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THE
Christian's Helper.

"By love serve one another"—Gal. v. 13.

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AFTER THE FLOOD.

Gen. viii. 20—ix. 17.

No record but one have we of the daily life of the antediluvians, but *that* one we must call authoritative. It is the record of One, Who with reverence we may call an eye-witness. "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark" (Matt. xxiv. 38). Utterly careless as to the future, unmindful of the near end of the time of the longsuffering of God, so they lived. The ark was preparing, but which of them felt any concern about it? That ark, when ready, received its living freight, and food for all its inmates was duly stored in its capacious interior. Animal after animal, two of each kind, went in; of unclean beasts by pairs, and of clean by sevens, room being found for all. Then Noah and his sons, he and they with their wives, eight souls in all, entered the vessel, and the door was shut, for God shut them in.

As yet the flood had not come, nor, we may believe, was there any sign of the coming deluge. All who were to be inside were safely housed, whilst the world of the ungodly, as Peter (2 Pet. ii. 5) describes them, went on in their careless ways, regardless of the threatened judgment, heedless, too, of the near approach of death. "They knew not," the Lord said, "until the flood came and took them all away" (Matt. xxiv. 39). God's word to Noah came true. Doubtless he had often proclaimed it during the years of the Divine longsuffering, "Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die" (Gen.

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vi. 17). Noah entered the ark with the earth teeming with life, but of all that he left outside he saw none again for ever.

“ In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened ” (Gen. vii. 11). In the six hundredth and first year, in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, God spake to Noah and his sons to come forth from the ark (Gen. viii. 14-16). A year and ten days elapsed between the first outbreak of the waters and the earth becoming dry enough for Noah and those with him to go forth from the ark. What a shelter had it been—God’s provision that men and animals should not wholly perish from the earth by the *flood*; nor did any creature die in the ark. All came forth that had gone in (viii. 19).

Into what a scene was the little company of eight souls now launched. They had last known the world abounding in vegetation and in all kinds of animal life. They knew it now, not, indeed, as a wilderness, for vegetation had revived, but as a wide expanse, as far as eye could see, without man or animals of any kind save those that had been kept alive in the ark. Solitude, of course, it was not, for they were a company of eight. Companionship, too, they could enjoy, for each man had his wife, the helpmeet of his life. Yet it must, we think, have been strange to find themselves the only representatives of the human race, where so many had once lived, but, alas, in utter disregard as to the future.

But *they* had been preserved. And now what must have been their thoughts and feelings, we may gather

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from the altar Noah built, and offered thereon of every clean beast and of every clean fowl burnt offerings to their God. Their first united act on leaving the ark was one of worship, and surely of thanksgiving. Their offerings expressed that, though no word very likely was uttered. But to God there was far more in those burnt offerings than that which they could understand. They spake to Him of the future self surrender in sacrifice of His beloved Son. A sweet savour He smelt, as the smoke of that sacrifice ascended heavenward. And He said, but said in His heart, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake: for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (viii. 21-22).

God had cursed the ground after the fall (iii. 17), and thorns and thistles was it to bring forth unto Adam, accompanied, however, by the herb of the field, the appointed food for the man and his descendants. God had also cursed Cain from the ground, that it should not yield to him its strength (iv. 11-12). But such dealing on God's part would not be repeated, for man was not bettered by it, the imagination of his heart being evil from his youth. Neither should a flood destroy all flesh, as it had done, the ark's occupants excepted.

But why such a change in governmental dealing? Man was no better. Noah's sons were not ever said to be righteous as their father was (vii. 1). It was not any good seen in them. It was not even Noah's righteousness that induced this change, nor any prayer, if there had

been one, offered up at that altar. It was simply and solely the sacrifice in prospect that was there foreshadowed, the sacrifice of God's Son.

But speaking to Himself was not all. God also spoke to the little company which had assembled round the altar. And they surely heard what He said, as for the first time He spoke to Noah's sons as well as to Noah himself. And He spoke in a manner that no one had heard since the fall. Before it God blessed the fish in the sea and the fowls of the air (Gen. i. 22), He blessed also Adam and Eve (28); and blessed the seventh day (ii. 3). He could bless what He had created, as it came forth from His hand. He could bless what He had instituted, as the Sabbatic rest. But how could He bless fallen man? No antediluvian had been blessed by God since Adam's fall. It was surely a sound foreign to them all, till the little company around the altar heard the Divine Being opening His mouth in blessing.

And now surely without waiting to be asked, without a prayer, that we know of, ascending up to Him, He, who had watched over them in the ark, proceeded to bless both Noah and his sons, associating the latter with the righteous man, their father. Man in his nature was unchanged (viii. 21). How then could God bless them? The secret lay in His acceptance of the sacrifice. With the sweet savour of that rising up before Him God blessed them, and that at once. Nor was it a stinted blessing. It is true Noah was not the head of a race, as Adam was. He could never therefore have the place here in which Adam was put, yet in one way a fuller blessing was bestowed than Adam had ever known.

We quote the terms of the Divine communication:

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“ Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea ; into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require ; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man ; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of God made He man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply ; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein ” (ix. 2-7).

We have said Noah was not a head as Adam was. We miss therefore the significant words addressed to Adam when God blessed him, “ and subdue it,” *i.e.*, the earth. We miss, too, the words in relation to all the lower animals, “ and have dominion over the fish of the sea,” etc. Headship, as we have said, was not conferred on Noah. Was anarchy then to reign, and the animals to defy man ? God provided against that by putting the fear of man in every animal on land, in the air, and in the waters. But a grant, much fuller than Adam had received, Noah and his sons were to enjoy. Before the fall the fruits were given to Adam. After the fall, having sinned through them, Adam was deprived of them. Now to Noah and to his sons God gave of everything to eat, even as the green herb which they had hitherto been allowed. No animal food even was kept from them.

But as in Eden there was one restriction, so was there one now. Blood was forbidden. With the sweet savour of the sacrifice before him how richly, then, did God bless them!

Full, indeed, was this grant. Nothing either in the animal or vegetable kingdom was withheld, and all on the ground of the accepted sacrifice. Still that grant continues in force, but with the one restriction uncanceled. Nothing, writes the Apostle Paul, was to the Christian unclean of itself (Rom. xiv. 14). Again he tells us, that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4-5). "Sanctified by the Word of God"! This takes us back in thought to Gen. ix. 3. But the one restriction then made remains in force still, as the Apostolic letter to the Gentile converts reminds us (Acts xv. 20). Blood is the Life. That belongs to God. So we take it that is the reason of its exception.

Unasked, as the sacred record seems to imply, God blessed them. It was not a question of their deserts, but simply of what God could do with the sacrifice before Him. Centuries before He had accepted Abel, but with his offering. He now blessed the little company, as the sweet savour of the burnt offerings went up to Him. With that before Him what would He withhold? What Adam in his innocence never had, Noah and his descendants, members of the fallen race, should be privileged to enjoy. How this tells us what the sacrifice is to God. On the ground, too, of the accepted sacrifice, believers are now blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. i. 3).

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That God could richly bless on the ground of sacrifice, Noah and his company that day learnt; but to what extent was only revealed after the sacrifice of God's Son on the cross. And we, deserving no favour, and therefore having no ground in ourselves to look for any, now learn, that no spiritual blessing is withheld from those who believe on His Son. Teaching about sacrifice even in those early days, has teaching for all still.

God blessed that little company. Were they the only members of the human family alive on earth? "The flood came," the Lord said, speaking of the rest, "and took them all away" (Matt. xxiv. 39). "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished," is the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the Apostle Peter (2 Peter iii. 6). All of the human race alive on earth, when Noah entered the ark, save the seven with him, clearly died by the flood. People question the universality of the deluge. But we are to believe that animal life was swept away wherever it was found, when the flood gates were opened, else why were animals and birds provided for in the ark, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth (Gen. vii. 3). Their presence in the ark attested the certain destruction of all the rest of each species outside of it. And certainly, if any antideluvian outside the ark escaped death, that one shared not in the blessing bestowed on Noah and on his sons. In Noah's line was the blessing, and to his line alone was made the grant. All men had perished save that patriarch and those with him.

In the character of a *blessor* God had appeared. But that was not all. First thinking of Noah and his family, He also thought of creation. He is the Creator, and

cares for His creatures. In the days of Jonah He thought of the cattle in Nineveh (Jonah iv. 11). He would not have the ox muzzled that trod out the corn (Deut. xxv. 4). So on the day on which God had blessed Noah and his sons, He entered into a covenant with them and their seed, "and with every living creature," so runs the record, "that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth" (Gen. ix. 9-10). And that covenant ensured all against a flood overspreading the earth to destroy again all flesh. That should never happen again.

So God again spoke (ix. 9-17), and told out what none could have thought of; and provided a sign of that covenant, viz., the bow in the cloud. Often, surely, has every reader of this paper seen a rainbow, and may have admired its colours, which never vary in their order. But has each one reflected that God was looking at it also? (16); a reminder to man surely of God's covenant with all the earth, but, also that which reminds the Creator of the everlasting covenant between Him and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth (16).

What a day had that been, when the patriarch and his family stepped forth from the ark into a newly ordered scene. All traces of former disorders, which had stained its surface, were removed. Nothing was there in recognition of the past, but the absence of man and animals who had once peopled it.

And now just that little company of eight souls were to be the nucleus of earth's population, the progenitors of families, tribes, and nations (x. 32). But ere that day closed, how cheered, how encouraged must they have

been, as they heard the blessing wherewith God blessed them; and were told of the covenant with all flesh, into which He of His own gracious will had entered for the preservation of life on the earth.

What was the sweet savour of the sacrifice to Him!

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—I.

(Chap. i. 1-14.)

THE Epistle to the Ephesians holds an important place in the canon of Scripture, acquainting us, as it does, with truth found nowhere else. Saints of God, we must recognize, need the whole Word of God to be thoroughly furnished, and there is no portion with which they can dispense. Varied are the lines of truth the Apostles dilate upon, but everything necessary is provided; and to become informed of God's mind as revealed, we have to acquaint ourselves with the various books of Scripture. No one book gives us all.

The Epistle before us, thought by some to be a circular letter, and so read by others beside the Ephesians, written by Paul during his imprisonment and sent by Tychicus (vi. 21), contains the unfolding of Christian blessing according to the counsels of God, and then exhortations based upon the magnitude of the vocation wherewith we are called. It is redolent with the fragrance of Christ, teaching us of both His person and His work, and bringing before us His love for us individually, and likewise His surpassing love for the Church, His Bride.

Not written for the primary purpose of correcting current evils amongst the saints to whom sent, the Apostle seems, as it were, free to bring forward precious

portions to delight the heart and link us with heaven. And so sweet are these revelations that the Apostle, desirous that the saints should enter into them, prays for this, and [his prayers are recorded (i. 17; iii. 14), and form a portion of his Epistle.

The saints are viewed as "seated in the heavenlies in Christ" (ii. 6), and already "blessed with all spiritual blessing" (i. 3). There is danger when contemplating this of neglecting that which has been sadly overlooked, namely, the latter portion of the Epistle, forgetting that all truth is to have a *practical* effect upon the soul now. God would shew the greatness of His grace, and that surely should be a reminder of what manner of people we ought to be. Unduly dwelling upon the first portion, and viewing it as true of us now actually, instead of seeing that it states the counsels of God, and is true of us as in Christ, a portion which we now enjoy by faith, has led to the introduction of a kind of mystic, sentimental spirituality. The end of the Epistle gives suited directions to wives, husbands, fathers, etc., in their respective relationships, which only exist in this world. Not a word should any raise that would hinder souls from seeing that here we have unfolded the vastness of Christian privilege; but God forbid that any should be blinded to their true responsibility, and the soul be fed on confectionery which destroys the appetite for wholesome food, and leads to unreality under the assumed name of humility. Truth is needed in due proportion, and this we get when there is dependence upon the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Stating that which constituted his authority, for he was "an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God," and not

Simple Musings on Ephesians.

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of men, neither by man (Gal. i.), Paul proceeds to give his usual salutation, sending "grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," both of which are needed by saints *on earth* in the midst of trial and adversity. This is immediately followed by a burst of praise to the Blessor, as though the heart, filled full with a sense of the immeasurable character of blessing bestowed, must empty itself in worship. But who is addressed? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This causes us to pause, for here, on the very threshold is a truth of unique beauty and supreme importance. In two relationships does the One addressed stand to our Lord Jesus Christ—"the God and the Father." Now the former reminds us, not of His eternal existence, but of the place Christ took as a Man, and the wondrous fact is recorded that the Man Christ Jesus is seated at God's right hand. It was after His resurrection that the Lord announced to Mary, "I ascend to My God and your God" (John xx. 17), and we do not read that He so spoke before the Cross. On that same occasion He also said, "My Father and your Father." Blessed association, made known when the straitening of the Lord's heart was all removed, for love was seen manifested in the agony of the Cross, and there it flowed forth in an unquenchable stream. Then from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blessings flow to us, and this enhances the value of what is already incomparable. How fitting that HE should be the Giver, and that to Him adoration should be rendered. Worship in its highest form begins, as here, with the Blessor and descends to the blessing. Often the heart seems wrapped round the gift and unable to appreciate anything else, and

that not the spiritual and lasting, but the temporal and transient. What joy when the shroud is broken, and the heart is set free to joy in the God of blessing. And what is the portion here brought before us? O, immensity of blessing! which we can only believe to be true because God says so. "Blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in the heavenlies" (ver. 3). Nothing, then, can exceed this. Also note the word "hath." Time is nothing to God, for He speaks from eternity, and in eternity, and here are recorded His eternal counsels. Every spiritual blessing is ours, which we are indeed now to enjoy by faith, and presently *with* Christ, Who is now on high the Head of a race, "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14), and we are there in Him as those who range under Him. "According as He hath chosen us in Him" reminds us that all is primarily connected with Christ. His future, His glory, is the prominent truth. Who would have it otherwise? Boundless privilege is here marked out for us as we are taught that it was

" In deep eternal counsel,
 Before the world was made,
 Before its deep foundations
 On nothingness were laid,"

that God chose us. It was before sin or responsibility existed, and hence, when, by the Fall, sin was introduced, it could not effect the sovereign choice of God. Now we can see how He rose above all the ruin, and so have all His counsels fulfilled without in any way compromising His character as holy. "Hath blessed us" is the word in verse 3, "hath chosen" the term in verse 4. What privilege is here set before us, for we are carried back to eternity before sin was, and on to eternity when sin shall

Simple Musings on Ephesians.

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be no more. The purpose of God is stated thus:—"That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." What a portion! Holy as to character, blameless in conduct, before God in position and according to His own nature. Are we this *now*? This conveys the purpose of God, and who, or what, can nullify His eternal counsels?

"Before Him in love" speaks of position, and the next verse teaches us of the relationship in which we shall be there. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself" (ver. 5). What wonderful grace, all intensified by the truth that it is thus according to the good pleasure of His will. We shall be there, though sin attaches to us now, not marring that scene, but "to the praise of the glory of His grace which He freely (what a Giver is our God!) bestowed on us in the Beloved." Our portion is inseparably connected with Christ, and God would have our hearts' deepest affections entwined round Him. Matchless is the grace given to us, and as we peruse the wondrous unfoldings, do we not understand indeed that we are highly favoured in the Beloved? The Beloved! What a title! telling us of what He is to the Father, His own peerless Son in Whom was ever His delight, and the One that came to make good God's counsels.

"In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" verily instructs us about a deep need met, but yet mentioned to bring out the deeper perfections of the Beloved, and withal forming another link by which we are bound to Him by an indissoluble tie. God forgives fully and freely; nor could it be otherwise when it is "according to the riches of His grace." Clearly and oldly we can each affirm that *riches of grace* alone would

have brought us into association with Christ. And these riches He has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence, teaching us of "the mystery of His will." What is this? That which God had purposed in Himself, but has now revealed, and hence is a mystery no longer to those divinely taught. God has all along been working for the glory of His Son, and reverently we can say that God is still working for it. What heavy scales drop from the eyes of the heart when this is truly apprehended. We are so prone to think of ourselves only in connection with God's working.

