountains, the Ziphites discovered his retreat, and the men of Keilah were willing to deliver him up. They had shared his dangers and owned him when in rejection, so their names are now mentioned with honour. It is very interesting to trace the moral order of events as given us in God's word. Long before David uttered his last words, two, certainly, of these mighty men had passed away. Asahel was slain by Abner, when Ish-bosheth yet divided the land with David; and Uriah was slain by David before Solomon was born, yet the catalogue has its place here as completing the picture of the kingdom.

Of the deeds of many therein recorded we have no account. But whilst all of them are classed as the mighty men of David, we see each one is rewarded with his place according to his work. Such is the law of the kingdom (Matt. xvi. 27). Is it asked, what qualified the first three for their place of pre-eminence? The sacred record informs us, viz., boldness in the wars of the Lord, and personal devotedness to their king. But among these three there was an order. The Tachmonite sat chief, qualified by having killed 800 (in 1 Chron. 300) at one time. Eleazer comes next for his bravery in retrieving the day single-handed, when the men of Israel had gone away, and "the people returned after him only to spoil." Shammah had his place next for defending a portion of God's land against the Philistines, when the peoples' courage had failed and they fled away. In these the claims to place were different. In what follows we learn of three who had a claim for distinction in common

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(2 Sam. xxiii. 16; 1 Chron. xi. 18), besides individual acts never to be forgotten on high. The act in common was hazarding their lives and breaking through the hosts of the uncircumcised, to draw water for their king from the well of Bethlehem. Death was braved by those men, perils encountered, the enemy defied and overcome. Numbers were as nothing when God's honour and power were in question. Difficulties could be overcome, dangers met, when the desire of the king had been just expressed. Against God's enemies they would fight, even if they fought alone. For the Lord's anointed they would break through the Philistine host, if only to get him a drink of water. What cannot boldness for God achieve when acting according to His mind? What will not attachment to the king effect?

The Philistines who dwelt in the land; the Moabites who often invaded it; the Egyptians, from whom God's arm had once delivered Israel; such are the enemies they encountered and overcame, and these the enemies of Israel, were likewise the enemies of the Lord. Thus they entered, with what measure of intelligence we know not, somewhat into God's thoughts about the Kingdom. The time was approaching, when a king of Israel should reign over all the land, and the different kings and kingdoms between the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates should own his sway. By their acts they seemed to anticipate this, and they did what they could to forward it. The acts of Benaiah were numerous but three only are singled out; the combat with the mighty men of Moab, the slaughter of the Egyptian with his own weapon, and the destruction of the lion in a pit in the time of snow. Nothing stood in his way when conflict was necessary. In season, out of season, such seemed his motto. Few too in such a position would like to meet a wild beast. Death or victory could be the only alternative. There could be no escape. He went forward and conquered.

Confidence in God, and fellowship with God's thoughts, seem the true feature that characterize these mighty men. None had a place in this list who was not mighty in warfare. The time to sheath the sword had not then arrived. Each was active, and each rewarded according to his deeds. And God remembered them. David gave them a place in his kingdom. God recorded their acts in His Word.

But in all parallels between God's saints and the Lord Jesus there will be contrasts also. We have David in his last words as an example of faith in the word of God. We have him too in his acts as a type of the Lord rewarding those who were faithful to him. It has been noticed how he was not a type in punishing the wicked. There is one other contrast to be noticed ere closing. David could reward his faithful adherents with a name and a place at his court ; but he could not preserve them from death, nor ensure their beholding the reign of the Prince of Peace. And if he gave them a place before him to sit in his presence, he could give to none a place on his throne. What he could not do, the King of kings can and will. It is now the time to be associated with the Lord Jesus as the One rejected by the world ; by and by we shall reign with Him. Asahel never saw David king over all Israel. Uriah never witnessed the capture of Rabbah and the final subjection of Ammon. We through grace shall witness our Lord's glory, and shall share in His triumph. C. E. S.

NOT as the world loves doth God love. They love to-day and hate to-morrow ; wearing their friends like flowers, which we may behold in their bosoms whilst they are fresh and sweet, but soon they wither, and soon they are laid aside. Whereas the love of God to His people is everlasting, and he wears them as a signet upon His right hand, which He will never part with. Not as the world gives doth God give.—*Selected.*

DID GOD DIE?

TRUTH about the person of Christ is of supreme importance, for if we are wrong in this we are wrong in everything. Truth, although wide and varied, forms one harmonious whole. Christ is it. Every branch thereof has its connection with Him, and hence the importance to us of learning the truth, and of holding it fast.

If we speak of the person of Christ we must always remember that He is God, the only begotten Son of God, the Word who was made flesh, the second person in the Trinity. Of Him it is stated that He created all things (Col. i.), and He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. i.) Any denial of the truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ must inevitably deprive the one who does so of any share in God's salvation. He laid claim to be one with the Father, "I and my Father are one." This formed the chief ground of complaint against Him, "Thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John x. 33).

That He was a man none disputed. All could see that He was that, but He was also God. To deny this is to affirm that He was an imposter. It is wicked to say He was not God, and yet maintain that He was a good man. Either He was really and truly God or He was the very worst of men. One or the other.

He was man. As such He had a beginning. Of Him as God we read, "In the beginning *was* the Word." A beginning to all things there was, but none to Him. "He is before all things and by Him all things consist." As man He was born of the Virgin Mary. She was His mother, she held Him in her arms, she nursed Him at her breast. His was real, true humanity, only untainted by sin. Born of a woman, He had no human father. So we read, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which

shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." To this Psalm ii. refers when it says, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten Thee."

In two distinct ways then, the Lord Jesus Christ was and is the Son. First, He is God's eternal Son; second, He is God's Son, as a man born of the Virgin Mary. But though this is so, He was none the less really and truly human. So He grew from an infant to manhood. He knew what it was to be weary, and needed sleep and rest. He was hungry and thirsty, and was also a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. There was no merging of His deity into His humanity, and no merging of His humanity into His deity. Both were in existence in Him. The personality was one—God and man. What a wonderful person! Not a God-man as it is sometimes stated, but *God and Man*. This distinction it is most important to maintain.

Of God we read, "Who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16). Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God. Death then could not touch Him. God, being immortal, cannot die. God is a Spirit. Angels are spirits. Man, too, has a spirit as well as soul and body, and spirits never die. Men die, it is their lot so to do. Yet Jesus said of those who are dead, "that all live to God." Death then can only claim our bodies. We read, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. x. 28). So and so is dead, is common language, and even scripture speaks in the same way; but he who would teach that a man's entire person dies, would be in conflict with scripture and fundamentally unsound. Jesus died, yet He was in Paradise the same day, and there to receive the thief. If then death does not touch the soul and spirit in any man, whether saved or unsaved, is it possible to talk of the death of God? Death severs the connection between the body and the soul. It claims the former, the latter is beyond its

reach. If it cannot touch the soul and the spirit, how much less can it touch the Deity.

We are also taught that, He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Can we connect the words, "Who knew no sin," with the deity of the Son? Impossible. Again, the passage runs thus, "For *He* hath made *Him*" (2 Cor. v. 20). The "He" is God; the "Him" is Christ as a man. "Who His own self bore our sins." How? "In His own body on the tree." He bore divine judgment, for we read, "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." Did that awful judgment touch His deity. Let us hear His cry, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.*" He spake then as man; as man only did He bear divine judgment. Sin, death, and judgment, never touch the Deity. Of Christ's sacrifice we read, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself *without* spot to God" (Heb. x.) Did the offering include His Godhead? Clearly not. "Without spot," should make that plain to every one. "Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Can we speak of divine blood? of the blood of God? Surely all should answer, No. Without blemish and without spot applies only to Christ as a man, and marks His fitness to be the sacrifice. Nor is it true to say that the value of Christ's sacrifice consists in His Godhead. It formed no part thereof. We are told in the Hebrews (chap. x.), "By the which will (God's) we are sanctified through the offering of the *body of Jesus Christ once.*" If we say that the efficacy of the sacrifice lies in his Godhead, then we rob it of all its value. God could not be a substitute for man, but He could, and did, provide one. A man, but what a man! One who was without sin, without blemish, and without spot. One who had trusted in God from His birth perfectly, refusing to exercise His power as God the Son to turn stones

into bread when He was hungry, although tempted by Satan to do so. As God, nothing was easier. He was also man, and as such He would be all that God desired that man should be. Hence, He replies, "*Man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. xi.) Humility, obedience, and dependence characterized Him, who was thoroughly devoted to the accomplishing of God's will, even to death. Surely such a sacrifice was of more value than a whole race of sinful, self-seeking, disobedient, and God-hating men could be. What have such done for God? What fruit have they brought forth? Let Rom. iii. answer these questions. His precious sacrifice was offered to God, and, as God is one, there could not be one God to be offered and another God to receive the offering. But, being God as well as man, it does enhance the grace of Christ in suffering and dying for sinners. One of the thieves who was crucified, said, "If Thou be the Son of God save thyself and us." He was the Son, nevertheless He would not save Himself. He drank the cup of wrath. He died for sinners. He suffered for us in the flesh. Who could have nailed Him to the cross if He had made use of His divine power? He was there as man, in all the perfections and graces of one whose life had been in this sin-stained world most precious to God. How He suffered according to the language of Ps. xxii. as His heart uttered the words, "Our fathers trusted in Thee, and thou didst deliver them. They trusted in Thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Was ever such humility? He died, and God raised Him from the dead. Need we wonder at the words, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every name should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Sometimes it is said of Jesus that He ranked with God on the divine nature side, and with man on the human nature side. This is incorrect. Divine nature is not Deity. *We* are made partakers of the divine nature. In the Deity we do not share. Neither is human nature the same as humanity; human beings alone possess it.

God and man, then, is the truth. Sometimes He is before us as man, sometimes acting as God. Asleep in the boat on the sea of Galilee tells us He was man; rebuking the winds and the waves shew that He was God.

E. R. W.

MERCY NOT SACRIFICE.

To Moses God had revealed Himself as merciful and long-suffering. Israel's existence as a nation depended upon a display of mercy on God's part; for when this declaration was made all but Joshua were engaged in making the golden calf, and transgressing against Jehovah; and hence were deserving of judgment and death. Wholly dependent, then were they upon His mercy. And failing Israel found this mercy of His a never-failing resource; for though at times He had to act in judgment to maintain His holiness, yet when they turned to Him, they found Him ready to receive and pardon. The consideration of such a subject warms and refreshes the heart; for it brings out that side of His character which we can well enter into; and it shines the more brilliantly against such an unrelieved background as Israel's wanderings and evil doings. But receivers of mercy should be lovers and dispensers of mercy. So the prophet instructed them, "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, *to love mercy*, and to walk humbly before thy God?" (Micah. vi. 8).

In Hosea vi. we have the pathetic yearning of Jehovah over His people. He watched, as it were, for any sign of repentance on their part ; reluctant to deal with them as their departure called for (v. 4). "Your mercy is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." It was transient and unstable. As airy as the fleecy morning cloud, as fleeting as the early dew, He declares it to be. In mercy indeed, had Jehovah sent them prophets to convince and convict them of a broken relationship, and to seek to win them. How little they knew their God. Where were their hearts ? "I desired mercy and not sacrifice," He says. They might seek to rest in forms and ceremonies, but such could not satisfy Him. Before this the question had been put to them, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ?" (Isa. i. 11). To *know Him* was the great thing, and this was impossible whilst they pursued a course of wilful evil, and acted contrary to His expressed desire.

Then, coming to later days, the rejection of their Messiah proved the unaltered condition of their hearts ; and manifested beyond all else that they knew Him not. The wondrous actings in grace and mercy of this rejected One were often questioned by those who sat in Moses' seat ; and twice does He vindicate His ways by appealing to the principle contained in the words addressed to them in Hosea, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice."