And now the mystery is stated: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth; even in Him." All the ages converge to this, even the Millennial age, when Christ shall be manifested as the One over the works of God's hand. Displayed in glory He will take His rightful place. Then all shall own His authority; all shall bow to Him; and all shall do Him homage confessing Him Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But not alone will Christ reign, for according to this marvellous revelation we are to be associated with Him, having been marked out beforehand by Him whose counsels can never fail. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance" shows, we would again remark, the utter impossibility of disassociating our blessings from Christ. We are heirs of God, and shall reign together with Christ, and shall be there "to the praise of His glory." Perfect indeed must be the redemption wrought by Him. Blood-bought ones magnifying His glory, not staining it. How precious and blessed!

Things which are before.

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The Apostles had first trusted in Christ, and in Him also the Ephesians had trusted, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. First hearing, and then believing, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (ver. 13). Yes, sealed *with* the Spirit individually until the redemption of the purchased possession, for our bodies are to share in the blessing. And that self same Spirit, which is God's seal in us, is likewise "the earnest of the inheritance," giving to *us now* the assurance that we *shall* enter into our portion. Our bodies are His, and when clothed upon with the likeness of Christ's body of glory shall we assuredly be to the praise of His glory. We have read of "the glory of His grace" in connection with the vastness of His counsels (ver. 6); of "the riches of His grace" as reminded of what He has done for us (ver. 7); and of "the praise of His glory" linked with our being displayed with Christ (ver. 14). Rich and illimitable all this is, and stable and fixed also, because resting upon the immutable counsels of God. What manner of people ought we to be now? What but those who having such a hope seek to purify themselves even as He is pure?

H.F.

THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE.

BELOVED, let us be decided, for it is impossible for us to grasp at things "before" and "behind" too. Were we "pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" were we "reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must be forgetting those behind; were we looking up, gazing with the eye of faith on our portion above, could we be groping in the dirt of this world for what we might find

there? Could we make a god of business, pleasure, riches, or reputation? Faith is an anticipative grace. Faith is a substantial reliance on the verities of God, such as makes its possessor count all things else but dross and dung for Christ and the things above. Dear readers, either give up professing to be guided by the Bible, or act as if you believed it. There is such a thing as the "obedience of faith"; and if we don't obey, our religion is all pretence and unreality.

BIBLE HERALD.

FELLOWSHIP IN REJECTION.

My heart has perfect repose in the thought of being rejected. I only trust I shall always be able to bear it in meekness, neither in disdain turning from and scorning those who so act, nor in self-vindication retaliating, but accepting all simply as that path in which we are to have fellowship with Jesus, who was so misunderstood, and whose principles were so little appreciated even by His apostles and brethren. It is so valuable a school to learn in; the one in which the more you love, the less you are loved, and still not to be faint or to be weary.

At times my heart is very sick at the aspect of things—such divisions, such jealousies, such evil surmisings; but then I think thus it was with Jesus. If I am called a teacher of blasphemy, so was He; if I am called a sabbath breaker, so was He; if my authority to teach was questioned, so was His, though it was the wisdom of His; if He was neglected by His own people, so are we.

J.G.B.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

OF all the subjects that saints of God are privileged to be occupied with, there can be none more calculated to delight the heart than that of the love of God.

The Apostle John, in his first Epistle, tells us that God is love, but he would have us know also that God is light. Of light we learn, what is indeed patent to all, that it makes manifest. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." God, then, as light makes the true condition of all His creatures apparent. Any departure from what He had made, any non-fulfilment of obligations which He had ordered, must of necessity be offensive to Him. God is the source of all, and He has arranged the whole universe in infinite wisdom. Wonderful is the power that brought all into being ; but not more wonderful than the wisdom that designed every particular part, causing all to work harmoniously, obeying laws which owe their existence to Him.

What an awful crash there would be if any of those mighty worlds that roll through space should depart from their defined course. The mind can hardly grasp the fearful results that would ensue. Thank God He upholds all by the word of His power, and so we need not fear.

But what of man, the greatest of God's creatures upon earth ; the best endowed and the most richly blest ? Yes, what of Him ? He fell. It is an old story now, the story of a moral fall and a perfect wreck, though God-like once. Alas ! 'tis a sickening history, more like the devil than ought else. Of man we read somewhat early "That every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. vi. 5). Then came the deluge, by which the whole human race was swept away, with the

exception of Noah and his family; and again we read (viii. 21), "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." From this onward until God sent forth His Son there was no object on which His eye could rest with satisfaction. All had gone out of the way. All had become unprofitable. There were none doing good, *no, not one*. What a condition of things for Him who is light to behold! Had He been only light, all must have been swept away in judgment. But God is love. Hence we have the precious announcement that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). God so loved is a brief statement, but the depth, the sweetness, the blessedness of it, no human tongue can tell or mind conceive. What precious consolation has it ministered to a vast number of sinful men and women. Whom did He love? *The world*, yet it is not the material earth that was meant, but the sons and daughters of Adam. He loved, spite of all their wickedness and sin; so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. Oh, the wonderful love of God! As light He saw and knew everything. So light and love must act together. And together they march hand in hand as we say. God gave His only begotten Son. He so loved that He gave. Hence love is manifested in and by the giving, and this is how it is spoken of by the Apostle John in his first Epistle (iv. 9-10), "In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son, the propitiation for our sins."

The Love of God.

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All that our need called for, and all that God's holy nature claimed on account of our sins, He, in the greatness of His love, provided. Life for us, propitiation for God; and this life here spoken of could only be imparted to us on the ground of propitiation having been effected. And the bestowal of life (eternal life) carries with it the forgiveness of sins and justification also. We speak not now of conscious possession, but only of the fact that the giving of life everlasting proves that God does not and will not bring the receiver into judgment for his sins. Of the character and duration of that judgment the Son of God Himself has told us, and hence there can be no honest doubt about the matter. The holy nature of God demands the eternal punishment of all unrepentant and unbelieving sinners; whilst the love of God has provided a substitute, Who, being His only Son, and having become a man, as man bore Divine judgment on the cross, was made sin, and was forsaken of God. He died, and as God's High Priest has presented His own blood to God in heaven which speaks with burning power in God's holy ear, and in result the love of God can now flow out righteously, and He can pardon, justify, and welcome into His holy presence every truly repentant sinner, no matter how vile he may have been.

We have seen that God so loved that He gave. Hence He comes before us, not exacting, but giving. We have noticed, too, that His love has been manifested. It is a declared and a well-proved love. But the objects of this love were not only sinners and ungodly, but enemies—alienated and enemies. So to this very enmity has the blessed God addressed Himself. He did not wait

for the turn of the tide in human ill-will, not for some improvement of state, not even for a feeling after Him, but He has commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly. He has stormed the citadel of our hearts by His wonderful love and driven therefrom our hatred and unbelief, and has won even love from us, poor enough and feeble enough, we own. True, indeed, is it that "We love Him because He first loved us." And this love of God has settled our past and ordered our future, a future resplendent with glory, a future that makes the brightest scene on earth pale and dull beside it. How foolish of us that we do not live more upon our prospects! What contemptible creatures we are even now in ourselves. But He loves us, bears with us, corrects us, cheer us, ministers to our every need, outvying all human love in His considerate tenderness, always watching, always waiting. We forget, but He never does. We sleep, but He never slumbers nor sleeps. He may indeed chasten us, but only when it is really necessary, and then love holds the rod always for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness.

Saints are exhorted in a dark and evil day to keep themselves in the love of God, that is, keep in the conscious enjoyment of His love, dwell in it, make it our home. The Apostle John writes, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in Him." This will prove amply sufficient for the darkest day a saint can ever know on earth, and even the brightest day will be blessedly illumined by bringing the love of God into it.

E.R.W.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—II.

(Chap. i. 15-23.)

WITH the full glow of the Divine counsels before his soul, revealing the glorious greatness of God's grace, what could the Apostle do but worship with an overflowing heart. But now, expressive of his desire for the saints, we have a burst of prayer, wherein Paul states with precision what he would have them understand. Of what love and tender solicitude does this speak!

His desires are three-fold, and concern

- (1) The hope of His calling;
- (2) The riches of the glory of His inheritance;
- (3) The exceeding greatness of God's power.

Into the counsels of God the Apostle would have the saints enter with spiritual intelligence; for what is there more calculated to stir our steps, and make us eager in our desire to practically possess what God has set before us, than knowing the infinity of the blessing which is ours in Christ? Then, impressed with the due certainty of all that God has revealed, surely each would be fitted to manifest a superiority to surrounding circumstances. Paul having been brought acquainted with the display of practical Christianity that flowed from those he was addressing, responded Godward in thanksgiving and prayer. Of the activity of their faith and love, this latter embracing all saints, he was aware, and consequently ceased not to make mention of them. To "the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ" he addresses this petition, as the requests have reference to His counsels more than to intimacy and fellowship. Speaking of glory and power, he connects these with God, who, as being their author, is also named the Father of glory. All has its source in Him. Glory apart from Him there is not.

The natural man receiveth not the things of God, and so a more than earthly wisdom is requisite to enter into and enjoy the revealed mind of God. The Apostle links all with Christ; for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii.), and spiritual discernment is the more acute as Christ is the more valued. Paul's desire, then, is that they may possess "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him" (ver. 17). He, whose love is greatest, learns most quickly; and he who knows most of Christ will love most. Awakened affection produces quick learners, and the more intense the appreciation of the blessed Lord so the more is His Word loved and understood. "In the full knowledge of Him" would connect them with more than an abstract statement of the truth, and the result is that "the eyes of the *heart*" are enlightened. For it is not a question of the mind or understanding merely. That would, and does, stumble at the immeasurable character of blessing bestowed; but with the heart's affections stirred up and Christ owned, all is plain, and believed, and received in simplicity. The eyes of the heart opened, there is ability to know and understand the fulness of the provisions of His love and grace.

First, then, we read of "the hope of His calling." The blessing to be conferred is ours, but yet the calling is connected with God, and in this way would the Apostle entrance the heart with its true and blessed character. The Christian's calling is a heavenly one (Heb. iii. 1), and it has been already stated at the commencement of the chapter (3-5). Paul would have all *know* it. Are we engrossed with the things of earth, with the evanescent things of time? How far short do these leave us of the fulness of His calling, the hope of which carries our souls up to the heavenlies, and all spiritual blessings which we are to possess there; for that is to be our

abode for all eternity. Canaan was set before Israel, that land rich and blessed, flowing with milk and honey. With this land their calling was connected. How the thought of that country, and what awaited them there, should have quickened their steps as they trod the desert sands on their way to inhabit it. They were a people bound for Canaan, but, alas! they forgot not only from whence they came and the bondage endured there, causing the heart to sigh and the tears to flow, but also whither they were going (Ex. xvi. 3). God's calling links His saints with heaven. What power and teaching there are in that pregnant sentence of our Lord's which He uttered in prayer to His Father: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16). Into the political arena of this world, with its many inviting themes to dwellers on the earth, with its flashes of patriotism, and its stirring eloquence of what a true citizen's duties are, we are not to enter. Should these things move us? The hope of His calling centres the interest and concern of the saint in another sphere entirely. May the remembrance of it appeal to our hearts, and move our whole spiritual being, and so prove effective indeed in keeping us from being engaged in conflict with flesh and blood. Enough—we shall be there as sons (ver. 5), and so can allow "the potsherd off the earth to strive with the potsherd of the earth," and the dead to bury their dead.

Secondly, the Apostle mentions "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." God's inheritance is here contemplated which embraces the whole universe, though Christians inherit the heavenly part (1 Peter i. 4). And as Christ has been in humiliation the Unfolder of God's secrets of love and grace, so shall He be in power and glory the Administrator of God's might (ver. 10, Heb. ii.). In Him we have obtained an inheritance (ver. 11). He, who is King

of Kings and Lord of Lords, must hold undisputed sway over all the works of God's hands, and as associated with Him we shall reign over the earth, judge the world, judge angels (1 Cor. vi., 2, 3). Men discourse in eloquent language on the dignity that attaches to one belonging to a great empire; but they boast as having fought for, won, and helped to build such up. 'Tis but a tottering fabric thus erected. The greatest empire ever existent will form but a part of His inheritance before the unfading glories of which all pales; and grace alone introduces us into such, for in the establishment of this what part could we have? With the riches of the glory of this inheritance Paul would have the saints conversant. According to His desire may our spiritual vision be enlarged, and our souls elevated thereby, that much now sought after by us may sink into insignificance before the incomparable riches of the glory of His inheritance.

And now, thirdly, to the *power* of God—"the exceeding greatness of His power"—does the Apostle make reference. The psalmist acquaints us with the fact that power is of God, from whom he had learnt the truth.

"God hath spoken once"; and as the echoes of that mighty voice reverberated through heaven's blue vault, David repeats: "Twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." (Psalm lxii. 11).

Already we have been taught about God's calling, which directs us onward to glory, and likewise of His inheritance presently to be possessed by Him in His saints as He possessed Canaan in the people of Israel. But actually neither is ours yet, though very patent to, and enjoyed by faith. Do we question how we shall be put in possession? Paul expressly answers: "By the power of God." There is sometimes the inclination when faith ebbs low to repeat the query raised of yore: "How can this be"? To the Sad-

duces the Lord had answered, when questioned about what seemed impossible to sight and sense, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, *nor the power of God*" (Matt. xxii. 29). Manifestly their ignorance was two-fold. Of the truth about the matter brought forward they were in darkness, and they entirely ignored the power that could assuredly accomplish what seemed to them to be beyond doubt an utter impossibility. Many a doubt is effectually disposed of when Scripture is allowed its place in the heart; and many a reasoning raised in the mind is silenced when the power of God is remembered and dwelt upon.

But "the exceeding greatness of His power" is "to us us-ward who believe," for it is yet to be exercised on our behalf to place us actually where we are now in Christ—in the heavenlies. Christ is there; and it is to the wondrous display of supreme power manifested by the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in setting Him above the Heavens that our attention is directed. What has God performed? Worlds were framed by the Word of God; for He spake and it was done (Heb. xi. 3.) Mighty effect indeed was that; yet not of a new acting of God in creatorial power are we here instructed, but of that might, superior both to death and the cold relentless grave, "which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies" (ver. 20). No creature, however mighty, could intervene to stay Him, and the narrow confines of the grave were exchanged for that boundless sphere and pre-eminent place above; and the completeness of the exaltation is clearly attested by the fact that it is "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*" This God *has* done. Who, then, can interpose and hinder Him from putting us there? but, of

course, as ranging under Christ. God's power has wrought already in exalting Christ to a place no mere creature could ever occupy, and soon will it work for us in placing us in the heavenlies with Him. What an assurance we have here for faith to rest upon, and in tranquility meditate on the measureless blessing which our chapter unmistakably intimates is already ours according to God's deep, eternal counsels.

Nor is this all; for it is revealed that "all things are put under Him" in fulfilment of Psalm viii., quoted here to show that it is not only as man that Christ enters upon this universal dominion, but as the Risen and Glorified One. And linked with this there is a truth of supreme importance to Christians since they only are concerned.

Up to this point we have been considering truth unfolded about saints individually, but now there is mention made of that blessing which concerns Christians corporately; for we learn that in grace unfathomable to us, God "gave Him to be head over all things to *the church, which is His body.*" In glory transcendent the church will be arrayed with Him. How near it is to Him! How precious in His sight!

"Which is His body" are words that convey that this is so straight to the heart, and in terms that admit of no doubt. They likewise declare that without His body He will not be either complete or satisfied. What grace is this to us we repeat, and of what love on His part does this tell; for what can be conferred upon Him "who fills all in all." No ministry can unlock to our hearts the soundless depths of truth this contains about Him, or the matchlessness of the grace bestowed upon those favoured to form that Body.