The first occasion we have in Matt. ix. Let us retrace it, and with adoring hearts too, for how much it does reveal to us of Himself. Matthew had been called, and making a feast for the Lord in his house, many publicans and sinners sat down with Him. Oh, dreadful sin ! What lack of propriety was He showing ! for not one sign of discomfort, not one feeling of contempt for them did His countenance betray. So thought those cold, unbelieving critics of His. What but unbelief did they manifest ? What mercy was He

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displaying? Unmoved He sat, blessed Master! in such company. View Him there. Hear Him speak. This must touch a chord in our hearts and awaken praise, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Not owning their true condition kept them from turning to Him, and enjoying His company. To the Word, however, He refers them, and had they known the true meaning of what was therein contained, they would have joyed in His action, and exulted in this bestowal of mercy. God was working and they were seeking to hinder. For a purpose He had come, and that he declares was to call sinners to repentance. Surely now we can understand why they could not enter into the spirit of His mission. Away must go their righteousness, and with publicans and sinners they must take a place. For this they were not prepared. However, their heartless criticism only brought out the exceeding graciousness of Jehovah's servant, and made evident the dark unbelief and disobedience which characterized them.

But let us turn to the second scene found in ch. xii. 1-8. Through the cornfields the Lord went with His disciples. They hungered, and to satisfy that plucked the ears of corn as they went along. Rejection their Lord was experiencing; and they were associated with Him in it. The Pharisees again challenge the action, saying that it was unlawful, though they produced no evidence to uphold that. How effectually does the Lord answer them. David's case was a parallel. God's anointed then had felt the pangs of hunger; and in partaking of the shewbread, which was unlawful for him to do, he did not experience any show of the anger of disapproval from God. Of two things those critics were guilty. With eyes wilfully shut they discerned not who was in their midst. One greater than the temple was present. The Lord of the Sabbath was there. Then, secondly, they were condemning the guiltless. Had they drank at all of the

spirit of those words, "mercy not sacrifice," they would have been kept from such. A carping spirit is like a rank weed. It grows very fast, and thrives on very little. As we value all that is good and true, let us shun it. Their hearts were far from God, and so necessarily they failed to appreciate the way He was acting. Freely was He dispensing mercy, and no need was too great for Him to meet. But in their hatred and folly these builders were refusing the Stone which was to become the "head of the corner."

And does not God expect His own to act as He acts? No amount of outward religiousness will compensate for disobedience or neglect to act as He does. Much Israel had to learn from the words of the prophet (Micah) already quoted; for God was showing them what He accounted good. Their whole path passes in review. There was to be no compromise with evil, no sacrifice of truth; they were to be tender hearted, loving mercy; and pride and self-righteousness were to be absent, for humility became them. Much we, too, can learn from this, remembering that we are called upon to be imitators of God as dear children, our actions animated and governed by those principles which He, rich in mercy, displays toward us. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. v. 48.) He who brought the fulness of mercy to man was "the faithful and true witness." Let us not forget this. No false affection moved Him; and could He not say as none other, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." Following in His footsteps with faces glory-ward, may we each be enabled to appreciate all that God may be doing; and have very responsive hearts for whatever His word may address to us. H. F.

AFFLICTIONS are the medicine of the mind; if they are not toothsome, let it suffice that they are wholesome. It is not required in physic that it should please, but heal.

CONFIDENCE—CARE—CHARITY.**THOUGHTS ON 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS.**

· LET us think for a moment how essential is confidence—lying, as indeed it does, at the root of every gathering of the saints, by enabling children of God to know and walk with each other as brethren, as fellow-members of the Body of Christ. Without it, what corporate expression of the Church of God were possible or, it failing, could be continued? And though we are not now concerned with the display of this, we can surely say that confidence is as needful in these days to enable us, few and weak as we are, to go on together—which we have got to do. If this were more clearly seen, how much more jealously we should watch against the small scandals and disparagements by which the enemy seeks to hinder the work of the Lord—against the many things that tend to weaken confidence. For in “one body” we know we are united, and have mutually to care for, and depend upon, each other (1 Cor. xii.) We seek to own it, that it is one, and surely too the work of grace in it for its edifying (Eph. iv. 12), for its cleansing and sanctifying (Eph. v. 26). On this all depends, and in this, spite of all, the Lord assures us He will not fail; and we can count upon Him for this, and find, even in the darkest days of which He speaks to us, five words of comfort like those of 2 Tim. iv. 5—“the work of an evangelist”—which shew us that He is still seeking worshippers, and God is gathering to Christ.

But we need much to be reminded, too, that in each individual child of His God will assuredly complete the gracious work He has begun (1 Cor. i. 8-9), for there are often things that do necessarily tend to weaken confidence—things of our own and of each other; but when such things abound to discourage us, we here learn that our hearts may rise up to God, to a grace that is above all, and so confidence be preserved.

But how good, too, when the evil that is seen or heard of among the saints has first its proper effect upon ourselves, and when we see to this ere we speak of it to others, or seek to take it up. Among these Corinthian saints how much evil was rife. And we know it was so with this honoured servant of the Lord, for out of much affliction and anguish of heart Paul wrote unto them with many tears (2 Cor. ii. 4), and in going over it with heart and conscience thus exercised with God, it was given him, in the taking it up on God's behalf, to begin with confidence. Great is the confidence we may so learn of Him, seeing His purpose for His own—the confidence which God inspires and will amply justify.

And God is then, even at a time like this, when one who has laboured truly and faithfully hears with sorrow and shame of saints turning again to ways that had made their name a proverb, hears of strife, and division, and evil teachings, and is led almost to count his labour in vain—God is, even at such a time as this, a spring of confidence; but confidence that will never be at the expense of care. How needful, too, is care. Think of the young, think of the poor, think of the isolated; and here, too, we must say that the harvest truly is plentous and the labourers few. “Lovest thou Me,” the Lord says; “feed My sheep; feed My lambs” (John xxi. 15-17). We labour wrote Paul, the love of Christ constraining us. Oh! for more of that care and service of which the love of Christ is the source and power. We know that God is love, and the love of Christ is that same love come near to us in a human heart, where “God was perfectly the source of thought and feeling;” was truly, so we say, in every gracious thought and exercise about His own. Whilst He was here below, that love wrought in patient service, in a grace that was above all slowness and failure on their part; and now in the glory we see how, by His Spirit filling His servant, it wrought, still in such tender care and solicitude,

giving such thoughts and exercises, and leading to such labours for them. And here, too, may we not all better learn (for we have all a care) to address ourselves to the hearts and consciences of the saints in grace and truth, trusting the ministry of Christ as a corrective of all evil and errors? How sweetly, and suitedly, and in how many characters, He is presented here; and this is food for the saints, milk for the babes in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 1). He is the One to whom alone we owe allegiance, He who was crucified for us (1 Cor. i. 13). Servants, however gifted and faithful, are but the ministers of His grace to us (1 Cor. iii. 8), and they are *one*. Of the greatest and wisest according to this world we can say, they sought wisdom and found sorrow; but we “foolish things” God has called and chosen; and in Christ Jesus made Him who is the source of our deepest joys “unto us wisdom.” To foolish things, wisdom; to corrupted ones with no hope in the flesh, righteousness and sanctification; to weak things, redemption. And so of power—authority, which the saints shall rightly exercise under Him in that day, if faithful now (Rev. ii. 26-27). So of the old leaven, He is our passover, sacrificed for us, and we are to keep the feast without leaven (1 Cor. v. 8; Lev. xxiii. 6). So of the resurrection, He is the first-fruits of them that sleep (1 Cor. xv. 20; Lev. xxiii. 9-11). And this engages the heart with Him, and in the light of it fleshly ways are judged.

Lastly, as to charity. Love serves and suffers; and though so active in this service and ministry, is not less beautiful in what it suffers and excludes in presence of so much in us and around us that is so contrary to it. And in this connection how sweet to meditate upon 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7; and here, too, our thoughts turn to Him who, above all, suffered long and was kind, whose life was so opposed to any spirit of resentment, emulation, envy, or self-seeking, in whom “love never faileth.”

C. A. L.

E X T R A C T S.

"In the admonition of the Lord" (Eph. vi.), refers to the discipline of the family. Every son of God we learn (Heb. xii.), receives chastening, because having an unbroken will, it is an absolute necessity. Also we are taught that it is a positive proof of love to be receivers of such, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." To day people like to give nice names to vile things, and hence the sparing of the rod, which by Scripture is called *hatred*, is at present termed love."

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son," for discipline has for its object the good and blessing of the child, so that "he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. xiii. 24). Thus speaks the Scripture which cannot be broken. Oh! for faith to truly apprehend that this is of God, and that He thus instructs that His own may be saved the painful experience of reaping a plentiful harvest of tears, consequent upon a sowing time of selfishness, displayed in having no concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of their families.

"BUT *now*, happy, brought into communion with God, tasting the sweetness of His love, instructed in His thoughts and affections, we measure—what yet surpasses all measure—this work of Christ, by the grace of God, which it unfolds. Instead of seeing in it only that which the sinner sees, all precious as such perception is, we see in it that which God sees in it. In the enjoyment of peace, by virtue of this sacrifice, we contemplate its value with the eye of God, and are nourished with all its perfectness according to God's estimate. For these thoughts and this vision are given to us by the Spirit to sanctify us—to bring our hearts into harmony with the mind of heaven. We see also, in the offering He made of Himself, how great has been the love of Christ for us."

J. N. D.

TEACHINGS FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

THE sufferings of Christ! What an association of ideas! The anointed One of God suffering! Who would have thought, who would have conceived it possible, that the Christ should ever have passed through sufferings on earth, and that submissively?

He could, and did by His word call Lazarus and others from death, yet He suffered. He could still the tempest. Just two words in the original were spoken by Him, then the wind ceased, and there was a great calm (Mark iv. 39). Demons owned His power, and left for ever their victims at His command. Such confessed too His absolute control over them, as they besought Him to let them enter the herd of swine at Gadara, and not to be sent to the abyss or bottomless pit, their prison house (Luke viii. 30-32). Yet He, whose power was irresistible when exercised, suffered here in humiliation.

A marvel, a mystery too this would be, had not Scripture taught us about it; but if a marvel to men, the contemplation of it, even in prospect, was precious to God. So prophets, guided of the Spirit, testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ as well as of the glories which should follow (1 Pet. i. 11). And it was of these same sufferings that the Lord Himself also spoke, forewarning His disciples as to them (Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 12; Luke xvii. 25); and reminding them, when risen, of the prophetic word concerning them (Luke xxiv. 26, 46). What He had just suffered had been long before foretold. Their faith in Him therefore as the Christ, far from being shaken was only to be strengthened.

Now this *was* the case as Apostolic preaching shows. For Peter in the court of the temple, rehearsing events which had lately taken place in Jerusalem, boldly stated that the

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sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ even unto death had been the subject of divine prophetic announcement (Acts iii. 18). Likewise Paul in the synagogue at Thessalonica averred the same (xvii. 3); and standing before Festus and Agrippa at Cæsarea he declared that he still maintained it (xxvi. 22-23).

To Jews it was a startling announcement that their Messiah, or Christ, should suffer. To them it was a stumbling block (1 Cor. i. 23). So whilst Christ crucified was a theme of Apostolic preaching far and wide, it is in those Epistles that are specially addressed to God's ancient people, that this theme of the sufferings of Christ holds such an important and prominent place. Peter writes of them, and the Epistle to the Hebrews treats of them. What the prophets had foretold, these writers dwell upon, pointing out the need for them, and practical teaching flowing from them. Of this last the apostle Peter is the special exponent, his beloved brother Paul dwelling more upon the doctrine in connection with them.