He is God as well as man, and the heavens and earth throughout their whole extent will yet be radiant with His effulgence; yet viewed as Christ, the church is stated to be

His fulness. Wondrous truths! God give every reader to find an answer to all contained in this prayer that our souls, filled with the power and fragrance of it, might respond in praise and service intelligently rendered. H. F.

LETTER OF INTEREST.

THOUGH the Lord, as it has been remarked, never worked a miracle to meet His own need, yet He clearly indicated at times that He was God. He read, as you point out, men's hearts, and answered their thoughts, a prerogative this is of God (Jeremiah xvii. 10). A notable instance of this we have in John xvi. 30. His disciples had a difficulty, and were desirous to ask Him (18, 19); but they did not. He then answered what they wanted, and they replied, "Now we are sure, that Thou knowest all things, and needst not that any should ask Thee: by this we believe Thou camest forth from God." Was He just a man in their eyes? Did they not now apprehend that He was more?

Then, as to miracles. He worked them in *His own* name. His disciples were empowered to work them in *His* name (Mark xvi. 17). But there is a realm, in which He was omnipotent, into which they were never, that we read of, empowered to enter—the realm of nature. Matt. x. and Luke ix. tells us of the range of their commission, when the Lord was here. Mark xvi. 17, 18, describe its range after He should go on high. Now He quelled the storm with a word, and that a word of command, "Peace, be still" (Mark iv. 39). He turned, too, water into wine. In the realm of nature He showed His power as God (Ps. lxxv. 7, lxxxix. 9), and as Creator.

Then, too, He showed Himself to be God—the God of Israel, when He said to the leper, “I will; be thou clean” (Mark i. 41). Would *any* contend that He did that just as a man? He was a man, but He acted then as God. “*I will,*” etc. Again, when the doctors from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem (Luke v. 21) asked, “Who can forgive sins but God?” He showed He could, it being as easy for Him to forgive sins as to heal. Son of man He was, but acted on this occasion as no mere man could act.

Then, too, He acted as a divine Person when He cleansed the Temple the second time, quoting the words of the Prophet, “My House shall be called a house of prayer” (Matt. xxi. 13). On the first occasion He cleansed it as His Father’s house (John ii. 16). On the second occasion He did it as His own, applying the words of Isaiah (lvi. 7) to Himself. So He presented Himself to Jerusalem on that last visit as Jehovah (My House)—as Messiah riding on the ass, and as Son of Man, applying the eighth Psalm (Matt. xxi. 16); and Jerusalem rejected Him in that three-fold character. Further, He applied Mal. iii. 1, to John the Baptist, thus intimating pretty plainly who He Himself was (Luke vii. 27). Then as the forces of nature obeyed at once His word, beings, of whose existence we only know from the Scriptures, confessed they could not stir without His leave. They besought Him not to send them into the abyss (Luke viii. 31), but that they might enter into the herd of swine. He gave them leave. Could a mere man have had such power? Would the demons have owned it? Acts xix. 15, 16, show they would not. And their request that He would not send them into the abyss, their prison house, shows that He was a divine Person, whose word and whose will could be law to every creature. And they at times confessed Him as divine (Luke iv. 34 and 41) in which last verse we should

Discipline.

29

omit the first Christ. Take, too, the words of the demon at Gardara before being cast out, "Art Thou come to torment us before the time"? (Matt. viii. 29) was the language addressed to Him, who they called the Son of God.

Scripture, I think, makes it abundantly clear that the statement "the Lord acted not in the omnipresence and omniscience of Deity, such did not belong to men," will not stand. Could a mere man enter a room when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews without opening any door?

I just add, what would Nathaniel and Thomas say? To the Lord's reply to Nathaniel, "before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig tree," Nathaniel immediately answers, "Thou art the Son of God." He viewed Him as a divine Person. And Thomas, when the Lord showed him how fully He had been acquainted with his unbelieving speech, replied, "My Lord and my God." Omniscience He claimed. They owned His omnipresence too. Certainly Thomas must have owned it. "The Lord had been present, would he not have said, though unseen."

Dec. 1900.

C. E. S.

DISCIPLINE.

If there is one thing that is characteristic of the day in which we are living, in Christendom, it is every man doing that which is right in his own eyes. Evil is unjudged. It may not be this glaring corruption which we have here (Judges xix.), though we do not know what is carried on in the darkness, and I would not set any limit to the evil that is committed, even under the holy name of Christ. Look at the horrible corruption of Rome itself, and you can see the possibilities of the human heart still finding expression in conduct of that kind. But we are living in the time when

there is little power to judge sin. Everybody goes and does as he pleases. There is little power to meet sin in the fear of God and judge it, and to see Himself acting with us in it.

Now, from all this, I would not want to leave with you the impression that the exercise of discipline is an impossibility in these days. I am sure it is not. I would not want to leave you with the impression that I am criticising every earnest and honest effort to judge evil. God forbid. Thank God for every particle of faithfulness, and for every one who wants to be faithful to Him. But if we are to be guided by these chapters (Judges xix. 20.); if we are to be guided by the lesson that speaks to us so eloquently from these chapters, if we are to learn from the burnt villages of Benjamin, and by the bereaved households of all Israel, I am sure that the lesson we are to learn is the lesson, first of all, of *personal humiliation before God*.

Is it not true, have you not found it so in your own experience? What gives a parent power in dealing with his children? Is it not the power which he gets from self-judgment in the presence of God? What is it that gives an assembly power to judge evil in their midst? Is it not that which brings them down on their faces crying to God in their helplessness, with a confession of their own failure and their own sins? Ah, God speaks from that scene of helplessness. He speaks to us and bids us, as it were, rise out of the dust from before Him, and He will go before us, as we seek to obey His holy will.

But, let us be assured of one thing. He would never have us condone sin. He would never have us allow sin amongst us; He would never have us careless about the honour of His holy name. We have the name of Christ upon us. We dare not, as much as our lives are worth, we dare not be careless as to the existence of evil. But, oh, if we are to

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have power over evil, if we are to have spiritual power that will purge the saints of God from that which holds them down, and which dishonours Christ, it is to be the power that you find in the house of God, in fasting and the sacrifices of God. The sooner that place is taken, the quicker we will find the power."

FROM LECTURES ON JUDGES.

THE LORD JESUS IN HUMILIATION AND SERVICE.

I FELT, beloved friends, that it would be happy to have the Lord, Himself, before our minds this evening as the object of our thoughts. The Christian is so completely brought to God, that he goes out from God to shew the character of God to the world. The subject of this epistle is *Christian Experience*. And you get this experience in the power of the Spirit of God so completely, that you never get sin mentioned in the epistle from beginning to end, nor the flesh, looked at as bad flesh, save to say that Paul didn't trust in it. He here does not know which to do—die or live. If I die, I am with the Lord; that's better; but I can't work for His saints. If I live there is the activity of love for them, and so he does not know which to choose. There is utter absence of self in that, and power. "Then," he says, "It is more needful for the Church that I stay, and so I know that I shall be permitted;" decides his own case. It is all power, the power of the Spirit of God leading a person out of the reach of sin. If you look at the detail in verses 15, 16, you will find his exhortation to others is an exact picture of what the life of Christ really was—"blameless and harmless;" that is what Christ was—"the sons of God;" that is exactly what He was, Son of God—without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; such was Jesus—

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“shine as lights in the world”; when He was in the world He was the light of the world—“holding forth the word of life;” He was that Word of life. The detail is precisely the same power of the Spirit of God, and the exhortation is just the detail of Christ’s life in the world.

In this epistle there are two great principles of Christian life (the last chapter is, he is superior to all cares and all circumstances). In the third chapter, it is the energy that carries a man on, so that everything else is dross and dung—that is *Christ in glory*. He has seen Him up there and he says, “I must get that.”

“There are hindrances in the way.” “I’ll throw them aside,” he says. “You’ll lose everything.” “Can’t help it; I must get Him.” “Oh, but you’ll die.” “No matter; that’s all the more like Him; I must get on to Him, the One up there in the glory, whom I have seen.” “If by any means;” that is whatever it may cost me, even life itself. “Resurrection *from among* the dead,” that is the character of Christ’s resurrection. The resurrection of the saints has nothing in common with the resurrection of sinners. Christ is the first fruits, then those that are Christ’s at His coming. He is not the first fruits of sinners to be judged. Not a hint in Scripture of saints and sinners being raised together. “That I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead” (the apostle uses a rare and emphatic word to explain his meaning)—what is there to attain to, if the wickedest man in the world goes up at the same time in the same way? “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” What’s the good of that if all rise together? The character of Christ’s resurrection was the positive seal of God’s approval of Him, and His work, and so is ours. As regards justification His resurrection is of all importance, for it is the seal of God on the excellency and perfectness of

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the work of Christ. He was taken out from among the dead as a perfect seal upon His work and person, and everything else; and so is our resurrection the seal of our acceptance. Because God delights in us, we are taken out from among the dead, as Christ was. So Paul continues his running till he gets that. You have Christ in glory, and all is dross and dung except that. He wants Christ instead of Paul, and all he gets by the way is nothing—if he gets even death, it is all the more like Him.

In chapter ii. you don't get Christ in glory as the One he is running after; not Christ gone up, but Christ *coming down*—One whom I am to be like in this, the graciousness of the walk that he displayed, and who is always going down—going from the form of Godhead down to death. Where do I find what God is fully displayed—righteousness and love perfectly displayed? In death! It is a wonderful riddle that has come out, the Holy One going down—the Prince of Life going into death. We never completely learn till we see it there—the things that the angels desire to look into. No one knows the Son but the Father. We know the Father, but no one knows the Son; the Divinity of Christ is maintained by the inscrutability of the Incarnation. God becoming a Man! That is unfathomable! And the meekest, lowliest Man that ever walked this earth. Paul is taking up the truth of lowliness, etc., but the moment he begins he must bring out Christ. The motive of all exhortations is nothing less than the whole scope of Christianity. God come down as Man and bringing salvation, and gone back again as Man. Take the commonest exhortations, the spring and motive is nothing short of obedience to the word of God Himself. Eating and drinking even is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). I am merely eating like a beast if it isn't. He exhorts them to walk in lowli-

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ness and love (there had been some little squabbling, suppose, among them). These Philippians had been sending help to the apostle from a long way off, and he won't reproach them, but says, "Now I see how you love me; I see how you care for me and my being happy. Now, if you want to make me perfectly happy, walk in love among yourselves." It is a reproach so delicately brought in that their hearts could not resist it. "And let each esteem other better than himself." It sounds unpractical and impossible; but if I think of myself with the mind of God, I see the evil, the sin in myself. If I think of another, and I am full of Christ, I shall see all the value of Christ upon him, I shall see with Christ's heart, and I can esteem him better than myself, for I see evil in myself, and I see Christ in him. "Let this mind be in you," etc., *i.e.* the spirit in which Christ was, always going down; first being in the form of Godhead, and in the glory, He takes the place of a man, and then He humbles Himself again to death. He is the first grand example of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." and that is what we have to do—go down. Here we get the principle of Christ's whole personal course, and we get not only what He was, but the delight he took in us. He took us up. His interest is in us, and the expression of this delight was not simply that He acts graciously towards men, but He Himself became one of them. He went down to death! We go down to death by sin, He by grace; we by disobedience, He by obedience. So He gets by obedience and grace, what we get by disobedience and sin. From the first step that we go He takes us up till He has us where He is. Speaking in a general way, I cannot look at Christ in His life and walk till my soul is at peace, and settled. If a soul has not settled peace, you will find it wants the Epistles first, not the Gospels, because the Epistles are the reasonings

Letter to a Friend on Rest.

35

of the Holy Ghost on the value of Christ's work. John's writings bring God down here in grace to sinners. Paul takes man up there in righteousness to God. Paul takes man up to God in the light; John brings God down to man. You get in the Gospel of John, God brought down to us in our need, get Him talking to the woman at the well, and His disciples wondering, and she finds that in this tired Man at the well, she has been speaking to the Lord of Glory. "I thought," she said, "He was a poor, tired Jew, who wanted a drink of water." "Oh," He says, "if you knew how that God had come so low as to be dependent on you for a drink of water, you would have confidence in Him at once."

This poor, tired Man was the Lord of Life and Glory, who not only could lay all her life bare before her in its sin and shame, but could fully meet her heart, meet her need, and attract her to Himself, so that she loses all her sense of fear, and shame, in her anxiety to bring others to Him too.

(To be continued.)

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON REST. No. 2.

MY DEAR A.,

With regard to my letter on rest in October number, you say you enjoy the thought very much, but you find it so difficult to carry it out in practice; that, in fact, it seems impossible. You say, "When I get *out* of a trial I always wish I had trusted God more while passing through it, for I always find He was doing the best thing all the while. But when things seem to be all going wrong it is so difficult just to *be still* and leave it all to Him; and if for a little, after going to Him about it, I do enjoy the rest, all the worry comes back again and again.'

Well, what does all that show? Just this, that you and I can do nothing *of ourselves*. We so forget this, and when trial comes we go and spread it out before God, and get for the time the joy and peace which flows from that; but if the trial still goes on, we find we have no more power against it, and we get down under circumstances and as ready to chafe and fret as ever. What is the remedy? Why, just to go again and again to our stronghold. Some speak and write as if it is only to go once for all to the Lord and you go on triumphantly afterwards. But most of us find the trouble will keep occupying the mind, and hindering rest and peace unless as often as it presses we just, as it were, roll it all over on Him. In fact, we cannot take the burden one moment if we are to enjoy rest of heart. After all, I am sure the great difficulty often lies in our wanting our own way; though perhaps we are hardly conscious of it sometimes. We want to bring ourselves face to face with God about it. Are we content He should do as He will? Well, if we are, cannot we trust Him to carry out His will? He certainly will bring about His purposes in spite of our chafing and fretting, then how much better to go quietly on with Him, trusting Him all through, even if it be all dark to us. How that glorifies Him! We like to be trusted ourselves, and we see in Abraham's history how God values the faith that trusts Him when there seems no hope. I like that hymn—

“I bow me to Thy will, O God,
And *all* Thy ways adore.”

One verse is so nice, would we could always say it—

“I know not what it is to doubt,
My heart is ever gay;
*I run no risk for come what will,
Thou always hast Thy way.*”

Well, dear, what a comfort it is to know that God knows our frame and our desires, and our weakness, too. He is never surprised at anything He finds in us, because He knows us through and through, and if only we would take His estimate of us, and not look for anything good in ourselves at all, we should not be surprised either; but we should be more cast upon Him, and should prove more for ourselves the truth of that word, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Yours in Christ,

R.

A WORD OF KNOWLEDGE.

Amnos is the word translated Lamb in the Gospel by John, and it occurs nowhere else as said of the Lord.

Arnion is the word translated Lamb in the book of Revelation, where it occurs 29 times, and nowhere else as designating the Lord Jesus.

Amnos, the Lamb of the Gospel, we look back to, and remember in the Lord's Supper, as the One who loves us and shed His "precious blood" for our redemption and salvation.

But we have no connection with Him as the Lamb: nor had any one at any time; for our union is neither with the *Amnos* of Calvary, nor with the *Arnion* of glory, but with Christ on high, by the Holy Ghost sent down; it is with Him who is "the First-born from the dead," the ascended and glorified Man Christ Jesus, whom God raised from the dead and set at His right hand in the heavenlies as "Head over all things," and "Head of His body, the Church," that He might have the first place in all things.

Amnos (Lamb) in the Gospel is a title of *the past*, having been given the Lord only when He was on earth; and the dealing with sin and redemption by blood is connected with it; and *Arnion*, the Lamb of Revelation, is a title of *the future*, for it is as such that He will yet deal in judgment *with sinners*, and be brought forward to bring in the glory and administer the kingdom in "The world to come," for it is as the Lamb (*Arnion*) who had been rejected and slain, that He takes the book of the world's judgment from the hand of Him that sitteth on the throne (Rev. v). And it is as the world-rejected Lamb (*Arnion*). We find Him owning a Bride in the day of His glory—"The Bride, Arnion's Wife" (Rev. xix. 7, 8, xxi. 9). And the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (*Arnion*) are the temple of the heavenly city; and the lamp thereof is *Arnion* (the Lamb); and the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (*Arnion*).