Let us look at this. And first we would draw attention to that which is stated in the Hebrews, beginning with the reason for the Lord's sufferings which personally concerned Himself. So we read, and what no man would have guessed that "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from (or, out of) death, and was heard in that He feared (or, for His piety): though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author (or, cause) of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him: called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec" (v. 7-10). By this, we are taken back in thought to that scene in Gethsemane, when "He fell on the ground," as Mark (xiv. 35) wrote, or, "on His face," as Matthew, who was present in the garden, describes it, and poured out

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His prayer to His Father, saying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

A second time He prayed, and His prayer is again recorded. "O My Father, if this may not pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done." And a third time, as Matthew alone has written, He went away and prayed these same words (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44). Urgent was His request. Thrice was it preferred. But no alleviation, no mitigation of that which lay before Him, could be granted. To His Father's will He submitted, bowed to it in the garden, and obeyed it on the cross. What it was to Him in anticipation we learn from the agony in the garden, and from the presence there with Him of an angel to strengthen Him. But what it was that He suffered on the cross, no mortal can tell. That utterance recorded by both Matthew and Mark, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," intimates a depth, a reality of suffering which none can fully understand but One, even Himself, the Son of the Father's love, and who had always enjoyed the full sunshine of divine parental favour.

He *learned* obedience by the things which He suffered. Gethsemane and the Cross display Him as learning it. "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." That was the prayer—that the supplication. "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." This tells us of His perfect obedience, and the cup witnessed of it. "He learnt obedience," we read. The Son of the Father learnt it in the fullest and deepest way. Then fitted by all that He had passed through, He entered on His High Priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. By endurance of the sufferings His perfect obedience was manifested. What He had learned could by all be known.

And not obedience only, but His holiness was by His sufferings fully confirmed. To the Epistle to the Hebrews

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are we indebted likewise for the knowledge of this. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people: for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (ii. 17, 18). He *suffered* being tempted, and His sufferings here again are not viewed as short of the laying down of His life. To Him, the Holy One, temptation was real suffering. It was not suffering to Eve when beguiled by the serpent. Is it suffering to us, who have within a nature which responds to temptation? But it was to Him, who died not yielding to it. The full measure of temptation He has therefore gauged, and having resisted unto death, the fulness of suffering as the faithful Witness has He proved. Have we here just a picture to contemplate and admire? There is more in this passage than that. Encouragement does it furnish to Christians. The Lord proved the full force of the enemy's temptation, having resisted even to death. He knows therefore, as none but Himself can know, all that is needed to succour (or, help) those that are tempted. A Stephen and an Antipas, learnt what it was to resist unto death. But they cannot help others. The Lord risen and ascended can minister what each saint may specially require. We can profit by His sufferings. He can fully help.

But more, of special association with His people we read. He is the Captain of Salvation. Others then are connected with Him—a band, a following, He their leader and they called to follow Him. David in the past was head of his band. He, and they shared together, and from time to time they must have had new experiences. Not so is it with our Captain. He passed through all His sufferings before entering on that office. "It became Him," we read, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their

salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb. ii. 10). So from the outset of His Captainship He was fully qualified to be the Leader of His people. Nothing which they as saints are called to suffer in faithfulness to God, has not He known. He can fully understand the difficulty, and can help His tried and tempted followers.

Just one more special reference to the Lord's sufferings have we in this Epistle. He suffered without the gate (Heb. xiii. 12) to sanctify the people with His own blood, a word especially for those then who had been Jews. Judaism was to be relinquished, and full Christian ground to be taken.

That Christians in Jerusalem had not done, as James' words to Paul make plain (Acts xxi. 20). Without the camp they had no thought of going—yet that step had to be taken, and the reminder of the Lord suffering without the gate was to be to all true hearts a help.

Learning obedience by the things which He suffered; suffering being tempted; fitted, too, to be the Captain of salvation through sufferings; and then suffering without the gate—the need for all this, and blessed results to us from it the Epistle to the Hebrews thus tells us.

Now turning to 1 Peter, we learn of practical lessons for all Christians, which are to flow from the remembrance of the sufferings of Christ. We may think of them and marvel. Men may contemplate them as depicted on canvas, or set forth in a crucifix. But neither picture nor crucifix will teach us these practical lessons which Peter sets before us. And who more competent than he was to treat of them, inasmuch as He was a *witness* of the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter v. 1). This Paul was not. So in every chapter of his first Epistle are they mentioned (i. 11; ii. 21-24; iii. 18; iv. 1, 13; v. 1.) And since Christ has suffered Christians may be called to suffer. Three grounds then for suffering does Peter enumerate; suffering wrongfully (ii.

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19); suffering for righteousness sake (iii. 14); and suffering for Christ's sake (iv. 12-16).

Hard it may seem to suffer wrongfully or to suffer for righteousness. But the remembrance of Christ's sufferings for us can help. His patience under it is to be remembered. His spirit is to be displayed. His example of committing His cause to God is to be copied. Moreover He bore our sins on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed. (1 Peter ii. 20-25). Cease then from wrongdoing.

Is it for righteousness that any are suffering? "Happy are ye," writes Peter. Such might commiserate themselves. Peter would encourage them. Here let us quote the passage, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts; ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear. Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing. For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit . . .

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter iii. 14-18; iv. 1-2). Very practical is Peter. May we take it up, and practice what he teaches. The death of Christ for us whilst freeing us from the guilt of sin, should through the teaching and the power of the Spirit keep us from acts of sin.

Then, is it suffering reproach for the name of Christ that befalls us? Trying is that to flesh and blood. Shall we

run away from it? What a loss would that be. Happy are those who thus suffer writes our Apostle, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on such. A cause for rejoicing it is to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings, "That when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter iv. 13-14). What healthy stimulus would Apostolic teaching impart! Holy ground we tread upon, as we are occupied with the Lord's sufferings. Reminded first and foremost of His atoning death for us, we may also find encouragement by the way, as we remember the teaching of both Paul and Peter on this marvellous subject.

C. E. S.

WARNING AND INSTRUCTION.

1 Cor. x. 1-12.

MUCH of the ministry and preaching common to-day, effects, if that be not its object, the setting aside of the offence of the cross, and leads many with unbridled minds and wills to lightly take up divine and sacred things. They have no sense of the enormity of the responsibility incurred by so doing. Profession abounds; ordinances are zealously observed and made to take the place of Christ, and thus resting in a false security souls are deceived by the adversary, and led on to their eternal woe. Needful, it then is, for all who profess Christ to earnestly challenge their souls about their ways, for practice must conform with preaching, our ways with our words. In the Scripture above noted, the apostle is found bringing forward the position and privileges of Israel, and the judgments that followed their folly and abuse of such, as those things that are written for our admonition who live in this day of grace and blessing (v. 11).

Already had Paul pressed the urgent necessity for holiness in walk and way, as incumbent upon those who preach the gospel. Plainly does he intimate that one might be engaged

in the high privilege of preaching the gospel to others and yet be eventually found a castaway (chap. ix. 27). Introduction into privileges by no means carry immunity from judgment, but rather a weighty responsibility; and if holiness in walk and purpose is shown to be requisite in a preacher, the Apostle would not be unmindful, as led by the Holy Spirit, to press the same solemn truth upon all saints. And to do this he retraces somewhat of the history of Israel, a history that is here shown to be full of warning and instruction for God's people.

That it is the same subject as urged by Paul in chap. ix., where he says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," is seen by the connecting word which should read "*For* brethren," etc. (ver. 1). To Israel he directs attention. Many were the privileges bestowed upon them, but little did they benefit by them in the end, for their hearts lacked that faith which would give them a real, living interest in them. Outwardly they shared in the blessings, "but with many of them God was not well-pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (ver. 5). Then certainly something more was required than merely being participants in these outward signs. And to mark this the apostle lays strong emphasis upon the word *all*. "*All* our fathers were under the cloud, and *all* passed through the sea." Outwardly they had shared in what God had effected; outwardly all had been identified with Moses the leader of God's hosts; and in traversing the wilderness *all* had partaken of the same spiritual meat, and *all* drank of the same spiritual drink, and to make the truth more forcible in its application now, the information is vouchsafed that that attendant rock was Christ. Notwithstanding that this was so, yet *many* were overthrown in the wilderness and never entered Canaan the land of promise. Manifestly, then, this contains solemn warning for all who would claim

to be numbered amongst God's people; for we have in contrast with the being baptised unto Moses and the eating and drinking, the Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper; and also what was true of Israel with what might be true of professing Christians now. Participation in the privileges of the people of God is no security against the judgment of God. Ponder this well. *All* had a share in those endowments granted to Israel, but *many* were characterised by lust and self-indulgence, and so miserably perished. From this experience saints of this present dispensation are to learn, for it is stated that "these things were our figures to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (ver. 6). Thus the record of Israel's ways is shown to be full of warning, and pregnant with instruction. Would any spare the flesh and plead their zeal in observing ordinances? Let such mark what happened to Israel, and note that the enjoyment of outward privilege must be accompanied with self-judgment, and not the allowance of fleshly indulgence. Grace does not confer upon us license to follow the dictates of our wills, but rather the power to bow to God's word.

In general terms the apostle had spoken, and now proceeds to trace a definite line of teaching, as he bases exhortations upon particular incidents which happened during the wilderness journey of Israel. Four events he mentions, but not in their historical order. Hence at once our attention is arrested and interest aroused as we notice this. The Holy Spirit at times conveys direct teaching by arranging events in their historical order, thus showing how God works behind all circumstances; and at others, as here, He records incidents in a moral order. But whatever the arrangement we know there is a purpose in it. We must seek grace to learn what God would teach thereby.

Of idolatry he first speaks. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them," and to the time when the people made

the golden calf does Paul refer. Yet not to the act of making the calf is attention called, but to the feast that followed it, when Israel indulged in fleshly gratification and pleasure. That Christians should be exhorted to keep from idolatry may seem strange, yet how patent a fact it is that such may be true of them. "He is the true God, and eternal life," says John, immediately adding, "Little children keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21). Now we can mark the wisdom shown in the quotation from Exod. xxxii. 6, for we may not go to the extent of rearing a golden calf, but yet may so allow fleshly desires and pleasures as to displace Christ in our hearts, and this is idolatry. But just trace the history of the moment referred to by Paul. Moses had gone up into the mount with God, there to receive the law, "and when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (ver. 1). They lost sight of Moses, and patience had not her perfect work. Here, then, is the first retrograde step, and we know that in the downgrade of a Christian the first step is the losing sight of Christ as the object for us now by faith to gaze upon and wait for. Things insignificant in themselves may occupy His place. Eating and drinking even may have an undue place, for it is written of some, "whose God is their belly." But with Christ the absorbing desire of the soul, it can be stated as true of us, though He be now hidden from mortal vision, that "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter i. 8). What joy can equal the joy of the heart that is engaged with Christ? Unspeakable is the word that expresses its character. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to direct the

gaze of the redeemed to that face in which we behold the glory of God (2 Cor. iv.)

The second event mentioned is that of Israel committing fornication, the account of which is found in Num. xxv. 1-9. Is there any connection between this and the preceding incident? Fornication stands for that illegal, illicit intercourse with the world which is strictly forbidden to the people of God. Had not Israel to walk in separation from the nations they might come in contact with? This they did not do, and consequently brought upon themselves the plague of which 24,000 died, or as stated in our chapter, 23,000 in *one day*. Tracing the moral order we see that the lesson conveyed is that when there is the renunciation of waiting for Christ, and He ceases to be *the* object of the heart, we descend to the level of the world and act as though of it—the world the friendship of which is enmity against God (Jas. iv. 4). Fellowship with Christ is our portion, and He will sustain in it, but if we have no sense of it, no enjoyment in it, wherein do we differ from others? If this be true of us, how soon the desires of the flesh and mind assert themselves, and we are found at one with the world. Keep in the company of Christ, having the mind set upon things above, and then the glorious charms of the Lord will indeed effectually keep out the attractions offered by the world.

But can a Christian consort with the world and yet retain his love and desire for the things of the Lord Jesus? We shall see. To Num. xxi. 1-6, are we next turned. “Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents,” is the Apostle’s comment on it. Dissatisfaction marked Israel. They murmured, they grumbled. Bread from heaven might be rained upon them, yet they say, “There is no bread;” for their souls loathed the light bread. Desire for what God had in grace provided completely disappeared. Does not this answer our question? With the allowance of worldliness the spiritual appetite is

lost. Then "Nothing but Christ," is very far from being the yearning of the heart. The soul is dissatisfied, and found hankering after the beggarly elements of a Christ-rejecting world. With this the blessing and happiness once known take their departure. How instructive is the order in which the Apostle brings these events before us. How solemn the lessons taught us in them.