All this shows us that it is as the One who had been refused, rejected, cast out and slain by man, that God gives Him the highest place and name now, and glory as well as a bride and a kingdom in the "world to come." God has given us His mind about His Son, the Lord Jesus, in every relation He sustains, in every place we see Him, and thus we are freed entirely from any necessity of thinking of Him in our own thoughts: and by getting God's thoughts about His Son, we become intelligent in the knowledge of Him, and can intelligently serve, praise, and worship Him.

The *Gospels* give us the earthly life of "the Man Christ Jesus," as Son of God, when revealing God to man, and also being perfect Man for God, and giving Himself for us. The *Acts* and the *Epistles* give His

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heavenly place and occupation, and our place in Him. And the book of Revelation tells us of His future place, work, and glory in the coming Kingdom, and when His bride shall share His glory and reign. He is the perfect One in every place and relationship. "*To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*"

W.R.

LIFE'S CULMINATION.

Weary with life's fierce battle,
Tempest-tossed and tried;
Seeking for rest and gladness,
Yet all unsatisfied.

Turn thine eyes for a moment
From changing scenes of earth,
To see, by faith, in glory
A sight of peerless worth.

A face of matchless beauty
Shining above the sun;
For thee once marred and smitten,
Bruised and spit upon.

Was life for Him worth living
When this poor earth He trod
Alone, despised, forsaken,
Jesus, the Son of God?

Was life for Him worth living
In view of cross and grave?
Yes; for He had before Him
Thee, whom He came to save.

Life's Culmination.

No deepest depth of suffering
 (Which brought Him from above)
Could quench for e'en one moment
 His agony of love.

For thee He bore the mocking;
 For thee the cruel shame;
From God's right hand in glory
 To ransom thee He came.

Is life for thee worth living
 In sight of Calvary?
Yes; to tell forth to others
 What He hath done for thee.

Is life for thee worth living
 With *such* a Friend and Guide!
One who will love thee always
 And never leave thy side?

Yes; life is worth the living,
 If but to win His smile;
Soon shall earth's shadows vanish
 And pass this "little while."

Then on thy raptured vision
 Shall burst a wondrous sight—
A city of rare grandeur,
 And the Lamb its undimmed light.

Then henceforth and for ever
 That place thy home shall be;
And there, in all its beauty,
 Christ's unveiled face to see.

A. S.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—III.

(Chap. ii. 1-10.)

STILL pursuing the subject of the power of God the Apostle shows that Christians are to know the might of that power morally now, as actually by and by. So beginning at the very bottom of the ladder, as it were, he dilates upon their once lost condition, and in language impressive and unmistakable proves the utter ruin of man, and hence of his inability to produce aught that could be pleasing or acceptable to God.

“And you who were dead in trespasses and sins” conclusively teaches that man is spiritually dead, and at once intimates the necessity, if there is to be fruitfulness for God, of new creation. Man might reason otherwise, but God’s Word is irrefragable; and so, spite of the strenuous efforts made to turn aside the keen edge of this truth by arguments brought forward to show that man, under favourable conditions, is amenable to education and culture, it stands recorded that each member of Adam’s race is as a sapless tree, not only guilty but *dead*—dead in trespasses and sins. Such is the solemn sentence pronounced by God’s Holy Spirit, and those who refuse to accept it as true, or to recognise it as sound teaching, do thereby prove the verity of the truth they seek to refute as they manifest the enmity of a mind alienated from God.

This statement, then, refers to a condition, once true of those who have been recipients of God’s grace, but now true of them no longer, since they are a new creation in Christ Jesus (ver. 10), and viewed as quickened with Him (ver. 5).

So taking a retrospect of their lives before God's grace had reached them, the Apostle reminds them of the path they once trod and of the power by which they were then actuated. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Governed by the principles of the world their paths were shaped to suit it. For God there was nothing; they were under the domination of Satan. He was master; and little, perhaps, as they would have liked to own it, they were, nevertheless, directly influenced by him. The "prince of the power of the air" worked in men then. And here time has made no change; for he still is "the spirit that *now* worketh in the children of disobedience." Definitely God states this. It may not coincide with man's idea of progress to be told that the arch-enemy of all that is good and blessed, of all that is pure and true is the one to whom they pay allegiance by doing his bidding. Children, or sons of disobedience they are called, for they refuse to obey God's word.

But the Jew was no better than the Gentile, though blessed with many a privilege, and possessing the oracles of God. "Among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do." How humbling! This is stated of the most favoured of men, and was true of the so-called refined and cultured as well as of the illiterate and debased. It goes far deeper than that which is seen, contemplating, as it does, the inward actings of the heart. All found fulfilling the lusts of the flesh places all on one common footing. What unfoldings are here. Gentiles controlled and energised by Satan; Jews equally with Gentiles found, as dead in trespasses and sins, incapable of any movement Godward, and all are by nature, that is natural generation being born sinful, children of wrath, and on the road to condemnation.

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But let us mark that Scripture brings before us another class termed the children of the devil. Men are only so called when they persist in their opposition to God and His work that is being carried forward (John viii. 44; Acts xiii. 10), and the term is not applied to all indiscriminately. All are the children of wrath on account of their sinful state.

What unfoldings we repeat. Here is man in all his moral ugliness, sinful, ruined, helpless; and the purpose for which all is recounted is evidently to magnify the mercy, love and grace of the One who acts in power to lift out of this condition. For if much is stated about man, what can be said of God? Much, very much; enough to make the heart quiver with delight as it is pondered. In sharp contrast to the truths that we were ruined and under the power of Satan, we have the facts that God is rich in mercy and actuated by a love that is termed "great." Lay emphasis on it. Read it again and again in conjunction with the following verse which tells us of what we were—note the word *even*—and what God, on account of the love He bore to us, has done for us, and see if the soul does not realize something of the force of that word *great* used to describe the love.

Love God manifested for us in giving His Son to die; for who but a God of love would deign to save guilty ones at such a cost? Certain it is that action after such a fashion is foreign to the untaught mind of man. In their prose and poetry, both ancient and modern, they betray this. Heathen mythology pictures the gods taking up those in whom the virtues were most prominent; and where shall we find it conceived, apart from the Spirit of God, that mercy in its fulness was to go out from the living God towards those who were entirely out of the way and defiled?

But here it is not the love of God revealed in giving His

Son *for* us, since it is shown in associating us with Christ. It is what, because of the love wherewith He loved us (truly a great love, for it had to recognise that we were even dead in trespasses and sins), He has accomplished by His power and accounts true of us. He has quickened us with Christ (ver. 5), and placing us in the heavenlies has made us to range under Him. This, then, is a truth that concerns the race of which Christ is Head. The quickening of the soul is a blessed reality, but that the Lord Jesus never required. This, the being quickened with Him, must be true of Him and us. He was laid in the grave, and, quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter iii. 18), was brought forth by the power of God. We are viewed as linked *with* Him in this, and further also as being exalted and seated in the heavenlies *in* Christ. It is the place we have in God's counsels, the knowledge of which is to effect deliverance morally now.

We are saved by grace, and well ought we to be able to understand that sovereign grace has been in exercise on our behalf. It is noted that we are saved by grace in verse 5, and repeated again in verse 8. Mercy, love, and grace has flowed from Him, meeting us in our ruined condition and delivering us from that state of unfruitfulness by making us a new creation in Christ Jesus. But ere mentioning what is to characterise us here we are made acquainted with God's purpose in placing us in the heavenlies. Is it to magnify us? Ah, no; but, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (ver. 7). In the millennial scene and throughout the eternal ages, in us will be seen the marvellous display of God's grace. It will be plainly visible. Everyone there will once have been a creature dead in trespasses and sins, but as connected with Christ in the most blessed way, and manifested with Him in glory, each will be

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a trophy of the kindness of God, and an eloquent, though silent witness of surpassing grace bestowed. Words will be unnecessary—person and position will positively declare it. And in this way God is going to maintain an eternal testimony for Himself. It will know no waxing and waning; no blight of time shall mar its clearness; but with the consummation of God's counsels and we found actually in the heavenlies, the righteousness of God shall shine forth in us, and every spectator (and we, as being the objects of that grace, more conscious of it than all others) shall behold in unflickering brilliancy the exceeding riches of His grace. Let us muse over it until the preciousness of it glows in the soul that praise might ascend to God both now and evermore.

And it is due to Him. We are saved by grace through faith (ver. 8), for it is when we believe that we come into possession of these truths and realize their application to ourselves. Nor can we claim one tittle of credit from this; for we are indeed reminded that the faith is God's gift. Entirely dependent upon Him for everything gave God scope, as it were, to bring out the fulness of His treasury and lavish His blessings upon us. Yes, truly,

“Faith too, from that same love we gain.”

Then this likewise excludes boasting. Had we but the smallest share in fitting ourselves for Him how we should boast. But we have not. We are *His workmanship*; so neither up there presently, nor down here now, can we speak of anything as obtained by, or flowing from ourselves. We are to be fruitful for God, and are taught that He has ordered a path for each one to walk in. But, “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” with trumpet voice declares the praise to be His, not ours. Would we have it otherwise?

But, let us retrace what has passed before us. We have seen what we were—dead in trespasses and sins; and have learnt that we are now quickened *with Christ*, the fruit of the unending love God bore us, and seated in the heavenlies in Him. Also we have read of God's purpose in placing us there (ver. 7), and have been made acquainted with His present purpose of new creation, for we are to be fruitful (ver. 10). That we could not be before; so since the work is exclusively His, boasting is effectually shut out. Does this humble us? Then let us seek to magnify the rich mercy, great love, and sovereign grace which has wrought so blessedly for us; and, as displaying what is becoming those who are in Christ, be found walking in the path which He has before prepared.

H. F.

LETTER OF INTEREST.

As to 1 Tim. iii. 16, the Apostle says he is (see R.V.) writing “that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” No responsibility can be greater than that which attaches to a place in so august a body—the house of God—the Assembly of the living God—and further, which is the sole bearer of a Divine testimony, and which alone has the foundation on which that Testimony rests. What is this Testimony? And how great a truth this secret is—which is and has been faithfully borne by the Church to this day. It is no less than the stupendous truth, Who that was, of Whom the things are stated that are named in the verse. The things are matter

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of history, but of Whom are they narrated? Of none less than God our Maker. This is the truth, surpassing in importance unspeakable all that has ever happened in the world since its making—that its God has visited it as a Man, with all that belongs thereto. This is the secret committed to the Church of the Living God, and to it alone—neither Heathen, Mahomedans, nor Jews possess that secret. The reason it comes in where it does is to enhance the sense of the tremendous responsibility resting on this body, of whom such things are said—and the correspondingly grave importance of the behaviour of every one of its members.

C. E. S.

THE PATHWAY OF THE KING.

THE King was seen by the prophet Isaiah seven centuries and a half before He became a Man. In the year that King Uzziah died, during whose reign the little kingdom of Judah had been helped by God in a degree, it would appear, unknown since the disruption after the death of Solomon, Isaiah was permitted with his eyes to see *the* King, who was to come. “Mine eyes,” he said, “have seen the King” (Isaiah vi. 5). Who was He? The prophet unhesitatingly declared that He was the Lord of Hosts.

In the Temple he saw Him, and upon a throne high and lifted up, His train filling the sacred edifice. Alone was the prophet at that time. To no one else was the sight vouchsafed. Seraphim, too, he saw, an order of celestial beings on which no mortal eye, save his, as far as we know, has ever rested. Their occupation he described, for their utterance he heard, crying out one to another, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is

the Lord of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of His glory ” (3). Their voice was clear. Their words were distinct. The very posts of the Temple moved at the sound of them, and the House was filled with smoke (4). Unfallen creatures were proclaiming the holiness of their God.

Those celestial beings were of one mind. Isaiah, who witnessed the scene, was of another. They were occupied with the Lord of Hosts. He, when he saw the Lord, became immediately occupied with himself. Yet no one had spoken to him. The Seraphim as yet were unconcerned with him. But the presence of the Lord was enough. His unfitness to be there he at once felt, and that acutely. How could it be otherwise? and he expressed it. “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts ” (5). He expressed what he was as one of a fallen race. Of his unfitness, as he was, to be in that scene there could be no doubt ; and of his inability to remedy his unfitness he was perfectly aware. Yet the King had not spoken. The Lord of Hosts had not thundered. How easily can God make a sinful creature painfully sensible of its condition. And He, and He alone, can provide what that creature needs to be at home, to be free in heart before Him. This Isaiah learnt and, fully proved (6, 7).

But our purpose in this paper is not to dwell upon that, most interesting and instructive as it is, desiring rather to trace out a little of the pathway on earth of *the King*, who is also the Lord of Hosts.

For who was it that the prophet saw, and whom he called “the King”? John, the Apostle, unhesitatingly declares that it was the Lord Jesus Christ (John xii. 41). In Divine Majesty Isaiah beheld Him. In His humiliation John well knew Him. For He became incarnate. “The Word became

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flesh, and dwelt among us." So said the Evangelist (i. 14); and on His breast, as Man, at the last supper he leant in confidence and peace.

But where and how was He first seen as incarnate by men? It was as a little infant, cradled in a manger. There the shepherds beheld Him, of whose birth the angel had informed them (Luke ii. 11, 16). The Messiah of Israel was just born, who was not only Christ, but also Lord. As Messiah, or Christ, He will sit on David's throne. As Lord He must have supremacy over all creatures. But He was more, for Matthew tells us (i. 23) He was Emmanuel, *i.e.*, God with us. God and Man in one Person was that little infant, on whom the shepherds in wonderment, doubtless, gazed. The subject of prophecy lay before them. The Christ of God was there. But His birth, His surroundings, betokened humiliation indeed.

We have spoken of His first appearance in the flesh. What shall we say of the last, as the world saw Him? He was seen on the cross, and crucified between two thieves. The King of the Jews, as Pilate rightly, though doubtless in contempt, proclaimed Him, was there dying in the presence of a multitude, who mocked Him, and reviled Him. His first appearance then was a babe lying in a manger, His last was a crucified Man dying between two thieves.

Between these two events, His birth and His death, what is known of Him? A dependant and obedient Man, suffering at times hunger (Matt. iv. 2; xxi. 18), thirst (John iv. 7; xix. 28), and weariness (John iv. 6), He was the faithful and true Witness for God (Rev. iii. 14). Yet He was rejected, blasphemed, spat upon, scourged, and reviled by creatures whom He was upholding in life, and had nowhere when on earth to lay His head (Matt. viii. 20).

What a contrast between the One as a divine Being whom

Isaiah saw, and the Son of Man, whose visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men (Isaiah lii. 14). Yet He was throughout the King and the Lord of Hosts. The wise men called Him King, and came from afar to worship Him (Matt. ii. 2). Nathanael confessed Him as the King of Israel (John i. 49). The multitude proclaimed Him as the King who cometh in the name of the Lord (Luke xix. 38). Blind men called Him the Son of David (Matt. ix. 27; xx. 31). Children cried out in the Temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. xxi. 15). The Syrophœnician woman acknowledged Him as such (Matt. xv. 22); and He gave the Pharisees to know that He claimed that for Himself (Matt. xxii. 42—45).

Then, too, He was divine—the Lord of Hosts. Demons confessed His divinity, calling Him the Holy One of God (Luke iv. 34), and the Son of God (Matt. viii. 29; Luke iv. 41). He never contradicted what they said, though at times He would silence them as witnesses on His behalf. Further, His divinity was unquestionable. He had power over death, for He raised the dead. He had power over nature, for He turned water into wine (John ii. 8, 9). He quelled the storm by a word. The wind was hushed, the sea was stilled (Mark iv. 39; Psalm lxxv. 7, lxxxix. 9). And demons knew and confessed that they could not stir at Gadara without His express permission (Luke viii. 31, 32). That which Isaiah has said of Him the Gospel history abundantly confirms. He was, and is King. He was, and is the Lord of Hosts.