There remains one other reference which seems rather more general than the others, and yet when we contemplate the teaching conveyed in them it is possibly to Num. xiv. that we should look, for there the people say, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (ver. 4). The preceding incident reminds us that they loathed the manna; this, that they desired to cast off their God-appointed leader. Is it not the natural order? When souls are dissatisfied with Christ as their food they soon refuse His authority, and have recourse to man. "He that eateth Me shall live because of Me."

Then, downgrade begins with withdrawing the eye of faith from Christ the adorable One on high, and ends with the renunciation of Him. Association with the world follows the first step, and losing the spiritual appetite is the consequent outcome of this. Solemn instruction! yet pregnant with meaning for us; for if any would question their application now it is dispelled by what the apostle writes, that "they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." It is easy to go down, especially over a hill of ice, so Paul would have none possessing an air of false security when found amidst so much that was tending world-ward, and hence presses his teaching upon each conscience. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Shall we not listen to his instruction. Holiness in walk he would have all realize is imperative, and the observance of ordinances Paul teaches does not save from the govern-

mental dealings of God consequent upon the abuse of grace and privilege. God's antidote against downgrade is Christ, hence the urgent necessity of cleaving with purpose of heart to Him. The flowers are attracted by the sun, the night-moth by the light. May the beauties and glories of Christ be so prominently before our souls that we instinctively turn to Him, and find it impossible to overcome the gracious attraction thus exerted over us, for present and eternal joys are linked with this. It is the running stream that keeps itself pure. Then, with grace active in our souls, may our prayer be :

" O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That, with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see."

H. F.

GLORIFYING THE LORD IN THE FIRES.

THERE is a beautiful word, shining out all the more brightly on account of its dark and gloomy setting, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah. In graphic language the Spirit of God depicts the condition of the earth, or more properly, the land, *i.e.*, Palestine, in the coming day of Jehovah's wrath. The word translated "land" in verses 3, 11, and 13, is the same as that rendered "earth" in the rest of the chapter. That it will be a period of unparalleled sadness for "dwellers on the earth," is evidenced by the words of verse 8, "The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth," while in verse 11 we read, "*All* joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is *gone*." A sorrowful picture surely, doubtless synchronous with the dire vistas of much of the book of the Revelation, see especially the pouring out of the bowls of wrath in chapter xvi., noticing the result upon men in verses 9, 11, and 21. And yet, despite the general gloom, Isaiah does tell us of some who sing and

rejoice even in that day, but they are as strangers in the scene. "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning of grapes, when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore *glorify ye the Lord in the fires*, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea."

Such language as this is hardly what one would expect to find used to describe a suffering, afflicted people, yet so it is. It brings before us the persecuted remnant of Judah in that awful hour of Satan's might, and when God Himself is allowing them to be passed through the flames of tribulation. Yet they will be able to lift up their voices in song, when all other songs are hushed, and to glorify the Lord in the fires. Surely wonderful is the grace that will enable them so to do. Doubtless they will prove the truth of the word of the Lord in chapter forty-three of the same prophet's writings, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (verse 2.)

If such is to be the triumph of saints in a future day, ought it not, beloved, to speak loudly to us to-day? With many of us it is comparatively an easy matter outwardly to glorify God, and to acknowledge His hand when all is prosperous and trouble seems afar off, but to do so "in the fires" —ah, that is quite another thing! And yet it is just at such a time that one should most enjoy the gracious ministrations of our great High Priest. It is then that the soul needs most to rely upon the precious word of God; to look up and contemplate with adoring love the Man on the Throne who has Himself known all the bitterness the heart can feel in a scene like this; yea, to turn confidently to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father too, revealed in

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the Son, and to remember that "A Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear." Thus, as we look away from self and circumstances, be the fires fierce as they may, we shall be enabled to glorify Him in them. Often we shall be puzzled perhaps to know why we are so dealt with, but the soul can rest in the knowledge that a tender, loving heart, beats behind the hand that wields the rod, that not one hour of pain, not one moment of anguish, could be spared us for our good, or we should not have been called upon to pass through it.

I do not speak particularly now of sorrow we bring upon ourselves by our doubting, distrustful spirits, and our lax ways, though in all this there is, no doubt, mercy too, but of circumstances hard and difficult, for which *we* can see no reason, fires in which God Himself has placed us, or allowed us to be placed, as He did the three children in Babylon at the very time that their faithfulness had been manifested before God and man. Yet these, how they glorified Him in the furnace, in a way they could not have done otherwise, and were there so occupied with the blessed "Fourth One" that they felt not the fierce heat in the midst of which they walked. Much pain and sorrow might be spared us which we sinfully incur; but much again which we might think could well have passed us by is but the trial of our faith, and in His eyes "more precious than gold," and so to be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ.

Be it ours then to be occupied not with the trial, nor murmur because of His way with us, but to glorify Him in it by lifting up a song of praise when days are darkest and troubles seem most sore. So in days gone by did faithful witnesses love not their lives unto death; so to-day will grace be given to gladly suffer the loss of all things if Christ alone be before the soul. Thus we shall know Him in a way that we could not have done had *we* been spared the afflictions we so often dread. In this way shall we too, as

well as a remnant in a coming day, "glorify the Lord in the fires" while we wait in patience for God's Son from heaven.

H. A. I.

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON REST.

MY DEAR A.,

We were speaking some time ago of the rest of heart which comes from taking the yoke of Christ. It is a subject on which many have spoken and written, yet how few of us have really taken it in, much less learned it practically in our daily paths. It is such a different thing to listen to and enjoy a truth as it is unfolded to us from the Word of God, from carrying that same truth out when we get into the circumstances where we need it. No amount of *theory* will avail us in any subject without *practice*, but I find in spite of all the teaching we have had on this subject so many do not see that in *all* the circumstances of our daily path God is behind the scenes. One to whom I was speaking of it some time ago said, "If the trial came direct from God I could bear it better, but it is the wrong doing of others I am suffering from. You don't mean to say God is the Author of that do you?" No, God is not the Author of evil we know, but then He permits it, just as He permitted Satan to trouble Job. If we could only grasp the fact that God is *always* behind the scenes and *nothing* can touch us, not an unkind word or act without His permission, it would give us such rest of heart. Alas, we who know something of it do so forget it when we get into circumstances which try us. We take things into our own hands instead of bowing to God's will and waiting for Him to act for us; and only make more trouble for ourselves; and get unrest instead of rest. The blessed Lord in that beautiful eleventh chapter of Matthew sets an example for us, before He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Circumstances were all against

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Him, as we say, but what does He do? He is misunderstood by His servant John the Baptist; rejected by the cities where most of His mighty works were done. But no complaint comes from His lips! How different from us! He bows to God's will and says, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth . . . even so Father for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." There are many instances of this sort in that wonderful pathway of His service here. You can look them up for yourself.

But there is one instance in David's history I would like to call your attention to. To my mind it is very beautiful. You will find it in 2 Sam. xvi. 11. When David is fleeing from Absalom Shimei curses him, and Abishai wants to take revenge for David's sake. But David says "Let him alone . . . *the Lord hath bidden him.*" Even David had learnt that lesson that some of us are so slow to learn. A child of God once told another of an unkind thing which had been said to her. With tears in her eyes her friend said, "Oh how much pride there must be to subue in your heart for the Lord to let you be treated so." Ah! the blessed Lord Jesus needed no correction but in grace He stopped to "learn obedience by the things that He suffered" that He might be perfect as High Priest, and also as an example for us. *We* have always need of these trials because of the *flesh* in us which needs putting down. And some of us have so many, because we are so slow to learn; but we have a patient Teacher. May we be more apt scholars!

Yours in Christ,

M.

It is not the bees' touching on the flowers that gathers the honey, but her abiding for a time upon them and drawing out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most on divine truth, that will prove the choicest, strongest Christian.

EXTRACTS.

“An uncomfortable death is not always a prelude to eternal woe: God sometimes undresses His children in the dark.”

If Christians meet on the Rock Christ as Christians, they will be happy with each other; but if on the sands of disputation, they raise a troublesome dust.”

There are two things we should greatly beware of—
“That we may never be ashamed of the gospel: and, that we may never be a shame to it.” (Prov. xxx. 9.)

What can be a better act than to speak Scripture? It were a wonder if Satan should do a good thing well; he cites Scripture then, but with mutilation, and distortion; it comes not out of his mouth but maimed and perverted; one piece is left, all misapplied; those that wrest or mangle Scripture for their own turn, it is easy to see from what school they come. Let us take the Word from the Author, not from the usurper.—*Bishop Hall.*

“There is such a thing as closeness of communion with God. We may be filled with the Holy Ghost. When this is the case we are powerful, not in ourselves, but in Him. Who would attempt to work for an hour in his own feeble human strength? We may plant, others may water, but God giveth the increase. In proportion as we are filled with the Spirit and have self expelled we shall be useful. There are persons who manifest in their lives the power that is in them impelling them to work for their Master. Their eyes beam with Divine love within. Their faces shine with it. Their tongues are eloquent with it. Their tears flow in it. Their whole walk and life seems to show forth the praises of Jesus. We may all have this power. It may only be found through prayer and sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning of Him. Let us seek it. The cause needs it here, everywhere.”

“ BE 'STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.”

Psalm xlv. 10.

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side,
Bear patiently thy cross of grief and pain,
Leave to thy God to order and provide,
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul, thy best and Heavenly Friend,
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He hath the past,
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake,
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul, the waves and winds shall know,
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul, when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears ;
Then thou shalt better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrows and thy fears.
Be still, my soul, thy Jesus can repay,
From His own fulness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on,
When we shall be for ever with the Lord ;
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

D E S I R E .

Lord bless ! yes, bless O Lord !
And bless Thy people all !
Thine own so dear to Thee, they were Thy Father's gift ;
As such they tell of His great love for Thee and them.
His still, yet given to Thee,
And Thou art glorified in them ;
Then bless us each and all.

We would responsive be ;
 We would in truth love Thee and Him,
 And be for both in this sad world.
 Lord make us more the reflex of Thyself !
 Thy life outlived in us.
 From evil keep us, Lord. Thou art not here—
 Thy father has received Thee above—
 But He who welcomed Thee on high has never closed the
 So we can have a sight of Thee by faith ; [door,
 And seeing Thee, our hearts do long,
 Not for a distant view, for that we have,
 But to be with Thee, to look into Thy face,
 To hear the music of Thy voice,
 To see Thy glory, Lord,
 The glory which Thy Father gave to Thee ;
 To see upon Thy brow, once crowned with thorns by man,
 The many diadems ;
 To see all honour, power, and majesty combined
 Wrapping Thee round, and Thou gracing them all ;
 Thy peerless excellence towering high,
 Adding e'en lustre to their lustre, and glorifying glory.
 Great God ! for such in truth Thou art,
 And hence we prostrate fall,
 Honoured indeed are we in honouring Thee.
 Man, too, a real man ! no myth !
 One that could weep, and groan, and sigh,
 One that could even die ;
 But One on whom death had no claim.
 But such Thy grace, Thou gavest up Thy life,
 So sinless and so pure for such as us.
 We live, for Thou has died.
 No wonder that we love Thee !
 Lord, make us love thee more !
 And may we say it, Come, O come—
 Forgive if oft impatient—Lord Jesus, come. E. R. W.

GOD REVEALING HIMSELF IN THE GARDEN IN EDEN.

THE dealings of our God with His creature man, must ever have an interest for true saints. By them we learn something of that which He is, and also of what He can do. We invite, then, our readers to consider with us for a brief moment His earliest dealings with him, who was placed as head over this creation, and by consequence was head also of his race.

One book, and one only, has ever dealt authoritatively with this. That book is the Bible, and the portion of it is the first book of Moses, commonly called Genesis. In its first chapter we read of the creation of man (i. 27). "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them," and, "He called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (v. 2). In the second chapter of that book God's dealings with him are unfolded.

A creature for earth, with an immortal soul, and endowed with mind, and an intelligence far surpassing that of the animals around him, where was he to dwell? and what was he to do? This chapter will tell us. In a garden, planted by God eastward in Eden, Adam found his home, Eden being the name of the region in which the garden was situated. To dress, and to keep the garden was the work assigned him (ii. 8, 15). Everything around him in the shape of trees was pleasant to the sight, and good for food (9). No arid waste was it, which he by patient toil was to bring into order, for a river went out of Eden to water it. His food likewise was prescribed, and provided without stint, and without toil to produce it. "Every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you," so runs the grant,

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"it shall be for meat" (i. 29). His place of dwelling assigned him, his relation to all animals was also settled. God brought them all to Adam, and he named each one. Articulate sounds were now heard in that garden, as God's creature man first pronounced the name of each animal. He gave the name, and that was final and abiding.

An intelligent creature, gifted with speech, and able to modulate his voice, was ruler over all on earth, and in the sea; nor were the feathered fowl that traversed the air exempted from his sway (i. 28). He could speak, and all the animals could hear him, but converse with a fellow creature was a joy as yet unknown. That however should be provided. A further act of the Creator took place, and woman was formed by the Almighty out of Adam's side; and, fashioned according to the divine mind, God brought her to Adam. A creature then of the same nature as himself, perfect surely in form, as well as comely in appearance, such was Eve, we may believe, as she approached Adam.

What had God wrought? He had formed man of the dust of the ground, and had breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and so he became a living soul. He had planted a garden and placed man in it. He had made to grow there every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food. He had put the man over the work of His hands in this sphere; and to crown all He had formed the woman, and had brought her to the man to be his help-meet, his companion. What happiness must have reigned in that garden when Eve first sat by Adam's side. The Lord God had brought her to Adam, who immediately named her *woman*. And God, as far as we know, then left the two together. Unalloyed happiness must Adam have now enjoyed. He could speak, and Eve would understand him, and reply to him. The *beneficence* of the Divine Being had been displayed indeed. No want, nor even any stint of supply was experienced by the newly created pair.

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But soon the brightness of that time was dimmed. The woman and the man disobeyed God. The serpent beguiled the woman. Adam listened to his help-meet. They eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They fell. The divine command (ii. 17) was broken. Their state of innocence was gone. Henceforward they were fallen creatures. Their state of nakedness, which had not troubled them whilst innocent (ii. 25), grievously troubled them now. The serpent who had beguiled Eve on the specious ground of being their friend, had done his dire work, and then left them, conscious now of their nakedness, to cover themselves as best they could. How often since that day has such maliciousness been repeated. Man, or woman tempted, they yielding, and then left to bear alone the consequences of their act.

And now Adam became conscious of his unfitness to be in the divine presence. No one told him of it. Conscience had spoken. Once at home with God, a stranger to shame (ii. 25), and speaking his mind freely in the presence of his Creator, as he named the animals first, and then his help-meet when brought to him, he now experienced that to which he had been an utter stranger, viz., what it was to be afraid of the Almighty. The last one whom he would now wish to meet, was the One in whose presence previously he had been perfectly at rest.

In their nakedness, and so consciously unfit to stand in the presence of the Creator, who could help them at this juncture? The serpent did not. To God they could not turn. Efforts of their own seemed the only resource. So they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons (iii. 7), fallen man's first effort to cover his nakedness. But all in vain. The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, brought home at once to the guilty pair the futility of their efforts. The Lord had not spoken to them, but they *heard* His voice. The fig leaves

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were at once found to be insufficient, so they betook themselves to the trees of the garden to hide from their God. What a change! Adam and Eve were afraid of God.

Could the trees hide them that they might remain behind them unnoticed? The voice of God reached them in their hiding place. He spoke and they had to answer. "Where art thou?" was the question addressed to Adam, to which he must reply. So from behind the trees the fallen man spoke to his God. The fig leaves they had proved could not really cover their nakedness. The trees of the garden they now experienced, could afford them no shelter from the sound of the Almighty's voice. Yet answer they must to the enquiry, "What hast thou done?" Eve excused herself for her disobedience because beguiled by the serpent. Adam threw the blame of his transgression on the partner God had provided for him. But no excuse that they could offer could shield them from the just consequences of their guilt. What they said was true. To God who could be untruthful? Before Him who is light no concealment is possible. Thus early in the world's history was it settled that excuses will not avail with God. By their excuse they admitted their guilt. Did the serpent hear all that? We must suppose it did. It did not, however, plead for them with God, nor take on itself the responsibility of their fall.

Behind the trees of the garden they remained, for God did not call them forth. A fallen creature in its nakedness cannot stand before a holy God. Again He spoke, and they heard Him. Having first questioned Adam and Eve, for each had to answer, God next proceeded to pass sentence upon the serpent (iii. 14). All three were His creatures, so He had rights over them all. And the serpent, who had parleyed with the woman, had no word to say to God. It heard in silence its sentence. But Adam and Eve heard how God could reveal Himself in a character not needed for man to know when in his innocence. He could

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be the *God of hope* for His fallen creatures. So the seed of the woman, He announced, should in time bruise the serpent's head (iii. 15). But God is light (1 John i. 5), so He passed judgment, but in governmental dealing only, on the guilty pair (Gen. iii. 16-19), announcing their subjection to temporal death, but saying nothing about the second death, the lake of fire. Their transgression could not be overlooked.

Should they always hide from God? What wretchedness would that entail. Naked they were, and their nakedness they could not effectually cover. The serpent in that matter could not help them. To whom could they turn? God now revealed Himself in a new character. He would work on their behalf, manifesting Himself as a God of *grace*. Eve, beguiled by the serpent, had distrusted God. Of Him they could ask no favour. But He thought of them, and He provided for them. He made coats of skin wherewith to cover their nakedness. They had made for themselves of the fig leaves aprons or girdles. God made for them coats of skin and clothed them. In the fig leaves there was an inherent defect, of which Adam and Eve, as they used them, must have been ignorant. For nothing short of the death of another can meet the need of a guilty creature, to allow such an one to be at home with God. The coats of skin were an abiding witness of death, and that on their behalf. It was God, we would emphasize it, who thus clothed them, and perfectly surely, since we read no more of their nakedness. What a rebuke to Eve must this act on God's part have been. Who was their real friend, the serpent or God?

A God of *hope*, and a God of *grace*, He also displayed Himself at that time as a God of *mercy* (22-24). In the garden was the tree of life. Of its fruit Adam had not partaken. Of its fruit *then* he must not be allowed to eat. For, had he eaten of it in his then fallen condition, he must have perpetuated his misery on earth. He could never have

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died.* God therefore drove them out of the garden, and by cherubim and flaming sword carefully guarded that tree, lest they should eat of its fruit in their sinful condition. Again we may ask, who was man's real friend, the serpent or God?

Now shall we read that history simply as a record of the past? Does it not speak to us of God's care for His sinful creatures. We see indeed how He could provide for Adam in innocence. We learn, too, that He did not desert him when fallen. He would encourage souls still by hope. He has provided that by which an ungodly one, if believing His record about His Son, can stand in His presence without fear of coming judgment (Rom. iii. 21-30 ; iv. 23-25 ; v. 1-11). Nor shall such be for ever deprived of the tree of life. In the paradise of God it will be found (Rev. ii. 7). In the midst of the street of the new Jerusalem will it flourish by the river of the water of life. And those who have washed their robes will have the right to eat of its fruit, being then in a condition to enjoy it without harm, as freed from the presence of sin within them ; and of their part in the tree of life will they never then be deprived (Rev. xxii. 2, 14, 19).

A God of *hope*, a God of *grace*, a God of *mercy*, such God proved Himself to be, revealing this step by step as it was needed. Interesting as all this is, it has increased interest as we remember the latest revelation of His nature set forth by the Apostle John (1 John i. 5 ; iv. 8, 16). *God is Light and God is Love*, is the record of that Apostle. The history in the garden of Eden shows it. Unchanging is our God.

*Death for man is the present appointed way of deliverance from the earthly sorrows attendant on the fall. To the saints death is therefore a mercy. By and by men will seek for death, and will not find it, and will desire to die, but death will flee from them (Rev. ix. 6). A terrible condition in which to find themselves will that be. What mercy to have guarded the tree of life as it stood in Eden !

He is light and He is love. He was that then in His first dealings with His sinful creature—man. He is so still after the world's rejection of His Son. In words of divine revelation the last of the Apostles declared it. In acts His dealings with Adam and Eve in the garden first demonstrated it.

C. E. S.

GOD FOR AND WITH HIS PEOPLE.

ON the selfsame night in which the children of Israel kept the Passover in Egypt they started on their journey out of it, urged even by their cruel oppressors to do so; for, thoroughly cowed at last by the severity of the judgments inflicted upon them by Israel's God, they are more than willing to be rid of a people who have so powerful and devoted a Friend to espouse their cause.

It remained to be seen what more He would do for them and how far He would publicly identify Himself with this people.

Sheltered by blood, the stroke of judgment could not reach them. God had seen the blood, and they in consequence were unharmed. The fact of the blood being required is the strongest proof of their guilty condition; and even so their guilty condition furnished the strongest testimony to the value attached to it by God. Of course there was no real value in the blood of the Paschal lamb, but it did point unmistakably to the blood of God's Lamb, the value of which is beyond any mortal's power to tell, and God was ever and anon causing some feature or other of Christ's sacrifice to be delineated before Him for His own especial delight, as also for instruction and help to those directly concerned.

The children of Israel started on the selfsame night as we have seen, and that night was never to be forgotten by

them. Henceforth the keeping of the Passover was to be observed throughout their generations ; and it is one of the feasts that will still be kept during Christ's millennial reign, when they are in the enjoyment of all that He has promised to them in the land of Canaan (see Ezek. xlv. 21). Moses was the visible leader of the people. A vast host it was, probably two millions or more, with their flocks and herds as well. It was quite impossible that they could journey fast, and the distance to be traversed was considerable. They were defenceless. Hence they needed a strong defender. They were ignorant of the way. Hence they needed a competent guide. Their supply of food would soon be exhausted, and the desert through which they were to pass could yield them none. Hence their leader must have enormous resources.

Moses (blessed man as he was) could never have accomplished the task. There was One, and One only, who could do so. Could He be induced to undertake it? Who would ask Him? He did not need to be asked, for He graciously took His place in their midst and made Himself responsible for everything. The first stage of their journey was from Rameses to Succoth, and a few hours would accomplish that. In Exodus xiii. 20-22 we read, "And they took their journey from Succoth and encamped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; to go by day and night." How long they stayed in the places just mentioned we do not know, nor what interval of time elapsed between their start on the night of the Passover, and their journey through the Red Sea. Time enough, however, to allow Pharaoh to recover his lost courage, and to marshal his forces with the object of bringing back again into bondage the people whom Jehovah had delivered. The military resources of Egypt were great,

whilst those of the Israelites were as nothing. Another stage of the journey had been made, and God had purposely led the people into a position which placed them, so far as sight and sense could judge, completely in their enemies power. Men would say "What bad generalship." But they do not know the resources of Him who is perfect in knowledge. He knew from afar the heart of Pharaoh, and all that he proposed to do; yea, He had judicially hardened the proud monarch's heart, and by one stroke from Him the power and pride of Egypt would be completely swept away. What an adversary to have! Yet such He will eventually be to all those who continue to disown His authority and despise His offer of mercy and salvation. But what a friend to have, and of this Israel was soon to learn something.

Encamped by the Red Sea the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and saw the Egyptians close upon them, and they were sore afraid and cried out unto the Lord. Reproaching Moses, they averred that their condition of slavery in Egypt was better than that they were then in.