Why then had He come in humiliation? Why did He appear in human form? Why was He incarnate? All power was His. Why consent to enter the ranks of human creatures, and experience wants incidental to humanity, as hunger, thirst, and weariness? Let Him tell us, and whilst

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He speaks should it not be with adoring hearts that we listen? "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine Own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the will of Him that sent Me (so we should read), that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." Carried thus on in thought to the future, there is something to be gained in the present, as the Lord proceeds, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day" (John vi. 38—40). As the Sent One, and as the Obedient One, He appeared upon earth, and men's everlasting future in blessing was His desire. Again He speaks, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (xii. 46). With man's condition as a fallen creature He was acquainted. He came, if men would receive Him, to remove it.

And on several occasions did He proclaim that. In Matthew's house, and at that publican's table, and in the hearing of all present He stated, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke v. 32). In the house of Zaccheus, at Jericho, He made known whom He could and would receive. "The Son of Man," He said, "is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke xix. 10). Let sinners hear it. Let the lost give heed to it. To His disciples He said, on another occasion, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt xx. 28). A substitute would He be, and that willingly, to save. Fulness, too, of blessing would result, for He came that His sheep "might have life, and that they might have it abundantly" (John x. 10). The *Good Shepherd* indeed! Who would have thought that the One whom Isaiah saw in the Temple would ever

die on the cross? On a throne, high and lifted up, the prophet saw Him (Isaiah vi. 1). Lifted up on the cross the world beheld Him. Angels, too, surely witnessed that sight. Which of them would not have flown to His assistance, had it been permitted them to do so. But He died thereon; for nothing short of atonement by His blood could accomplish the will of God, that guilty creatures of the human race might be saved.

What a pathway was His! "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him (or had its being through Him) and the world knew Him not" (John v. 10, 11). Rejected from the outset of His ministry (we read of nothing of that during the first thirty years of His life); then, crucified between two thieves, He breathed out His life. The world could see Him die. The stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre concealed His body from human eyes. They saw Him no more. Had He gone never to re-appear? Had the world finally rid itself of His presence? Men who die return not here. But He who from the Mount of Olives wept over Jerusalem, and subsequently sitting on that Mount foretold to disciples the sorrows of the people, and of the city, will stand again on that Mount, as Zachariah (xiv. 4) long ago foretold.

And prophecy, which marked out His path of humiliation (Isaiah liii.), has traced for us incidents in His future. The effect on Kings of the earth at His future re-appearance Isaiah has predicted. Astonishment will seize them (lii. 14), and homage will they render (xlix. 7). His personal appearance David has described as going forth to conquer (Psalms xlv. 2—5), and John, in Revelation, describes Him in that character as He saw Him in vision. But more, David, speaks of Him alone. John writes also of His train, not of that which once filled the Temple, but composed of

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the whole company of heavenly saints, trophies of divine grace, all redeemed by His blood (Rev. xix. 11—16). All the holy angels will accompany Him when He returns to reign, but His escort, may we call it, will be composed of all the heavenly saints. May the readers of this paper make sure now that they will be of that blessed, happy and rejoicing company coming with Him out of heaven, and beholding His triumphant course as He will deal with the enemies opposed to Him.

C. E. S.

THE LORD JESUS IN HUMILIATION AND SERVICE.*(Continued.)*

WHEN our consciences are awakened, we want then to know how a sinner can be just with God, and so we turn to Romans and the reasonings of the Epistles: but when the heart knows I am a child, and the same favour rests on me as on Jesus, I turn back to the Gospels and say, I must look at Jesus—what a Saviour He is! I want Him *close, close* to me then! brought close to my eye. Then I look back to the Gospel of John and see God come down in Him. I get in Him One, who instead of driving the one who had the defilement away, drives away the defilement, and leaves the poor leper *clean* and *near Him*. Where do we find the blessed Lord going as soon as He is called out to His public ministry? To the baptism of Repentance. Why does He go there? “Oh,” He says, “these poor people going there are those in whom God is working. They are taking the first step in the right direction, and I must go with them.” I find this perfectness

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and love in Him. "I can't leave them to go alone," He says, "I must go with them." I need not say He needed no repentance, but it was the first right step of that poor remnant, and He will be associated with them. "This is not your place," says John. "Yes," He says, but "suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He does not haughtily say "becometh Me," but "becometh us." He takes His place in grace along with us (here it was with the Jew), and the heaven is opened for Him, and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the Father's voice proclaims His Son; the model of our place in grace through redemption. We get heaven opened four times. At His Baptism, when the Holy Ghost comes down on Him. Then heaven is opened, and the angels of God ascend and descend on the Son of Man—that is, the highest angels become His servants. Heaven is opened, and he comes out on the white horse to judge. And between these two I get heaven opened for Stephen to see Him. The heaven was opened to Stephen as to Christ. But mark how the glory of His person is always maintained. When heaven is opened to Stephen, it is that he may look in and see Jesus; but when at His Baptism heaven was opened, it is for heaven to look down upon Him. He was not looking at an object in heaven. Heaven was looking at Him. The heavens were never opened for heaven to look down on anything in this earth till that Divine and Blessed One is there. The fulness of the Godhead is in Him, but He is sealed as a Man. The Father says, "All My delight is there." What is most despised on earth is the One heaven can't but be open to, and the Father can't keep silence about Him. A Man is the delight of God. Heaven is opened upon Him, the Holy Ghost comes down upon Him, and the Father's voice proclaims Him His Son. And it is of profound interest to see

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that here first the whole Trinity is fully revealed, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. First then, His place as the manifestation of accepted man is settled. As soon as that is settled, "Yes," He says, "but these are people in conflict and difficulty, and have got this tyrant over them, I must go and meet him for them." He meets the devil—overcomes him, of course. The devil wants Him to go out of His course, to keep not His first estate; he would have Him leave the place of obedience, and a servant, on the plea of His being a Son. The written Word was sufficient to conquer the devil, and enough for the Son of God to use. All possible salvation depended on His victory; all that victory depended on the written Word of God. Never, save at His death, was there such a solemn moment. What He held for enough, and what Satan held for enough, was the written Word of God. He bound the strong man by that means, and set about spoiling his goods. There is one Man, who knows the truth, because He is the truth, who is satisfied with the written Word, and that is the Lord. There is no craft of Satan that the Word of God is not sufficient to meet. There was One, as a Man, wielding a power that was sufficient to deliver man from all the effects of sin. If sick they were healed—healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him—power working in goodness. And what is the effect? They would not have Him! The Lord on earth had power to remove the effects of Satan's power, but behind those was man's heart, which could ask Him to depart. Where there was a legion of devils, and He sends them off into the herd of swine, they prayed Him to depart out of their coasts—they didn't want Him. The quiet devil that influenced their hearts was worse than all the legion of devils that ran noisily down the steep place into the sea.

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Satan says, "If you take this people up, you take them at your cost. I have got the power of death over them." But He goes on. Presently Satan, prince of this world, raises all the world against Him. The disciples are afraid and leave Him; one betrays Him, another denies Him, and the rest run away. "Well, then," He says, "since this hatred is so great, I must give up My life to redeem them out of it—and 'through death, destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'"

They ask Peter, "Does not your Master pay tribute?" Peter comes to Jesus, and He shows He is God, by showing that He knows what is in Peter's heart, and says, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute; of their own children or of strangers?" "Of strangers," Peter says. "Then are the children free." He was the Son of the Great King of the temple, and free; and so was Peter. He puts Himself with Peter. "Notwithstanding, lest *we* offend" (puts Himself with Peter again) then shows He is God over all, and Lord of creation, by disposing of creation, commanding the fish of the sea to yield up the tribute money, "that give for *Me* and *thee*"—puts Peter and Himself both together again. It's lovely!

While He was God in everything, He was the humblest, most accessible Man that ever walked this earth. In death only is He alone. He looked for compassion and found none. "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me." In His sore trial He looked in Gethsemane for them to watch with Him—they could not, and an angel from heaven comes to strengthen Him. Will He ever give up being a Servant? Never! That form of Servant He will never give up. Selfishness likes to be served. Love likes to serve. That is just what I find in Christ.

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No intellect knows God. We only know God by our wants. Infidels say you can't have more than the power of man's mind. If I see a decrepit old woman leaning on the arm of a strong man, and supported by his strength, it is not in herself that she knows what strength is—and that is how we know God. No man can know God by "knowing;" he would not be man if he did, and God would not be God at all. It is conscience that knows the way God meets us. It is a want in me. Look at Simon the Pharisee and the woman. What did he know of Christ? He felt no need of Him; thought he was putting honour upon Him in asking Him, though in curiosity, to his house, and does not show Him the courtesy due even to a guest, and Christ is not inattentive to neglect. He knows and feels it. If I am cold and indifferent to Him, He knows and feels it all; it touches His heart. God's essential names are Light and Love. Look at the woman, the light made her know herself, and the love made her know Christ and trust Him. Christ thoroughly knew her heart, and she thoroughly knew Christ's heart. While Simon had thought Him unworthy of the common courtesies of life, she found a fulness of grace, and of light, and love that could meet all her need. Her sins, which are many (He knew them all), are all forgiven, for she loved much. God's heart and man's heart, through grace, met in blessedness where the Pharisee was an utter stranger.

I learn this lesson here, that the person of the Lord Jesus may have full power in my heart before I know the fact of forgiveness. The essential names of God, Light and Love, I find both brought out in Christ—the light that reveals everything in me, and the love that puts it all away. When the light comes and manifests me before God, I find myself in the presence of love, that has done everything for me. If

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I had the light without the love I must run away and hide myself. If I had the love without the light it would not do at all. It could not be. I get both in Christ—the Divine Light that discovers all, and the Divine Love that makes me know that all is put away. When light comes in, the conscience is honest. Take the thief, and hear him—“*We indeed justly*”—light had discovered that to him—“but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” How did he know? By Divine teaching. Would not our hearts all say, “He has done nothing amiss”? Then, again, “*Lord,*” he says—that is Divine teaching as to His person. All His disciples had run away; he alone owns His Lordship there on the cross—comforts His heart in that hour. And what does he ask? Is it relief from his pain? No. Suffering all that terrible agony of the cross, does he ask the One hanging by his side, whose power he owned, to lessen the suffering? No; but to be remembered by Him in His kingdom; and the effect of this is, “To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” Oh, here was a heart that had found out what He was. A Pharisee is a Pharisee, and a whited sepulchre, but a *broken heart* is suited to a *heart-healing God*.

Is He a servant in glory? Oh, yes, He says, indeed I am. He says to His disciples—I am going to the Father; I can't be your companion any more on earth; but I'm not going to give you up. What's to be done? I must fit you to be with Me; give you a “part with Me.” You are clean, but you will be picking up dirt in your walk in this world, and this won't do to be associated with Me in glory; I must wash your feet. And that is what He is doing now. He is a Servant to wash our feet now.* He sets Himself to that

* “Washed,” in John xiii. 10, refers to the whole body; “wash,” to feet or hands. The words are different in Greek.

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service. We do not cease to be clean, looked at as to our standing before God, but we walk through the world and pick up dirt, and Christ is our servant to wash it away. In Luke xii. we find He will be our servant in the glory. "He will gird Himself, and come forth and serve them." It is Divine love unspeakably blessed. He will never give up being a Man. "Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning." I must have a full profession of Christ, that is, lights burning. Have your loins well tucked up for service while I am away; when I come again I shall have My own way, and you shall sit down and I will serve you.

Shall I ever forget the humiliation of Christ? Shall I ever forget His manhood in that way, giving Himself for me, and then taking me up there to be with Himself, where He is remaining a Man for me through all eternity; shall I forget? Never! never! through all eternity. I shall never forget His humiliation on earth. While seeing Him in glory animates the soul to run after Him: what feeds the soul is the Bread that came down. That produces a spirit that thinks of everything but itself. I need not go into detail, but you get in the rest of Philippians ii. all the delicacy of feeling brought out which flows from absence of self, and love to others, because the soul has got imbued with Christ, and is feeding upon Him, till unconsciously it grows to be like Him. I must have the 2nd as well as the 3rd of Philippians; all the energy you like, but then go and study Him, and live by Him, and you will come out in His likeness, in all His grace, and gentleness, and loveliness. Oh, what a place, redeemed by Him, going to be with Him in glory, and set meanwhile to manifest Him on earth!

The Lord give us to be so occupied with Him who was so full of love, so full of gentleness, so full of lowliness, that we shall manifest the same! The first sin in the world was

losing confidence in God. He comes back to us who are in all these sins and says, "Now you may trust Me." It is God winning back the confidence of your heart, unbounded confidence in unbounded love—and that not by exhortations from heaven, but by His presence on earth. "If you are a poor woman, not fit to face any of your fellow-creatures, come to Me; I'll have you, trust Me; if you are hanging on a cross for your crimes, you shall go up to-day with Me to paradise. My blood is enough to put your crimes away, My heart is open to receive you."

The Lord give us to know more of that One, who when He put forth His own sheep went before them—met the lion for them, and delivered them! The Lord give us to realize what He was.

J. N. D.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

CHRISTIANS should seek to know more of the presence of Christ in their meetings. We do not want sermons, nor power of eloquence, nor human intellect, nor anything that merely comes from man; we want the presence of Jesus; and without that all is cold, barren, and lifeless. But, oh! who can tell the sweetness of realizing the presence of the Master? Who can give expression to the exquisite feeling known by those on whom the dew of the Divine blessing drops? Blessed be God that any know it! Blessed be God that in this day, when the sad effects of human tradition are but too apparent in the Church, there is such a thing as the house of Obed Edom the Gittite, where the presence of the true Ark, and the consequent blessing of God, can be known and enjoyed! Let us prize them more and more amid the shadowy and unsatisfying forms and ceremonies which prevail around us.

C. H. M.

AFTER THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

THE fifteenth of Nisan was fast running out when the Lord had uttered the last words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost" (Luke xxiii. 46).

What a day had it been! Before *four* tribunals, may we not say *five*, the Lord had stood. First He was before Annas (John xviii. 13); next he was before Caiphas, the real High Priest (Matt. xxvi. 57), and was adjudged by him as guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death; yet He only admitted the truth as to His person, that He was the Christ the Son of God, and applied Daniel vii. 13, to Himself. On the third occasion, after day had dawned, He was taken before the Sanhedrin (Luke xxii. 66-71) and formally condemned, because admitting in reply to their questions that He was the Son of God. Taken then to Pilate to be legally dealt with, and crucified, the Roman governor sent Him to Herod, understanding that he was a Galilean, and therefore belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, Returned by Herod to Pilate, the King having elicited no word of any kind from the Lord, the Governor, to please the Jews, condemned the Lord to death, knowing at the same time that He was innocent of the charges laid against Him (John xix. 1-16).

What a day indeed had it been! What indignities had the Lord endured! Smitten unjustly by one of the officers in

the presence of Annas, who uttered no word of rebuke for such conduct, He was spit upon by some of the Sanhedrin, who, covering His face, buffeted Him, whilst their servants beat Him with the palms of their hands (Mark xiv. 65). Then Herod, with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arraying Him in a gorgeous robe, sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11). The Roman soldiers too mocked Him, spit on Him, smote Him on the head with a reed, and arrayed Him in a purple robe, with thorns for a crown, and a reed for a sceptre, and bowing the knee before Him said, "Hail, King of the Jews" (Mark xv. 16-19). Pilate, too, allowing that, brought the Lord forth to the Jews wearing that crown of thorns and with the purple robe, mock emblems of sovereignty.

To be spit upon twice over, to be buffeted three times, was not that enough? Fresh indignity was meted out to Him. He was scourged by the order of Pilate. Then, with His back severely lacerated by that torture, He was led forth for crucifixion. And "He, bearing His cross, went forth unto a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John xix. 17-18). Fitting companions it was thought for Him, who had healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, cast out demons, had walked upon the waters, and had quelled the storm.

Had He not now suffered enough from men, His creatures, sinners whom He came to save? Crucified between two thieves, a spectacle to the multitudes that congregated at Golgotha that day, He was next reviled by the passers by, who taunted him with destroying the Temple, and building it in three days. If He could do that, why not save Himself? If He was the Son of God, let Him come down from the

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cross (Matt. xxvii. 39, 40). Poor creatures! Little did they know, that His being the Son would keep Him on the cross till death had taken place. But the multitude might have been viewed as the ignorant rabble. What would the professed teachers and acknowledged doctors say? Would not they rebuke the crowd, or at all events stand aloof from taunting Him who was on the cross? Ah, no. "The chief priests," we read, "mocking Him with the scribes and elders said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He is King of Israel: let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him, for He said I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 41-43).

Blind guides of the people indeed were the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, little thinking that they were fulfilling Scriptures, as they said "He trusted in God," etc. A thousand years before had David, by the Spirit of God, foretold that taunt which those unhappy men hurled at the Son of God (Ps. xxii. 8), not one of whom as they spoke it remembered, we may be sure the Psalmist's prediction of the treatment the Lord when on the cross would endure. Which of the members of the Sanhedrin, who spit upon Him, or any of the soldiers who did the same, were aware of the prophetic utterance of Christ, as given in the Prophet Isaiah, centuries before He appeared? And Pilate certainly knew not, that in the same passage of the Prophet the Lord's prophetic utterance would include a notice of the scourging. Men unconsciously were fulfilling the written Word of God (Isaiah l. 6).

Yet more indignities did He suffer. The thieves who were crucified with Him (so writes Matthew xxvii. 44) cast the same taunt in His teeth. And when on the cross suffering most agonising punishment, the soldiers came mocking

Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, "If thou be King of the Jews, save Thyself" (Luke xxiii. 36, 37). A dark day, how dark was that fifteenth of Nisan. Pity on the part of the passers by was flung to the winds. Steeleed, too, were the hearts of the chief priests, etc., against the slightest compassion for that One suffering on the cross. All the scorn, all the bitterness, all the enmity of the human heart was poured out upon Him. No one reviled the two thieves, No one mocked them. No one intensified their mortal agonies with manifestations of contempt or of hatred.

Now from Him who suffered all that we have recorded from the divine Word, not a word of reproach proceeded. Reviled, He reviled not. Suffering, He threatened not. But was He silent? No. To the women who bewailed Him, when on the way to Golgotha, He spoke (Luke xxiii. 27-31). When nailed to the cross He prayed, yet not for Himself, but for His murderers (34). He was heard, too, from the cross assuring the penitent thief of association in paradise with Himself (43). He thought too of His mother, and confided her to the care of the Apostle John (John xix. 25-27). He uttered too that awful cry as the three hours of supernatural darkness terminated (Matt. xxvii. 46). He was concerned too that all prophetic Scripture concerning Himself should be fulfilled (John xix. 28-30). And then, after one more utterance, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," His voice was silent in death, for he gave up the ghost (Luke xxiii. 46). Did remorse seize the spectators, who smote their breasts and returned (48)? But remorse could not undo the past. That was beyond recall.

We have so far reminded our readers of man's treatment of the Lord Jesus on that dark day. What a contrast are His utterances to the clamour for His death, and the revilings

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of the multitude, in which all classes had joined. But what had God done throughout all those hours? No voice had been heard from heaven speaking in tones of thunder to overawe the persecutors. No angel with drawn sword had appeared to smite down the opponents of God's Son. Was God indifferent to that which was passing upon earth? Never had the Son been more precious to His father (John x. 17). As yet, however, the only intimation of heaven's concern had been that mysterious darkness, which for three hours overspread the land. But now, when men had carried out to the full their will, God began to work, and that in a way none could have expected. He worked in marvellous grace, though accompanied with power. To Matthew (xxvii. 51-53) must we turn for the fullest account of it. For whilst both Mark and Luke have noted the rending of the veil, all else that took place has only been preserved in the Gospel of Matthew, the Publican. "And behold," he writes, "the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Of what did all this speak? It was surely fitting that at His death, who upheld all things by the word of His power, nature should be convulsed by the earth quaking and the rocks being riven. But other remarkable signs there were. The veil was rent in twain, and the graves were opened. The veil was rent in *twain*, be it observed. Not simply a rent made in it, but rent in twain, and that from the top downwards. The priest who officiated at the golden altar at the offering of that evening's sacrifice, we suppose, must have seen it, a mysterious act, and one confronting him, as

he stood at the altar in the holy place. Suddenly the holiest was opened to his view, and nothing any longer barred the way into it.

From the time of the erection of the Tabernacle till then a veil had hung dividing the holy place from the most holy. Why was that? and of what did the veil speak? It was put up by God's express direction (Exod. xxvi. 31-33), and no priest could pass it. Only on the Day of Atonement did the High Priest enter within it, and then in a prescribed dress, and in a specially appointed way. Under the law, favoured though Israel were, they could never enter into the presence chamber on earth of their God.

Further, there was this peculiarity about the veil. It was made of specific colours, viz., blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, colours the order of which could never be reversed; for they expressed the history of a Man, the like of whom had never appeared when Israel were in the wilderness. And of one Man only did they portray the history—the Man Christ Jesus. And that history is still an unfinished one, for the scarlet colour came after the purple, and not the purple after the scarlet. Would the reader ask what did the different colours signify? To Numbers iv. 4-14, we must turn for the answer, and find it in the different coloured clothes in which the ark, the table of shewbread, and the vessels connected with the brazen altar, were severally enwrapped. The blue spoke of the Lord as the heavenly one. The purple spoke of His sacrificial death. The scarlet tells of the glory in government with which He will be arrayed in a coming day. For of Him, and of Him only is it true, that His death precedes His reign. Further into this subject we cannot here enter.

The veil then spoke of the Man Christ Jesus. Till He made atonement by His blood there would be no living way

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for men into the presence of God. But He died, and God rent the veil, the token that through it now believers can draw nigh into the holiest. Of this, Heb. x. 19, 20, assures us. We pass, as it were, through the veil, approaching our God only in that way. Rent in *twain* was it, and we, as it were, pass through it. But no child of Adam can find a new and a living way into the divine presence, save as he draws nigh *through* the veil, owning his need of the atoning sacrifice of Christ to be at home in the presence of God.

But we must hasten on. The other remarkable event was the graves being opened. But who profited by this? Saints, we reply, and saints only. "Many bodies of the *saints* which slept arose, and come out of their graves after His resurrection; and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). Ocular demonstration was afforded that death could not hold in its grasp the bodies of saints one moment longer than God should will it. We view these saints as an earnest of the first resurrection. But all in order. Christ, the first fruits, He rose first, they rose after Him (1 Cor. xv. 23).

That fifteenth of Nisan was drawing to a close. It began with the Lord announcing of His passion unto His disciples. It ended with His body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. It had witnessed what man's heart is, and what men could do to the Lord, when all restraint on them was removed. It attested the abounding grace that was in the heart of Christ, and bore witness to His perfect obedience to all the will of God. And it intimated by the rent veil and the graves opened, what God in righteousness could permit by virtue of the atoning death of His well-beloved Son.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—IV.

(Chap. ii. 11-22.)

AFTER speaking, then, of what was true of them as saints in Christ, the Apostle proceeds to give the call to remember what was once true of them as Gentiles, a remembrance which would indeed enhance the grace that placed them upon the ground they then confessedly occupied.

Gentiles they were, and branded as the "Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." It is evident Paul is only speaking of the Jews in an outward way, and by no means recognises the circumcision as real—"made by hands." The Jews claimed to be the Circumcision. What that should mean the Apostle has fully and clearly set forth in Romans ii. 17-29. And, writing to the Philippians of that which is inward and spiritual, he says, "We are the circumcision, who worship God by the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (iii. 3). We, Paul wrote, for in this Jew and Gentile both share.

What they were morally has already been demonstrated (vers. 2, 3). Of their utterly destitute condition as respects their right to blessing and privilege, the Apostle now speaks. "At that time ye were without Christ." A concise yet full statement, clearly revealing how forlorn was their condition. Barren and desolate indeed; for possessing Christ is to possess all things, and to be without Him is to be entirely outside the sphere of blessing. All the promises are to be made good through Christ. The sure mercies of David will certainly be secured through Him (Isaiah lv. 3; Acts xiii. 34). But they formed no part of that privileged people,

being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. To belong to that nation was no mean privilege, possessing advantages, as they did, above and beyond all others (Rom. iii., ix.). In her day the Syrophenician woman must have keenly felt what it was not to belong to that favoured people. To them the oracles of God had been committed; they possessed the "covenants of promise," to which Gentiles were strangers. The hope which such could awaken they knew not. No ray pierced the idolatrous darkness by which they were surrounded. Without hope they must have been strangers to joy; and as, in heading up this picture of their wretchedness, we read that they were "without God in the world," we can surely say that not one spark of real joy enlivened the dulness that shrouded their hearts. Without Christ! Without God!! What a condition to be in. Of the full import of these words, we who have been brought up in Christian times, have, perhaps, though once sinners of the Gentiles, no full conception; yet, as knowing the difference between merely tasting the heavenly gift (Heb. vi. 4) and feeding upon Christ (John vi. 48-58) we are able in measure to understand this vivid description of Gentile destitution.

But all this is now altered, for what is there grace cannot effect? The distance is for ever abrogated, even though it was great—"afar off." In Christ there is no privileged class or nation (Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11), and by the blood of Christ Gentiles are made nigh; for that is as efficacious for them as for the Jews. The blood has laid the foundation for the free, full outflowing of God's mercy and grace, and now both occupy the same ground.

Between Jew and Gentile there existed variance and hatred which ages had not effaced; and although the former held the truth in unrighteousness it is true, yet they sought to zealously guard what pertained to Judaism. Did not his

countrymen charge Paul with profaning the temple by introducing Greeks there? So we read in Acts xxi. 28. "For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed Paul had brought into the temple" (verse 29). Who will remove the variance that thus existed, and likewise the enmity found in every heart towards God? We are here informed. All contending interests unite and become common interests because of Christ; "for He is our peace who hath made both one." Thus both are linked with the risen, glorified Christ, and the middle wall of partition which separated dispensationally has been broken down; for by His death Christ has abolished the enmity, and removed that which in a ceremonial way gave them alone access to God. The shadow gives place to the substance which is of Christ (Col. ii. 17); and since both are alike indebted to Him, both find in Him a common centre. By the cross He reconciles both unto God in one body, effectually removing by that death of His the enmity that existed in every heart; and all estrangement completely gone the once separated Jew and the idolatrous Gentile are brought into illimitable privileges impossible for them to have known in their former condition. The message of peace, the call of grace had reached both alike, having been proclaimed "to you which were afar off, and to them that are nigh" (ver. 17).

"For to make in Himself of twain one new man," we read. It seems almost irrelevant to call attention to the fact that this term should be distinguished from the term "*the new man*," by which the nature we have as born of God is known in Scripture (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10), and is in contrast to "*the old man*," the fruit of which characterises all when unconverted. But this "*one new man*" is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, exalted by grace to the

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enjoyment of blessings in common, and knit together to form the one body of Christ. Blest privilege to be so favoured!

Reconciliation having been effected, peace having been proclaimed, of which Christ on high in His own person is the unfailing assurance, access unto the Father through Him by one Spirit is the blessed result. Of the family relationship this reminds us, for the way to the Father is open. And here there are no limitations, for those once Gentiles, equally with those once Jews, draw near to the same Father, enjoying a nearness unknown before to even those that were nigh. Both form part of the redeemed family. Access tells of holy liberty, not indeed participated in in any fleshly, outward way, since it is through Christ in the energy and communion of the Holy Spirit that all approach; but, as numbering with those who have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, to such the Father is accessible. Precious resource! which is indeed the common heritage of the family of God.

“Reconciled to *God*.” “Access to the *Father*.” These truths furnish us with no indirect proofs of the abiding value of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, or of the infinitude of love which has wrought for, and been bestowed upon us. Rather they positively declare that what has been done infinite love alone could plan, and boundless grace alone could accomplish.

What can be deduced from the teaching we are now contemplating? This the Apostle proceeds to record. Once outside the pale of blessing, as Gentiles they occupied the place of aliens. That was now for ever over; for brought into association with all the saints, with them they were *fellow-citizens* in the enjoyment of like privileges and rights. Christianity knows nothing about privileged classes; for, by grace, common to all, has the title to partake of these joys been conferred. Separation from the world is here enjoined

as each is directed to the company of the saints, whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20).

But likewise they were of "the household of God." Men esteem it an honour indeed to form part of the household of an earthly monarch. What an inestimable blessing must this be, then, which thus intimately connects with God. Earthly distinctions which men so prize are often valueless and always fleeting. They cannot, therefore be compared with what is eternal and incomparable. Oh ! to fully realize this, and so be found valuing aright the blessedness of the place of intimacy into which we are introduced.

Still further, however, in the unfolding of privilege are we conducted ; for as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, they formed living stones in the spiritual house of which Peter speaks (1 Peter ii. 5), Christ Jesus Himself forming the chief corner stone, The Lord had declared "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi. 18), thus announcing both the foundation upon which it rests, for Peter had then given his confession of Him as the Son of the living God, and also who was to be the builder. "In whom," we here read, "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (ver. 21). A view we thus get of a progressive work that is being carried on unceasingly and unfailingly, and will continue until the last one has been gathered in who is to share in this glorious privilege. "*Groweth* unto an *holy* temple." It grows, and so is not viewed as yet complete ; it is unto an holy temple, and consequently wood, hay, stubble can have no place in it. Christ builds it, and hence its character and security are both assured.

But there is yet another truth mentioned full of practical importance to our souls. God has a dwelling-place on earth still. "In whom ye also are builded together an habitation

of God through the Spirit." The distinctive feature of Israel's blessing was that God dwelt amongst them. Redeeming them by His outstretched arm from the cruel bondage of Egypt, He then informed Moses that He would take up His abode in the midst of His people. "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8). And graciously Jehovah deigned to give full instructions as to how that sanctuary was to be constructed. The tabernacle was reared up on the desert sands and the glory of the Lord filled it. Thus he manifested His presence (Ex. xl. 34). And around this habitation He arranged His people. In their midst verily He was (Num. ii.). But presently the tabernacle was superseded by the temple exceeding magnificent, as the people were found in the land under the rule of Solomon.

That, however, no longer exists. Yet God has His dwelling-place now? He has, and it is formed of Christians who are builded together through the Spirit. What an immense privilege to form part of the habitation of God! No blessing enjoyed by the Jews before could compare with it; and that Gentiles should be sharers also in such a privilege was unique. Paul teaches that they do. "In whom *ye* also are builded together," etc. What loss is involved when the saints of God fail to realize the immensity of blessing divine grace has brought them into. It remains a fact indeed, though all should forget it; but God, who has given us such instructions, would have each of His own consciously enjoying all that His grace has bestowed. May our souls imbibe the blessedness of what we have been musing upon; and, as recounting the privileges that those who once were without Christ and without God are now made partakers of, may they well up in praise to Him ceaselessly.

H. F.

GRACE.

WE speak of grace frequently, and in a very general way associate it with that aspect of things to some extent measurable in our minds, and so come to regard it as a feature of God's goodness in the shape of unmerited favour bestowed upon us (which thing, of course, is true), with the consequent result that we find ourselves casting about for some adequate illustration by means of which to explain the nature of the *grace of God towards man*.