Moses, a man of faith, addressed the people, "*Fear ye not. Stand still* and see the salvation of the Lord which He will show to you this day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The *Lord shall fight for you* and ye shall hold your peace" (ver. 13-14). Moses, commanded by God, stretched out his rod over the sea, and the waters were divided, and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. There was no room for any strategic movement on the part of the enemy; no outflanking could be attempted. To attack from behind was all that could be done. But here again the goodness of God becomes apparent. Their one vulnerable point becomes impregnable, for the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel

removed and went behind; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. To reach the feeblest then of this privileged company was absolutely impossible. No power of man or of Satan could effect it. Who could pass by, or get through, the God of Israel, for such it was, to lay hold of even one of that blood-sheltered company? Moreover, the path of the enemy was dark; whilst that of the Israelites was light. The latter could see. The presence of God was both darkness to the Egyptian and light to His chosen people.

So far, we may say, Jehovah has only acted on the defensive. He had taken such measures as made a real attack impossible. Now, however, the enemy would find that they were being assaulted by a Foe that they could not see, and by means such as they could not resist. Their chariot wheels are taken off so that they drave them heavily. Thoroughly alarmed they cry, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Alas for them retreat was as impossible as advance had been. Where were they? In the bed of the sea. That sea had been opened only for a blood-sheltered people, and would prove to be death and judgment to all beside. And so it was. Moses, by God's command again stretched out his rod over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared, so that the Egyptians fled against it. It was all in vain, for the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Was it a mere chance that the dead bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on the further shore? We think not; for God who had made a way for His people through the sea, had also hardened the heart of Pharaoh that he might pursue after the people, that all their oppressors might be destroyed. Israel saw them dead on the sea shore. Hence their deliverance was complete. "And the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (v. 31).

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, and no wonder. Of their joy we will not speak. The song was soon hushed, and the joy was soon quenched. Not so the goodness of their God.

They did not sing at the Passover, yet the moral import of that deliverance far exceeded that of the Red Sea. At the Passover the judgment of God was in question even for them; and the blood it was that sheltered them from it. But at the Red Sea God was for them and with them. It was only a question of judgment on their enemies and of Israel's deliverance from them for ever.

As a type this latter is not difficult to read. All who are Christ's have passed through the Red Sea of His death, and are now viewed as risen with Him. It is not a question of actual experience as was the case of Israel, but of real fact none the less. We are called upon to understand and enjoy a deliverance accomplished for us by the death of Christ, with sin judged and Satan's power overthrown. "So sin shall not have dominion over us." We have died with Christ to it. So can be, and are, exhorted to make this true practically. Dead to sin and to the law are great moral facts. We are alive, but alive unto God. What a deliverance!

We will not pursue this interesting subject, but return to our theme—God for and with His people. In verse 13 of chapter xv. we read, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." God, then, was their Leader and their Redeemer. Where would He lead them? Verse 17 will teach us: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established." This was their prospect. Elsewhere we are told that the land was good and large, and flowing with

milk and honey; but the charm of it all to every right minded one amongst them must have been that it was Jehovah's land, and where He would dwell and have His sanctuary. They were going there to be with Him. Meanwhile, whatever may intervene, He would be with them. But His being with them did not mean that they would not be tried. Nor does it do so to-day. Three days journey without finding water was not a thing to laugh at; and when at last they found some it was not drinkable. It should have sufficed for them that their journey was divinely ordered. God was with them. Faith could count on Him as it can surely do now. If found in the path of obedience, God never has, and never will, fail an obedient saint or company who count upon Him.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (ver. 24-25). Moses, taught of God, found the way to make the bitter sweet. So can we. Christ's cross will surely sweeten every bitter cup—Christ cut down in death. As we meditate on His sufferings and death how ashamed we become of our complainings. Then the bitter becomes sweet, the medicine food. God would be with them, but if so He must prove them. He desired an obedient people. If they on their part would only keep His statutes and do His bidding, marks of His favour they should all enjoy. From the diseases brought upon the Egyptians they should be exempt. Jehovah would be their Healer.

If their first test was the lack of drink, their second would be that of food. As a figure the application of the cross of Christ to all unpleasant earthly circumstances sweetens them. But Israel were next to learn that their bread must come from heaven. And that bread speaks to us of Christ, not in His magnificent glories, but here in

humiliation, broken up as it were into small portions suited to the need of God's saints. It was easy to find if sought for before the sun waxed hot, and was enough for the largest appetite, and not too much for the smallest. "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack."

What grace on God's part to give the manna as His answer to the complainings of the people (xvi. 2-3). In this connection too is the giving of the Sabbath (vv. 26-29). Industry on their part was necessary in gathering the manna. On the Sabbath rest was granted them even from that. Then it was enjoyment without labour. For us who have what the manna figured, it is also necessary that we should apply ourselves to gather our food for our wilderness journey, even Christ. But the day of rest, an eternal one for us, is drawing near, when all labour in this sense will end, and enjoyment to the full will be ours. The manna ceased for Israel when they had entered Canaan.

For us the recollection of Christ in humiliation will be sweetest and best. Nothing of Him can ever be lost. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which *endureth* unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27).

Another stage of the journey is made "according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim; and there was no water for the people to drink" (chap. xvii. 1). Faith would have said, "The Lord hath provided, the Lord will provide." Unbelief, however, filled the hearts of the people, so murmuring came from their lips. Again God in His goodness and patient grace answers by a fresh manifestation of His power. The rock in Horeb is smitten by Moses at God's command, and the water flowed forth for their refreshment. Already they had eaten of the manna, which, as we have seen, figured Christ as come down from

heaven, and the four gospels give us the small portions of Him, as it were, for the supply of our daily need. Now we are to learn of His being smitten by God. He had to die, and from His death life and refreshment flow. But if God in His rich grace has thus provided for them, even when if they had their deserts He would have forsaken them or cut them off, we are now to see that there is an enemy who will choose this opportunity to oppose and distress them. It was not the foe from within (the flesh as we should say), but one from without that assaults them, Amalek, who for us figures Satan. Joshua led in the conflict but could not overcome. Victory depended upon the acting of the mediator Moses, whose hands being held up by Aaron and Hur, victory is assured to Israel (v. 13). "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." God it was who gave the victory, but the sin of the people gave an advantage to the enemy, and placed a barrier in the way of God's being with them in the conflict. The action of Moses met the difficulty, hence Amalek is overthrown, and the heart of God is told out. "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Never would he forget this assault upon His people, "He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

God's people in this day have one who abides for ever in His holy presence on high, who is there as Advocate and Priest to espouse their cause, "Jesus the Son of God," whose intercession cannot fail, being based upon His own accepted sacrifice.

In the third month, we learn from chap. xix., they departed from Rephidim and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai, "And there Israel camped before the mount." On this mountain God would grant an audience to Moses again and again, and make known His mind to His people, and His desires for them. He had brought them to Himself. What mercy! How immense the privilege had they been able to appreciate

it, and to render the obedience which was indispensable. "Now therefore if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people ; for all the earth is Mine, and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation " (vv. 5-6). Too ignorant of themselves to be aware of their inability they make the promise, " All that the Lord hath spoken we will do " (v. 8). God now reveals His will, defining their responsibilities to Himself and to each other. Love would fulfill both; selfishness could accomplish neither. The law was holy, just, and good. Man in his fallen state, no matter how highly favoured, utterly breaks down. He loves evil, not good ; his will is adverse. A new covenant in which God will deal in pure mercy, giving also a new heart and a right spirit, is called for, but we must not anticipate (chap. xxiv.) Moses goes up into the Mount and there abides for forty days and forty nights. The people, deprived for the moment of their leader, give him up as lost, and what is infinitely worse, give up God altogether. They made a calf and worshipped it, ascribing their deliverance from Egypt to the work of their own hands. Did not Jehovah know all that was going on in the camp at the foot of the mountain? Yes, for at the end of the forty days He tells Moses all about it, and sends him down to them. His eye had seen all that had gone on, His ear had heard their evil words; but what He had seen and heard did not stop His instructions to Moses. And what were these? All the details about the tabernacle which was to be made that Jehovah might have a dwelling-place in the midst of His people.

What wondrous grace! He knew their worst, and knowing all had determined to dwell amongst them, sharing their wanderings in the wilderness, greatly prolonged as they were by their sins against Him. He might have to deal with them in judgment and Moses might intercede for them but they were His people and He was their God. Well may we say God was for and with His people. E. R. W.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

Now look for a few moments at Eph. i. 3. Mark, it is "*hath* blessed," not is blessing, or will bless. He has not given us out of His treasures, but He has freely given us the treasury itself (Rom. viii. 32). *Out* of His heart He gave His Son, now both "His love and glory are mine." "Hath blessed us—us! Absolutely nothing is held back, this is not responsibility, but the accomplishment of Divine counselling. Nor is the blessing here according to walk, or to be measured according to the fulfillment of responsibility. No, no, it is as unconditional as it is rich. There is no earnest of love, though there is an earnest of glory. All God's love is already lavished upon you. He has no love reserved for eternity, although He has an inheritance laid aside and glory to give. He had but one Son, and he withheld Him not, thus measuring His love to us, beloved. We have an earnest of glory—the Holy Ghost (Eph. i. 13. 14.)

"All *spiritual* blessings " are our portion. We read of only one person in the New Testament to whom the Holy Ghost wished temporal prosperity—*i.e.*, Gaius, one who was using his wealth according to God; and in that case the temporal was to be in proportion to the spiritual prosperity. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health *even* as thy soul prospereth " (3 John 2).

It is not to be God and fortune-making with the Christian. If you are getting your millennium now, you may lose it afterwards when it will be worth enjoying and possessing with Christ. It must be bearing the cross now taking up the cross *after* Christ. Heaven's rest will be all the sweeter at the close for the hardness of the times, the roughness of the way. No cross *now*, no crown *then*, no kingdom hereafter! Oh! this dreadful money-making—this snare of the age! As a Christian I have to work down here to get as much money as I need for my necessities, seeing that

God has (2 Thess. iii.) connected our working and eating ; but all beyond absolute need is recognised by God as a gift, to be ministered for Him. If I use God's gifts on myself, or on luxury, it surely becomes the "mammon of unrighteousness." Beware, beloved fellow believer, *how* you use this gift of God. Redemption has not touched a tenth part of your substance merely, but yourself and all are to be laid on the altar. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10). The beloved Mary of Bethany spent her most costly thing on Christ, and there was present on the occasion one who could tell exactly the price of the precious ointment, who could reckon to a farthing that wasted (!) money (Jno. xii. 4, 5). The scene was all too much for his covetous heart. Judas went out and sold his Master for the goodly price of an ox—thirty pieces of silver ! Our bodies are according to Rom. xii. 1, to be presented to God a *living*, not a dead sacrifice.

We learn from Luke xvi. 9-12 the *main* cause of the feebleness of Christians in laying hold of their place, portion, and blessings.

Why were these verses written ? Because so many saints fail to apprehend their "spiritual blessings," which are meant by the Holy Ghost, when He says, "that which is *your own*." God gives me money by diligent labour, perhaps, and as I use it faithfully, and employ it rightly, He can then commit to my trust the *true* riches. Oh, to be generous, royal givers ! to give according to the widow's giving—her "all"—two mites. "Worthy is the Lamb" was, as it were, her motto. The Lord Jesus, who was rich—oh, so rich—made Himself "poor," so freely did He give ; and the Macedonian saints, out of their "deep poverty" (2 Cor. viii. 9), ministered richly to the needs of others. Oh for more whole-hearted, self-sacrificing liberality—a love that will spend upon *its* object, that which costs the giver something !

—*The Christian's Path and Portion.*

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON SPEECH.

MY DEAR A.,

I have been thinking a great deal on the importance of our words. The Apostle James says "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man." But how few there are who do not offend in word in some way or another. There is not one of us but must feel the need of praying with the psalmist "Lord keep thou the door of my lips that I offend not with my tongue." Some offend in one way some in another. How much there is in the Word of God about this. We cannot say there are no directions as to our speech. Let every man be slow to speak. (James. i. 19). Ah, if we were only slow to speak how much we should be saved. The foolish word, the unkind suggestions, the suspicion would be stayed ere they passed the lips if only we were slow to speak. And we little know how we hinder and stumble others by our careless words. Those of us who are given to foolish talking and jesting little think how earnest young Christians are puzzled as they hear the nonsense that falls from the lips of one from whom they are hoping to hear something about the Lord Jesus Christ. One young Christian said to me some time ago "I should never have thought———was a Christian if I had not known it, such nonsense is not consistent is it?" Another said, "How few Christians seem ready to speak about the word of God." Another said, "They talk of everything but the one subject I care most about." Oh! how we need to judge ourselves about the idle talking. Let us watch against it. The Lord Jesus said "If ye love Me keep My commandments," and by His servant Paul He wrote, "Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting." And "Let your speech be *always* with grace seasoned with salt." But we are not all tempted to *foolish* talking and jesting. Some of us need to watch

against unkind remarks about others. Oh what mischief is done often by an unkind suggestion against another. The one to whom the suggestion is made had never thought of such a thing, but it keeps revolving in the mind, till what was a mere suggestion is told by-and-by as a fact to someone else ; and you all know how things gather as they pass from one to another, and if nothing worse comes of it, at least one and another is prejudiced against the one of whom the suggestion is made. "Speak not evil one of another brethren." Well, out of the *heart* come the thoughts. We want the heart occupied with good and then the speech will be all right. "Whatsoever things are . . . lovely and of good report if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise *think on these things*" (Phil iv. 8). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34).

It would be well if we made more frequent use of the psalmist's prayer "Lord keep Thou the door of my lips."

Yours in Christ,

R.

LISTENING.

"SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH."

When the world is busy round me,	When conflicting thoughts assail me,
And each wave of sound is stirred ;	And strange doctrines reach my ear ;
When the thronging crowd press by me,	When the sheep are all bewildered,
Onward by strong impulse spurred,—	And no trusty guide seems near—
I am LISTENING—	I am LISTENING
Listening for the Master's word,	Till the Shepherd's voice I hear—
Listening till His voice be heard.	Listening till He appear.
When the heavy clouds of sorrow	When God's truth is placed before me,
Falls upon the darkened home ;	With its holy words of cheer ;
'Mid the bitter cry of anguish,	But in vain my finite reason
Or the heart's unuttered moan,—	Strives to make its meaning clear—
I am LISTENING,	I am LISTENING,
Listening for one voice well known ;	Listening with patient ear,
For my Father's voice alone.	Till the Spirit's voice I hear.

—*Extracted*

“WAITING.”

Waiting amid the shadows
For the blushing of the dawn,
Waiting amidst the darkness
Till breaks the unclouded morn ;
Waiting that glorious moment
When we at last behold
His face in all its beauty,
Radiant with love untold.

Waiting with Him to enter
Into that bliss above ;
Waiting to know more fully
The sweetness of His love ;
Made one with Him for ever,
His deepest joy to share,
O bliss beyond expression,
Made like Him, wondrous fair.

Waiting we oft grow weary,
The road is rough and long,
But soon it ends in glory,
In rapturous burst of song,
From hearts first taught to praise Him
In silent night of pain ;
Now all behind for ever,
Earth's loss is heaven's gain.

Waiting, with deep heart longing,
The Master's voice to hear,
That thrills with joy and gladness
The waiting, list'ning ear,
Blest end of pain and sorrow,
When God shall wipe away
All tears from off all faces
In everlasting day.

A. STREETLY.

THE DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS.

THERE is an event in this world's history which will never be forgotten. Centuries have rolled by since it took place. Centuries will yet come and go, but remembrance of it will not be effaced. Much that now occupies the thoughts of men will have been forgotten, in common with those new things which the Athenians in the first century of our era delighted daily to hear. Who would now care for them? Contests too that have taken place in the arena, or on the battle-field, which may have stirred men's interest almost to fever heat, have sunk, as time went on, into utter insignificance. Victories gained, and battles lost, or laurel crowns bestowed, what will be the thought of them in the future? The victories of Sargon in Palestine, the campaigns of Esarhaddon in Egypt, the marches of Alexander, the reports of which doubtless blanched many a cheek, and the terror caused by which banished sleep from many eyes, who cares for them now? The historian may recount the achievements, but who is moved at their report? The one event, however, to which we refer, will never sink into oblivion. Time does not lessen its importance, eternity will not outlast the recollection of it.

That one event is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, upwards of eighteen centuries ago. How the face of the earth has been changed since then! The temple in the courts of which the Lord taught has for ages been laid low; and Jerusalem, in the streets of which He walked, has been, and still is, trodden down of the Gentiles. The Prætorium where Pilate sat to judge Him, the Gabbatha where He was finally condemned (John xviii. 28; xix. 13), with Golgotha, where He was crucified, are places which await complete recognition. But the fact of the crucifixion

is unquestionable, and throughout eternity will never be forgotten by intelligent creatures, however little some may think of that now. For though it took place on earth, and in the circumscribed province of Judæa, such a small province of the Roman empire, Heaven, and not earth only, has a deep interest in the death at Calvary of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the following pages we desire to remind the readers of the light in which it is, and ever will be viewed, by angels, by God, by the Lord Himself, and by saints redeemed by Christ's precious blood.

Angels surely witnessed it. No angel will ever forget it; and by and by, but who can say how soon, will be heard on high the full choir of the angelic host breaking forth in praises to the Lamb! What they will say was revealed upwards of eighteen centuries back. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands will be heard as with one voice praising the Lamb. Never on earth has such a numerous company of voices united in the act of praise as will then reverberate through the vault of heaven, they saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12). No half-heartedness will there be, no reluctance to give Him honour, no uncertainty as to His worthiness in the mind of any one of the angelic throng. All will unite in the homage, and that with a loud voice. What the angels think of Him who died, and in what light they view His death is no matter of conjecture. The united praise rendered by all of them round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, speaks for itself. The death of the Lamb is no matter of indifference to them, though they share not in grace resulting from it. The angelic choir is of one mind, and they express it in the presence of Him who sits on the throne.

Are they checked, are they rebuked, are they silenced!

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'Tis true that He who sits there says nothing, but is that homage distasteful to Him? No. Elsewhere in the Word we learn what He thinks of the Lord's humiliation to death, the death of the cross. "Wherefore," so runs the inspired record, "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the 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). So far the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the pen of the Apostle Paul. Exaltation was His due, exaltation has been effected. He who hung upon the cross, exposed to the scorn of the beholders, now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3). And at the mention of His name every intelligent creature willingly or unwillingly must bow.

Further, from another Scripture we are taught, how the world in millennial days will be called on to remember that death. Exalted now on high, His name to be honoured in all parts of the universe, there will be on earth a special testimony from God to His appreciation of that death. For this Isaiah liii. 12 we quote, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Men crucified Him between two thieves, and clamoured for His death as a blasphemer against God, and a traitor to Cæsar, little thinking that His death on the cross would furnish a reason with God, why He should have a *special place* of power and authority over earth as the Prince of the Kings of the earth. Phil. ii. 9-11 tells us then of the present recognition of that which was proper to be bestowed on Him in heaven, as well as of the universal homage that He will

receive in the future. Isaiah speaks of the position He must occupy in the future in relation to earth, but both portions plainly declare what God thinks is His due who has died. Angels proclaim that nothing is too great or too precious for Him to receive. God declares that pre-eminence and dominion are but suited rewards for Him. And shall not every true heart say that He is worthy of it all?

Next we may inquire in what light He views His own death. To die is not the proper desire of a man as Psa. cii. 24 teaches, which we learn from Heb. i., is language prophetically describing the feelings of the Lord as a man. To fulfill, however, God's will, He was willing to die, and, as the perfectly obedient One He came to do that will (Psa. xl. 7-8; Heb. x. 7). Then surveying results of His death as in prospect, He spoke with assurance of His Father's love, valuing the thought of it in consequence of His death (John x. 17), and told out His desire for blessing to others as He said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke xii. 50). The tide of Divine grace could not righteously flow out to embrace sinners except on the ground of His death. And do we not discern in His words to Mary Magdalene, entrusting her with the message to His disciples, something of His joy, as He spoke of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God? (John xx. 17). The Spirit of God by the pen of David had foretold that, when risen, He would declare God's name to His brethren (Psa. xxii. 22). Surely He began that in the garden when standing beside the emptied sepulchre.

Angels think of what He deserves who died, God also declares what He shall have as having died; but the Lord Himself is occupied with the rich results of His death as it concerns others, even His Father, and His brethren, and we may add, this creation. So centuries before His incar-

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nation Isaiah, taught of the Spirit (liii. 11), penned those remarkable words, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Honours, greatness, dignities—these do not satisfy Him; but to see the fruit of His death resulting in blessing to saints, and to creation—this will satisfy Him. Of what love, true love, does this speak! His sufferings, now all past, none can know but Himself. His satisfaction has yet to be completed. When all the redeemed have been called out, His heavenly saints for ever with Him on high, His earthly saints in everlasting blessedness, and this weary, groaning creation delivered for ever from the heavy burden of sin that presses on it—the consequences of the fall—then, and not till then, will He be perfectly satisfied.

And now what can we say as to His death for ourselves? How should we express it? Has not John under the guidance of the Spirit voiced the suited language for each saint even now, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His own blood, and hath made us to be a kingdom and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. i. 5-6). But let us observe the order here. The root of it all in Him was His love, a love unchanging, a love still flowing out. Then what has been done is stated—loosed us from our sins by His own blood. Third, what will be known for ever as the portion and service of heavenly saints is declared, made a kingdom, and to be priests to His God and Father.

But many a difficulty may Christians have to encounter, and trials of no ordinary kind have some been called upon to endure. Yet will be, or has been, the estimate of Christ lowered in the heart from that which it was at the outset of their Christian career? It certainly was not lowered in the thoughts of the Apostle of the Gentiles (Phil. iii. 8-11). It was not so with John when banished to the lonely and

rugged island of Patmos. It will not be so with any true Christian saint. Whatever may have been the pathway by which each one has reached the heavenly shore, whatever may have been the experiences on the road, all will join without reserve, and without one discordant note being heard in praising the Lamb, when He takes the book to open the seals thereof, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast purchased to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God a kingdom, and priests, and they shall reign upon (or, over) the earth" (Rev. v. 9). Angels speak of the Lamb that was slain. Elders add to that the mention of the value of His *blood*, privileged to speak of it as none save the redeemed ever can.

What is the right expression for Christians *now*, as they think of the Lord's death, Rev. i. 5, 6 shows. What they will think of that death, when for ever on high, Rev. v. 9, 10 teaches. What is the expression of the heart of each reader of this little paper now?

C. E. S.

CHRIST AND HIS WORK.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus" (Heb. iii. 1). In these weighty words does the writer of the Hebrews invite attention to the One in whom the offices of apostle and high priest are combined; for Moses as apostle, and Aaron as high priest, were, in their respective offices, but types of one Person. Good it is to pause and consider any subject worthy of being pondered over, but here we are provided with a subject that far outweighs every other, even Christ and His work. Then briefly we would notice just a few of the points touched on in this epistle.

In the first chapter truth of deepest moment and unsurpassed interest is unfolded. The exponent of Christianity, He who came full of grace and truth speaking of the great salvation (ii. 3), is shown to be indeed equal with God, for though found in this world as Son, having been born in time (Psa. ii.), yet of Him as such *God* makes the declaration, "Thy throne O God is for ever and ever," etc. (Heb. i. 8). To angels God had never so spoken, and since law was to give place to grace, the shadows be superseded by the "good things," it was surely fitting that the contrast between those servants of His who do His pleasure—the law had been ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator (Gal. iii. 19)—and the Son, should be vividly set forth, and the superiority of the latter unmistakably demonstrated. Grace is superior to law in every way, and He who introduced the dispensation of grace is seen to surpass in excellency those mighty beings used of God to give the law. His divinity is fully affirmed, and in this blessed connection.

Then likewise the verity of His humanity is equally set forth in chap. ii., with the reasons for His becoming man also declared. That He might die (ver. 9), and that through death He might destroy the power of him that had the power of death (ver. 14), are there amongst the reasons assigned. And as it is true that He became a man to die, we have, as flowing from and consequent upon His death, the mention of two lines of service which He would perform.