Our noblest and best illustrations compare feebly indeed with the incomparable and measureless grace of God. One of the sweetest illustrations of it recorded at all perhaps, if we except for the moment the Lord Jesus in His sacred path of lowly grace, is instanced in 2 Samuel ix. It is there spoken of as "the kindness of God," although the act only of one man towards another. Blessed and noble as was this act of favour, how immeasurably greater is the activity of God Himself in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. If we consider for a moment what we were, as viewed by God who is holy, whose eye rested on all our waywardness in our lives here, and who had taken particular account of our many sins and disobedience, if we but consider how exceedingly great was the gulf our sin had placed between us and God, then shall we cease to speak of ourselves as unworthy merely, and grace as unmerited favour; and, on the contrary, own our altogether unfitness for God's presence at all. I may bestow very distinct favour on some person who from a point of merit is not in the least entitled to it, and this would be "unmerited favour," but that person may never have been, and need never be, such that he was too socially demoralised to be accepted in my presence. But God, on the other hand, not only bestows favour on persons who are unworthy (we know we are this), but He bestows out of

the pure love of His heart His free favour on those who, in the nature of things, have proved themselves unacceptable by their enmity of mind and wicked works.

To fathom the infinite depths and blessedness of this grace will never be possible for man. To prove its untellable sweetness is possible now, and will be throughout eternity. I can never know down here how great has been God's mercy towards me, and how touchingly tender the compassions of His heart that moved Him in the sovereignty of His grace to save me. I shall know something of that more fully by and by. But I can know, thank God, that He loved me when there was no love in my heart towards Him, and so effectually did He give expression to His love that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that I might live through Him. This is grace indeed, most wonderful grace, "the grace of God which bringeth salvation;" but I must follow the pathway of that holy Son of God, from the banks of the Jordan to the cross of Calvary, through those many scenes of trial, privation, sorrow and humiliation crowded into that brief space of time with its closing moments of unutterable grief and suffering, to understand what is meant for God to show kindness and favour towards mankind. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. How much is covered by this eternity alone will unfold. Not only did He become poor, in a world which most rightfully belonged to Him as its Creator, but that the counsels of God in grace might be fully accomplished in blessing for the sinner, He entered into conflict with all that held captive in sin and misery poor ruined, fallen man; and in the conflict, through death slaying death and getting a complete victory over him that wielded its power, and by His sufferings and death of shame upon the

cross so completely glorifying God that it could be said of Him, "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." And this, dear reader, and very much more, that the grace of our God might be made to rest on poor, fallen, sinful man. This indeed is favour, and did it stop here, so far as we the recipients of it are concerned, it would be most wonderful. To know God now as Father, to have the joy of His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, to feel that measureless gulf which once separated us from all happy association or communion with God has been removed and that we can draw near into His presence as children before a father, to have all the horrors of coming judgment dispelled, and a sense of absolute security in the soul from every boding ill, and a restful consciousness that my sins, for which I most truly deserved to be judged, have all been fully atoned for by another, and written off as no longer chargeable against me—all this would be most wonderful, most blessed grace to us as sinners; but grace, as bestowed by God, goes far beyond even all this. While it has made all these things to be true of us, it has also made the fullest provision for our safe transportation over the changing scenes of time, rough seas and stormy skies intervening. It has purposed us to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, and that with our blessed Lord Jesus, through whom God's grace has reached us. Do we rightly or adequately appreciate this exceeding blessing bestowed upon us? Do we live constantly in grateful acknowledgment of our enormous indebtedness to God for such undeserved goodness? Alas! we know too often the opposite to be the experience of our souls here. God give us each one, in the obedience of faith, to seek to be followers of Him as dear children that we may rejoice His heart who has bestowed so much upon us.

R. N.

EDIFICATION.

THE building up or edifying of God's saints lay much on the heart of the Apostle Paul. He wrote in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (xii. 19), "We do all things dearly beloved for your edifying." In his first letter he wrote (vi. 12) that all things were lawful to him, but all things were not expedient; and again in the same Epistle (x. 23), "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." Paul's heart was in tune with the Master's heart. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). Colossian i. 29, tells us how truly Paul had his Master's purpose ever before him. He writes "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

It was not that Paul had, as an Apostle, liberty from his Master to speak among the saints when they came together, but he earnestly desired that what he might say would be to their profit. The gift of tongues in which he more than any one participated (1 Cor. xiv. 18), had no value to him save as he could edify the assembly. "To each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit" (1 Cor. xii. 7). He that prophesieth—he who was instrumental in bringing the conscience of the hearers into the presence of God, through the Word he ministered, was a prophet. The woman at Sychar's well discerned by the effect of the Word

she listened to that the speaker was a prophet. It is fleshly contention to talk of a "right" to speak, pray, or lead in praise. We cannot think of our having any rights in our Lord's presence, and if one is conscious of being an "oracle of God" (1 Peter iv. 11), there will be some measure of contriteness of spirit. Someone said "A brother's spirit is more edifying than his communication." He will be aware that the truth he presses on others is much required by himself. He will seek to consider the application to himself lest he be found wanting and others are his shame.

The maintenance in the soul that all things are to be done to edifying will prevent the setting forth of favourite subjects, and subjects which lead to controversy. Then at times evil breaks out—the aim should be that it may be *covered* consistent with holiness. We are to remember also the word in Galatians vi. 1, "Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

In the assembly of God there is no room for man displaying himself, but there should be room for the Spirit of God to order and divide severally as He will. We are instructed how to behave ourselves in the house of God. *All believers* are stones in this divine building. When saints of God are gathered together in Christ's name, the principles we find in Scripture given at the beginning are the only guidance we have, but these with an ungrieved Holy Spirit are divinely sufficient.

The Apostle (1 Cor. xii. 15, 16, 17) introduces praying and singing also. When one prays or praises in the assembly he prays or praises as the mouthpiece of the company, and manifestly there are many things one can pray for, or seek guidance regarding, in the closet which would be detrimental if publicly mentioned. As to praise, we cannot pitch too high a note as to Christ's worth. He is "ten thousand

times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" more worthy than we can say, but have we not to be careful as to the words which express our own state? Let us remember we profess to be singing to the Lord. If we offer praise to the Lord the words, and tunes we use also, will be all brought under His eye and for His ear, and thus our aim will be that He may be glorified.

The Apostle John could say "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). In writing to the children he wrote that they might have fellowship with him. Thus it was a question of the truth his own soul was possessed by, taking possession of others. The principle holds good in our day. In days of declension like the present, days when truth is being given up, we are little in the condition to speak of our fellowship being with the Father and with His Son, for in John's Epistle it was the actual state of his soul, and not as in the Corinthian Epistle (1 Cor. i. 9), the calling that had been made known to them.

Some may say that this would make one afraid to sing, pray, or speak in the gathering of God's saints. This would not be a spiritual reflection, but Ecclesiastes v. 2, furnishes God's children with a suitable word, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."

In Israel, as recorded in the law of sacrifice in Numbers xv. 1-11, we find the drink offering of wine which spoke of joy, and the amount of wine was regulated by the amount of oil. The oil, being typical of the Holy Spirit, would teach us that joy which was in excess of the oil was a mere human and fleshly effort, and did not find its way into the holiest.

May our hearts seek true exercise in these things so that ministry may be in the spirit, and worship may be the fruit in our souls of faith's apprehension of the grace and glories of the Father and the Son.

D. S.

WHAT WILL IT BE ?

WHAT will it be to see Thy face Lord Jesus,
All radiant and beautiful beyond compare ?
And seeing be conformed unto Thy image,
All perfect, like Thyself divinely fair.

What will it be to hear Thy voice Lord Jesus ?
Like some sweet music thrilling all the heart
With joy unspeakable. The soul for ever
Filled with the bliss of being where Thou art.

What will it be to taste Thy love Lord Jesus,
In fullest measure while the cup runs o'er ?
As in the stillness of Thy holy temple
We rest at last in rapture to adore.

At home with Thee in bliss that knows no ending ;
In deepest fellowship, in cloudless light ;
Thyself the centre of that unveiled glory,
Centre for evermore of God's delight.

A. S.

AFTER THE ASCENSION.

FORTY days had elapsed since the Lord's crucifixion, at the sight of which, after His death, the crowd, beholding the things that were done, had beaten their breasts and returned to the city. Time enough then there was for remorse to have worked, and regret to have been manifested, leading to repudiation on the part of individuals of concurrence in the sentence and death. But none that we read of were thus stirred. Those who had known Him in life, and had followed Him before death, kept together, a company apart from the rest of the nation; and just one hundred and twenty of them frequented the upper room, in which the eleven abode (Acts i. 13) in the metropolis of Judæa.

Was the movement inaugurated by our Lord to die out? That was not the purpose of God. For before His death, in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. xxii. 1-14) the Lord had foreshadowed the character of a new service that would commence, inviting souls to fill every seat in the house, that the wedding should be furnished with guests. Again, on the night before His death, the Lord intimated in His prayer to His Father, uttered in the hearing of the eleven, that they should be signally honoured by becoming channels of gospel preaching to their fellows on earth (John xvii. 20). On the day He rose He spoke of the same (Luke xxi. 47); and assured them afresh of blessed results of their labour (John xx. 22, 23). And forty days later His last words, ere He ascended, spoke of this unchangeable purpose of our God. "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses, both in

Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

A work, the extent of which had never been previously conceived, should go forward through the agency of feeble men, setting aside all national distinctions, and overleaping previous dispensational boundaries, a work under the guidance and in the power of the Spirit of God. Of that men, children of Adam, would be the subjects; and blessing, such as had never been opened out in any divine communication, could result (Ephes. i. 3-14). God desired to bless creatures utterly unworthy of it, and that after the world's open rejection of His Son.

The fortieth day after the resurrection had come, and the Lord leading out the eleven as far as to Bethany, ascended to heaven whilst in the act of blessing them. Crowds had witnessed His crucifixion. Just eleven saw Him ascend heavenward. He, the rejected of the world, had departed to heaven. Men here did not want Him. They did not care for Him. Were the beings in the heavenlies as unconcerned? The rejected One of the world passed through the heavens in triumph. Earth knew it not. The eleven even saw it not. But ascending up on high, as revelation tells us, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (Ephes. iv. 8). From that spot near Bethany it was a triumphal progress through the ranks of evil angelic agency in the heavenlies to His seat at the right hand of God (Mark xvi. 19), on the throne of the majesty in the heavens (Hebrews viii. 1).

God's well beloved and only begotten Son rejected and crucified, no sign had been manifested of divine displeasure. His rejection and death, however, betokened man's condition, in enmity to God and to Him. What should follow? Condign punishment, everlasting perdition? Men deserved

that. What did follow? A ministry of reconciliation provided by the God of all grace.

What, we must however ask, had previously gone on? "God," we read, "was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 18, 19). The Lord Jesus as present in humiliation on earth was sent for that effect. The parable of the husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-41) acquaints us with it in special relation to Israel. And the Lord's own declarations affirm it as regards the world—"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness." And again, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John xii. 46, 47). "I am come," He declared, "that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly" (John x. 10). God then was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but the world was not reconciled, as the crucifixion of His Son manifested. Crucifying Him between two thieves, the world thereby declared itself to be in utter alienation from God.

Improvement to be expected from man in himself was hopeless. A better feeling towards God to spring up naturally in the human heart? Would that be the dream of an enthusiast? It could be nothing but a dream incapable of realisation. Man needed spiritual life. He needed to be born again. He needed to be converted. All this was beyond his power to effect or obtain. Who can impart life to himself? Who can effect his own birth? To ask such questions is enough. If then the need is admitted, it follows that nothing short of divine grace in power can meet it. Man then, for all that, is wholly cast upon God. But the world having rejected His Son, what next could be looked for? Man had not turned to God in contrition. Could God show grace to man? That which emphasized man's hatred

to his Maker enabled God in righteousness to be gracious to His creatures. Atonement by blood, made by the Lord Jesus Christ, grace could in righteousness be offered to men. Hence a new departure in God's ways was displayed. He raised up a ministry of reconciliation, entrusting its exercise to those who were themselves consciously subjects of divine saving grace. "All things," writes the Apostle Paul, "are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 18). First reconciled themselves, then entrusted with such a ministry; who so well as they could discharge it? Angels can speak of the greatness, and glory, and holiness of God. But of His saving grace the subjects of it are the fitting, the suitable exponents. And Paul, formerly a bitter persecutor of the Church, when converted, became an unwearied labourer in the ministry.

How the appointment of this ministry on the part of God speaks to us of His heart, and of His longing desire to save souls. Even the crucifixion of His Son did not dry up the stream of divine compassion. On the contrary, it afforded ground for its rich, its full outflow; and He who provided the ministry, furnished the labourers with the message to be delivered. The work should not suffer by failure on the part of the human instruments to understand the character of the message. Nothing should be wanting on God's part to reach hearts if possible, and to win souls to Christ. "He hath made Him," so runs the words of reconciliation, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). Exercised hearts might dwell on the enormity of the guilt, and be discouraged. Man's purpose in the crucifixion of Christ had been one thing, God's purpose was another. Men crucified the Lord as a blasphemer and a traitor. God made Him to

be sin for us, who knew no sin. The holiness of the Lord is carefully guarded, whilst His death on the cross is fully admitted. Man's treatment of Him will never be forgotten. God's purpose in that death the redeemed will ever remember with thankfulness of heart.

Reconciliation was needed. God to be reconciled to men? No. Men needed to be reconciled to God. Christ openly rejected, ambassadors have been sent by God on behalf of Christ, as though, says the Apostle, God did beseech by us, we pray on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. v. 20). The enmity of man's heart declared, the remedy for it is provided. God desires to remove it, and that after His Son had been received up into heaven. A substitute for men had been found. The sin offering has been accepted. The sinless One made sin for us, the exhortation comes, "We then as workers together with Him (*i.e.* God), beseech that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith I have heard Thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured Thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians vi. 1, 2). This presses on the notice of all the importance and character of the *present* time. But our thoughts are carried on likewise to the *future*, as the Apostle declares that which concerns the glory of our God, in that we who believe "should become God's righteousness in Christ." Now reckoned righteous by faith, we shall be displays of God's righteousness when in heavenly glory with Christ. Of this Psalm l. 6; xcvi. 6, both speak. And it will be everlasting to His glory.

Reconciliation with God! Can that be possible? Christians in early days knew it, and joyed in their God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 11). What reconciled them can reconcile souls still. It is the wonderful tidings of the death

of God's Son (Rom. v. 10). And those who had never seen the Apostle Paul, to whom he had never in person ministered, on believing the gospel of their salvation were reconciled, as Colossians i. 21, 22, states. God had done it for them by the ministry of Epaphras. He does it still by the ministers of the Gospel.

What a God is ours! We have looked at His ways in this little series of papers, after the *fall*, after the *flood*, after the *death of Christ*, and after the *ascension*. After the fall He clothed the guilty pair. After the flood He blessed Noah and his sons. After the death of Christ He opened a way for us into His holy presence. After the ascension He provided a ministry of reconciliation, and furnished His agents with the message. God did all this. And the Persons of the Godhead are each seen acting for man's blessing. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John iv. 14). The Son, as ascended, gives gifts unto men (Ephes. iv. 8, 11, 12). And the Holy Ghost fits each one for His service (1 Cor. xii. 7-11). God for us! Yes, indeed. May each reader of these papers be really on earth for God.

C. E. S.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—V.

(Chap. iii.)

THE champion of the Christian faith now presents himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." To them he had been sent (Acts xxvi. 17, 18); to them he had preached boldly and freely, and richly had his labours been blessed. For them he was now a prisoner, and though no longer free to visit them he was privileged to address them

in writing, and his letter loses none of its force or sweetness from being written under such untoward circumstances. The reference to his imprisonment might touch a chord in their hearts that, vibrating, would immediately awaken many a remembrance of his zealous service when labouring in person amongst them. That it should not have an ill effect upon them the Apostle prays at the end of the chapter.