The word reads, after stating that He took hold of the seed of Abraham, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17-18). Merciful and faithful! What a precious combination of virtues.

Surely a blessed testimony declaring that everything requisite would be accomplished by Him. Propitiation *for the sins* of the people He would make. Succour He would likewise accord to *those tempted*. Well He would know of their need of this, for had not He Himself been tempted and suffered in resisting? And with this truth of rendering succour is linked that of His priestly intercession. Two distinct lines of service are these, and we do well to mark the difference between them. Propitiation is for *the sins* of the people, intercession is for *the people* themselves, and in connection, not with their sins, but with their weaknesses and infirmities. Our epistle knows of but one perfect sacrifice for sins by which He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (x. 14). Hence it falsifies both sides of Christ's work to refer to sins in connection with His intercession. But perhaps the mind turns at once to what is given us in 1 John ii. 1. A study of that will reveal that His service as Advocate is not the same as that of Interceder. The former is with the *Father*, and with reference to the failure of a *child*, the latter is with *God*, and with respect to the feebleness of His *saints*.

And there is another very important difference. Propitiation is that act Godward by which a ground is provided enabling God to act in fullest grace, and towards all if they will, since such meet the requirements of His holy nature. It was portrayed in type by Aaron's entering the holiest with the blood of the slain victim, and accomplished actually when Christ entered by His own blood the Sanctuary on high. So it is seen to be an essential part of atonement, and of this intercession forms no part. Eloquent Aaron had no word to utter as he sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat. Of course, since propitiation is absolutely necessary, had it not been made intercession would be of no avail, for grace and mercy none could receive at all, yet if

we would be nourished up in words of sound doctrine we must distinguish between them.

The blood taken in tells of a life given up, and since Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary (ix. 12), and has found an *eternal* redemption, it is an act once performed never to be repeated, and so remains in all its infinite and abiding value, efficacy, and sweetness. He is there for a continuance and so can be identified with His own blood; and hence John speaking of Him says, "*He* is the propitiation for our sins." Christ and His work are inseparable. "God sent His Son the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10), and herein we see love, for it surely is an inexpressibly sweet and precious reminder that God in the infinitude of His love would do all that was necessary for His own glory and our needs. That peerless, spotless One was God's provision, the manifestation of His perfect love towards us. Christ's sacrifice was, then, one that God could accept, for He offered Himself without spot to God, and His blood has everlasting validity. Precious theme! so overflowing full of truth for our souls, bringing us near to God with hearts set free to worship and serve unceasingly.

Of Christ and His intercessory work we read in Heb. vii. There we are taught of the order of His priesthood. It is Melchisedecian, and so Christ continuing ever hath an unchangeable priesthood. From this the truth is deducted, the blessed truth, that He is able to save completely those that draw near to God by Him. It is not the salvation of the soul that is here spoken of, but the salvation of God's saints throughout the whole of their wilderness journey. "*He ever liveth to make intercession*" (ver. 25), and so through all the trials, difficulties, and conflicts of the way to God's rest, He procures for us the requisite help and succour,

which on going to the throne of grace, as we may boldly do, we find. The verse of the hymn—

“ All the path the saints are treading,
Trodden by the Son of God :
All the sorrows they are feeling,
Felt by Him upon the road.
All the darkness and the sorrow
From around and from within ;
All the joy and all the triumph
He passed through apart from sin ”

expresses what the Lord experienced before entering upon His office of High Priest. But it is not to this that our chapter refers, but to His *personal* fitness to do what He is doing. Truly “such an high priest became us,” for it is just such an One we need. Infirmary and sins both belonged to priests under the law, but the Son consecrated for evermore is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” How we oft forget that His interest is unabated, and so fail to profit by His service for us.

Now to just one of the many practical exhortations based upon Christ's person and work let us turn. In Heb. iv. God's saints are viewed as journeying on to His rest. It is not spoken of as though it were a journey without difficulty and trial, and those on it are known to be encompassed with weakness and infirmity. Israel of old in traversing the wilderness to reach Canaan, had, through unbelief, despaired and desired to return to Egypt. Should the same spirit manifest itself in God's saints now when encountering trial, and realizing their feebleness? Ah, no! that is not to be, and to help and encourage the Apostle exhorts to the holding fast of our confession, seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens. And this *great* High Priest is Jesus, Son of God. What an incentive to hold fast.

Will He fail? Can He understand? Perfectly He can sympathize—

“Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sorest trials mean,
For He has felt the same.”

He is up there, and lives, yea ever liveth to lift us above pressing circumstances. Upon Him all can count, assured of His sympathy. In doing God's will He was tempted and tried, and though no infirmity attached to His holy person yet He felt the pressure of trial, and learned obedience by the things which He suffered (chap. v.) Then to the throne of grace we are bidden to come, not to plead for mercy, or yet to seek grace, but “to *receive* mercy, and *find* grace for seasonable help,” already procured by the great High Priest's intercession. His work is a reality and not a myth.

Interested we ought to be in such unfoldings seeing they so closely concern us. What joy it ministers to really know that He who has passed through the heavens is mindful of all who compose God's house, over which He is as Son. When tempted to give up may we instinctively turn to the throne of grace, and so have intensified in our souls the knowledge of the value of His intercessory work for us.

H. F.

LAST WORDS.

THE last words of those we love linger long in the memory, and we rightly attach very great importance to them. Let us consider some of the last words of the Apostle Paul which he addressed to his dearly beloved son Timothy. The tie that bound these two together was very strong. Paul loved all who were believers in Christ, and endured much affliction on their account. In 2 Tim. ii. 10 he writes, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that

they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Had the saints in his day been out and out for Christ he would have had far less to endure. Much, very much he had gone through from opposition in the world, as he reminds the Corinthian believers in his second epistle to them (chap. xi. 23-27), but what heart sorrow this dear and honoured servant of Christ had endured on account of the state of saints of God. To the Philippians he wrote, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21); and to Timothy he wrote, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. i. 15).

We need not wonder that there in an especial link between him and Timothy, and that the latter filled a place in Paul's heart that no other saint did. The reason we learn from his own pen, "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state" (Phil. ii. 20). At the outset of Timothy's career as a Christian, Paul had noted the faith unfeigned that was in him, and the depth of spiritual feeling that he manifested; and, as the years rolled on, Timothy steadfast and devoted had gained (because Christ was supreme with him) a unique place in Paul's heart. Yet even he needed to be exhorted. We will notice two or three things. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Hold fast does not mean let go. Would that many in our day would take this to heart. What was he to hold fast? The truth in its entirety which he had learnt from the lips of the inspired Apostle. He was not to be a gospel man only, nor a church man only, but to hold fast each and every truth communicated to him. Difficult it was then, and, we may say, more so now.

How was Timothy to hold fast? *In faith and love*, believing in the truth and loving it. He is reminded that faith and love are in Christ Jesus. To Him then must

Timothy go. To Him must he keep near. The soul near to Christ understands that to "obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Christ is the reservoir from which faith and love can be drawn; and divine revelation is upheld and guarded by every faithful servant in proportion as Christ is before his soul. "That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (v. 14). If he was to hold fast in faith and love he was also to keep by the Holy Ghost. Faith and love Christ would supply and the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us. No need could there be for failing to guard what he had been entrusted with.

Was it only the spirit of the Apostle's instructions that Timothy was to hold fast and to keep? No doubt the spirit of the truth is most important, but the very form in which the truth was communicated was to be held fast. And this is of the utmost consequence, for then if any pretend to possess the spirit of the word their pretensions can be judged by the letter, for the spirit and the letter are in absolute accord. If then the letter of the word be violated, the spirit of it is likewise. Timothy learnt from Paul's lips, we on the contrary can only learn from his pen, and having the written word we are responsible to judge by it, and by it alone, all that pretends to be of God.

The writer was once asked by a Christian, in irony, "Have you been to the cathedral this morning?" No, I replied, that is not high church enough. I see nothing between where I am and Rome. If I went anywhere else it would be to the Church of Rome, for she has an idea of church unity which I do not see elsewhere. "Oh," said he, "but Rome is so unscriptural." She is thoroughly so, I said, and so I shall not go, but is it fair for you to apply the test of Scripture to the Church of Rome, and refuse to use the same test to the established Church of England? In com-

mon fairness we must apply that test to all, and doing that I cannot be but outside them all. Outside, but with whom? Outside with Christ, and that is not really outside, but inside. We read of the Church which is His Body. Rome retains the idea of unity, but uses it to deny almost every truth, and has invented doctrines in flat denial of New Testament teaching. To these are added such forms and ceremonies of Jewish or of Pagan origin, that one wonders how sensible people can be so deluded as to countenance them. But enough, let the reader honestly study the teaching of the New Testament, and be bold to refuse all that is not in accordance therewith. No one can rightly expound the word who has to defend any system or practice not found therein. How many will excuse themselves by saying, "Look at those who boast of being guided by Scripture, and see how they are divided among themselves." True, sadly true! but how does that justify the neglect of Scripture, and in fact disobedience to it, on the part of those who so speak? Would it not be well to try and help them? Is it not better to try and do right, even if one should in some things fail, than never try at all? Excuses will not stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Let us own the word of God, not in theory only, but by absolute obedience to it in everything. Depend upon it, it is the only path for a Christian, and leads to a deeper knowledge and enjoyment of God and of Christ than most saints have any idea of. Difficulties there are and must be. Real strength will be required and earnest purpose of heart as well. How shall we get the strength? We must find it in Christ Jesus. So Paul tells Timothy to be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (R.V.) Smooth sailing it will not be; quiet easy times are not to be looked for, but conflict. He had to be a soldier, not a feather-bed Christian. He must suffer hardship, he must contend, and that must be done lawfully, or

he will not be crowned by and by. Grace is called for, and there is no lack. How blessed ! all is in Christ Jesus, and all for the one who will make use of it.

Let us hear the last words of a faithful man, found in the same letter to Timothy (chap. iv. 6-8), "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." Happy Paul ! Would that we were more like thee. The Lord help each dear saint to be true and faithful.

E. R. W.

ALWAYS READY.—A lady once asked Mr Wesley, "supposing that you knew you were to die at twelve o'clock to-morrow night, how would you spend the intervening time?" "How, madam?" he replied, "why just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five to-morrow morning ; after that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."

"There is an immense tendency to meet a worldly trial in a worldly way. . . . Where we often fail is through acting from impulse. If we think to plan instead of praying in real subjection to God we need to fear for ourselves. Is it not an outrage upon God who has opened His ear to us? And yet who does not know that this is the very thing to which perhaps, more than any other we are prone."

We see how much a man *has*, and therefore we envy him ; did we see how little he *enjoys*, we would rather pity him.

THE DESTROYER OF A NEIGHBOUR.

"An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour."

Prov. xi. 9.

AN untrue man is the moral murderer, his mouth the lethal weapon, and his neighbour the victim. Horrid employment! For what purpose have we been placed in the world? Look unto Jesus, and learn by His life what is your errand here. He came to seek and to save the lost. He went about doing good. Let no man deceive himself with words. Nothing in nature is surer and truer than this, that Christians are like Christ; and they who are not like Christ are not Christians. Let that mind which was in Him be also found in you. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. The destroyers of a neighbour are as far from the track of Jesus as men in this life can be. Beware of carrying deadly weapons. For what end did God give to man, and man alone, a speaking mouth? The Maker of that tongue meant it not to be a dart to pierce a brother with. Remember every morning who gave you that wonderful instrument, and how He intended it to be used. When a kind parent sends to his distant child a case of curious mechanical instruments, he takes care to send along with them printed "directions for use." Even such a set of directions has our Father in heaven sent to us along with a case of cunning instruments which our living body contains. Look into the directions and see what is written opposite the mouth and tongue; for "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15). Every dear child will do what his Father bids him. He tries the edge of the weapon on truth to honour the giver God, and on love to soothe the sorrows of brother men. The tongue is one, and that not the least of the ten talents. "Occupy till I come" is the condition of the loan; near though unseen is the day of reckoning.

REV. W. ARNOT.