Chapter iii. is a rather long parenthetical section giving the unfolding of the mystery revealed to Paul and the truths connected therewith. For he was the minister of the uncircumcision, and the word for them had been committed to him: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward" (ver. 2). What that comprised, and how he became acquainted with it, we are here informed. "*By revelation*" the mystery was made known to him. Not by superior skill had he discerned it; neither was it the fruit of his own mind. This is manifestly true, for what was thus unfolded was altogether beyond the ken of the human mind, or the capacity of the human heart. The wisdom shown is incomprehensible; the largeness of love is beyond all measure. Paul, with his Jewish prejudices, would never of himself have conceived of such marvellous blessing for Gentiles. God alone could make it known, as the conception of such could alone be His, and by revelation he instructed the Apostle about this mystery of Christ. From heaven the knowledge is vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit, when Christ glorified is seated there.

And it had pleased God to keep this mystery shut up in His own heart until His rightful moment had arrived to make it known to the sons of men. In former dispensations it had been hidden from them. Granted that Scripture

refers, in many passages, to blessing for Gentiles, yet where is it unfolded that such blessing as is here brought out was to be theirs? Co-heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ—such are the inestimable privileges revealed in the mystery of Christ as the portion of those Gentiles now made nigh by His precious blood.

In former days the Jews were marked off as a separated people, and to step over the barrier erected by Jehovah was wrong. Association with Gentiles they were not to have. But now, in the manifold wisdom of God, when Christianity supersedes Judaism, Gentiles are co-heirs with saved Jews to the heavenly inheritance. Likewise they are of “the same body,” which body is the Church, the bride of Christ. Wondrous mystery! We *now* see that it was foreshadowed of old that Christ was to have a bride, His chiefest joy and delight, as Adam had his Eve; but nowhere do we read, nowhere can we perceive it taught that that bride was to be composed of Jews and Gentiles.

How far short of the truth it is, then, to speak of the Church as existing from the commencement of time. No, Christ had first to go down into death and triumphantly come forth ere that could be built against which the gates of hades should not prevail. The revealing of this mystery was consequently reserved for the moment when, man having been completely tested, Christ refused and crucified, the grace of God could flow out in all its vastness as well towards Gentile as towards Jew, both undeserving, but both made to prove mercy's full weight. Oh, the sweetness of it! What an answer the blessed God should receive from those who are participators in this.

Now Paul was made a minister of this mystery according to the grace of God, who wrought effectually in him for this purpose. But who was Paul? Let us just briefly notice

the various ways in which he speaks of himself, honoured servant as he was, for it is edifying so to do. Greatly favoured he was, but he loved to give all the praise to the One from whom all blessing flows, and to attribute that which was effectuated in his soul wholly to grace (1 Cor. xv. 10).

When comparing himself with other sinners he was the chiefest (1 Tim. i. 15), howbeit mercy had yet reached him, and he stood forth as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe. When dwelling on the marks of favour shown to him in choosing him to be the vessel to bear Christ's name to the Gentiles, he knew himself as "less than the least of all saints" (ver. 8); for he was aware that it was sovereign grace alone that bestowed upon him the manifest privilege of making known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Again, would any draw a comparison between himself and others? Then, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing;" for what had not grace wrought for him who was also "the least of the apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 9; 2 Cor. xii. 11). He would vindicate and magnify the grace that had so fully furnished him with all that was requisite to give him a place amongst the other twelve.

Such, according to his own showing, was Paul, and he counted it favour beyond measure to be so richly privileged. The unsearchable riches of Christ he preached, and earthly honours and distinctions can bear no comparison with that which has to be so described. Would that our souls were engrossed with all that is comprehended in that term, "*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" Recourse to the law for righteousness, or to the world for pleasure, we should never have; but daily occupation with Him "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" would be our constant delight.

To Paul it was given "to fill up the Word of God" (Col. i. 25), and this was accomplished as he opened out the mystery of Christ, and made all to see what was the fellowship of the mystery which, until then, had been locked away in the heart of God, so to speak, though closely connected with His glory and His counsels about Christ. It was His good pleasure to have it so, who was and is sovereign, having created all things, so that all were dependent upon Him.

His time having come when it was to be a mystery no longer, we learn that angels behold in the Church the all-various wisdom of God (ver. 10). Instruction for them there is through the Church, we are taught. There they behold the manifestation of the manifold wisdom of God; so we can gather that no angelic being even would have conceived such a wondrous thing as the unity of Jew and Gentile to form the mystic man termed "the Christ."

The ruin of the Church is a phrase, alas! too true in the way in which it is meant; for it is to the outward display of the oneness that should characterise the Church that such a phrase has reference. Yet, as we think of the counsels of God revealed and fulfilled, we see the present purpose of God accomplished—angels beholding *now* through the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Throughout all eternity the Church will occupy a place of blessing unique and precious (ver. 21; chap. i. 23), resplendent indeed with His glory; but now, through that upon which failure cannot be written, principalities and powers are provided with a picture, as it were, of God's many-sided wisdom, and this according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The mention of that One leads the Apostle to state what accrues to us through being partakers of His promise in

Christ, and through the relationship into which we are brought. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." This privilege, part of Christian blessing, he now makes use of as he prays for the saints. Being a prisoner Paul was solicitous lest they, thinking only of the circumstances which surrounded him, should become discouraged and faint-hearted. To "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" he addresses this petition, since it has for its subject the desire for the saints to become more practically acquainted with the intimacies of Christ's unending love.

How wonderful are the petitions in this Epistle! An Ephesian prayer meeting, how edifying! There the heart would go out in earnest entreaty for the preservation of all saints (chap. vi. 18), and likewise there would be the spontaneous desire that the whole Word of God might find an abiding place in their hearts, comforting in trial, encouraging amidst difficulty, and instructing always. Paul was no mean asker. He truly knew the One with whom he had to do. He knew that to bless was His great delight. He was aware of the desire of that One to have the household of faith enjoying the inexhaustible love of Christ. Upon this knowledge he counts and asks largely. How much we can learn from Paul in this connection. Does it not seem sometimes as if we are afraid to ask largely? though we hesitate not to be very lengthy in our requests. What God is, and is able to do formed the Apostle's standard.

That they might be strengthened inwardly he first prays, and this was to be effected by the Holy Spirit. Puny Christians, weaklings spiritually, are not able to apprehend with any degree of zest the incomprehensible joys of Christianity. Secondly, the desire is uttered that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The inner man braced

up and Christ filling the heart are the desires of the Apostle. And this for a purpose ; for thus strong, and faith in activity, the affections would be entwined about that blessed One, the very centre of God's counsels, and they would be fitted to intelligently apprehend the knowledge of God's glory and Christ's love. Such knowledge would overwhelm if they were weak ; or amaze, not delight, if not "rooted and grounded in love." Christ *dwelling* in the heart gives the necessary assurance to calmly survey with confidence the riches of glory unfolded.

"That ye," we read, "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"—of what? Of the vast range of new creation blessing ; in a word, of God's glory. For this sets us in a boundless sphere, without limit indeed, for where shall the circumference be set that is to enclose the fulness of His glory? But, thank God, this circle has a centre—Christ, for not only is there the glory to comprehend, but the love of Christ to *know*, though it be a love that passeth knowledge. Who can fathom it? Who can understand the mystery of love of which Calvary speaks? But it is that cross that brings it home to our hearts as a precious reality, and in this unknowable love we can rest and view the infinity of the glory of God.

The glories and splendours of a palace might well frighten if viewed apart from the love of the one who introduced to them and reveals them ; but, standing amidst the magnificence, almost overawing in its dazzling brightness, holding the hand, as it were, and reposing in the heart of such an one, there is the tremour of wondering delight and pleasure in the beauties so made known. And thus it is with God's glory and Christ's love. The latter is, indeed the assurance that we can complacently enjoy the former. This

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prayer treats of the present. May every saint be led now into the unfailing sweetness of the love of which it speaks.

Great are the desires of Paul; yet, in his closing words, he states that God "is able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think," and also ascribes "glory to Him in the Church unto all generations for ever and ever." No request of ours will overstep the limit of what He is able to do. The Church is to occupy a peculiar place of blessing and nearness everlastingly.

What comfort and encouragement must have been thus ministered by the prisoner of the Lord Jesus to those saints. It remains for us to-day. Let us, then, drink at this fountain; and despondency, away! faint heart, look up! and in the energy of the Holy Spirit realize afresh something of the fulness of Christ's love and God's glory.

H. F.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

IN order to understand what Scripture teaches on this important subject it will be necessary to bear in mind that the term "kingdom of heaven" supposes the absence of the King from the kingdom; or, more correctly, it views Him as having gone to heaven. Of course the Kingdom, in its entirety, comprehends both heaven and earth; but the parables of the kingdom of heaven deal with what is going on on the earth during the time of the King's absence from it, and cover, therefore, the whole period of Church history,

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but does not end with the translation of the saints at Christ's descent into the air. It lasts until His return in power and glory, accompanied by the armies of heaven (see Rev. xix.).

We must not look for much instruction with reference to Church privileges or responsibility. Such would be out of place in connection with teaching about the kingdom of heaven. To Matt. xiii. we must now turn. The chapter contains seven parables. That of the sower is not called a parable of the kingdom of heaven, for it describes what was being done whilst the King was still on earth. Six others there are, and they are divided into two threes, the first in each case giving the most comprehensive view. We are all, doubtless, familiar with the parable of the wheat and the tares, which is the first of the whole series. Both are found growing together in one field. That field is said to be the world. He who sowed the good seed was the Son of Man. The sower of the tares was the devil. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The tares are the sons of the evil one. Both, then, are found in the field growing together, and are to remain so until the harvest.

Must we then conclude that the tares are in the kingdom of heaven? In one sense they are; in another they are not. Circumstantially they are within the limits of the kingdom, but morally they form no part thereof. How often have we seen a wheat or a turnip field with some weeds growing here and there; yet we should say, That is a wheat or a turnip field. The wheat or the turnips are there for a set purpose by the farmer, but the weeds remain on sufferance, and are an offence to his eye and heart.

The Lord Jesus tells Nicodemus (John iii.) that without the new birth a man could neither see the kingdom of God

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nor enter it. An object lesson was furnished by the Lord to His disciples in Matt. xviii., when He called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We are not, therefore, left in doubt as to how God's kingdom, or as now spoken of "the kingdom of heaven," can be entered. So it is quite clear that while many may be in the field yet in reality they are not in the kingdom; and the time will come when "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The second parable likens the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Here we drop the large and comprehensive view, and concentrate our vision upon something small and insignificant in appearance—a single grain of mustard seed. Who would take account of that one seed sown in a whole field? Well, whatever man may think or say, that was the commencement of God's kingdom, and it would grow, as the figure states, and become a tree, so that birds might roost on its branches. The main thought for us here is the small and feeble way in which the thing started, and the certainty of its enlargement.

Next comes the parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. Much has been made by some expositors of the fact that it is a woman who is said to hide the leaven, the hiding being regarded as suspicious. It appears to us that this view is a mistaken one; as is also the regarding the leaven as evil. If we only bear in mind that the figures used picture to us

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the kingdom of heaven, we shall see at once that it cannot possibly be evil. God's kingdom evil? Impossible. The Lord borrows His illustrations from the domestic sphere, which is, of course, a woman's. She takes the leaven and hides it in the meal; but it will, it must spread. In the nature of things it will not remain hidden. It must work, and thank God it is so.

But some will say, Does not leaven always denote evil? Yes, we reply, when typically spoken of; but in this case it is not a type of anything in the future, but a figure of what was and still is, and so aptly illustrates one feature of the kingdom. Small and hidden away in one corner, as we say, at first, it was destined to spread, and so it has. Were we to regard leaven in this case as evil we should be teaching that the kingdom of heaven was evil.

The Lord now sends the multitude away (ver. 36) and goes into the house, where, at the request of His disciples, He expounds unto them the parable of the tares of the field. Having done this, He says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field" (v. 44). Observe he buys the field for the sake of the treasure. Much may be in the field beside the treasure, but it is the treasure that his heart is set on, and for which he pays such a price. So we have here a much larger and more comprehensive view than we find in that of the mustard seed, or in that of the leaven. Is it not strange that any Christian should have regarded this last parable as portraying a sinner selling all that he has to buy Christ? We may ask, What has a sinner to sell? and, Who can the buyer be? The sinner has his sins, and possibly some righteousnesses, which are called filthy rags. Who would buy these? Can Christ be bought? A sinner

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needs salvation, and this is God's free gift. We may, therefore, dismiss this view altogether. The buyer is Christ and the saints are the treasure. The field is the world. Christ gives Himself, or, in the language of the parable, sells all that He has and buyeth that field. How dear to Him that treasure must be! How concerned to possess Himself of it.

Next we learn something of what is included in the treasure, but for this the Lord gave another parable (ver. 45). "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." One pearl, that was all. How beautiful in His eyes! Do we not read, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). In this then we have a restricted view. And now follows the sixth and last of these parables of the kingdom recorded in Matt. xiii. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (v. 47). The larger view is again before us here. Good and bad fish were enclosed by the net, but the bad ones were not desired. No use could be found for them, so they were simply cast away. Within the confines of the kingdom outwardly they were, but were not of it morally; there for a season, but yet to be rejected as utterly useless.

We have before remarked that these parables of the kingdom of heaven cover the whole period between the King's going back to heaven and His return in power and glory, as described in Rev. xix.; and therefore, we shall look in vain for the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. This last we may well call *our* hope. It is true that the

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wheat in the first parable is gathered into His barn ; and in the last parable the good fish are put into vessels, but in both parables the angels do the work as regards the tares and the bad fish. Not so, however, at the first resurrection. Then the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout : He comes, blessed be His name. All is effected by His power, and it shall be ours to be with Him for ever. Blessed, thrice blessed hope !

But there are more parables of the kingdom of heaven to which we must now turn our attention, and in them we shall find much important instruction which the parables we have been considering do not present to us. It is often helpful to note well what led up to their utterance, as it casts a light upon what follows. To Matt. xviii. then let us turn. Deeply important truths for saints of God will be found in verses 15 to 20, and in ver. 21 : “ Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven.” This it was that led to the utterance of the parable of the kingdom of heaven immediately following (ver. 23 to the end of the chapter). Here we have a new aspect of the kingdom surely, dealing, as it does with individuals as servants who are to act to one another after the fashion and pattern of the King acting towards them. He, the King, has His rights, and takes account of each one of His servants. One was brought to Him deeply in debt, owing ten thousand talents. He could not pay. The King commanded that he should be sold, with his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The justice of this demand the debtor did not question, but “ fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” Whether he could ever have accomplished this is

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not disclosed ; but instead we have the grace and compassion of the King in what follows : “ Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him and forgave him the debt. But this same servant had a fellowservant who owed him a hundred pence, on whom he laid hands, taking him by the throat saying, Pay me that thou owest. But his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not ; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.” Evidently, therefore, the grace bestowed upon him had faded quickly from his memory, and had failed to form his character and govern his conduct. So grieved were the fellowservants that they went and told unto their lord all that was done. He called him, and said unto him, “ O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me : shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee ? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.”

Of course we are not called to forgive, where there has been no personal trespass, and not even then until it is acknowledged. Verses 15 to 18 must guide us in the matter of personal trespass. The offender is to be sought and every effort made to induce repentance ; but if pride and self-will block the way there cannot be forgiveness, but he is to be regarded as a heathen man and a publican, and is, of course, excluded from all fellowship by the assembly. So we may see that the man, who boasts of being the subject of divine grace, and yet has no grace to bestow upon one who has wronged him, when the indebtedness is fully owned, will find his boast an empty one ; for grace really received must and will form the character, and come out in

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our dealings with others when occasion calls for it. And, on the other hand, one who has trespassed against his brother, and cannot be induced to acknowledge his offence, forfeits all right to be accounted a Christian. Solemn lessons are these, and we do well to ponder over them.

But we must proceed. In chap. xix. the Lord had said to a rich young man who wanted to know what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me" (ver. 21). Full of sorrow he went away. And why? Had he seen that Jesus was not only a man, but God also, he would surely have hailed with delight the offer of such companionship. Good Master, he had called Him, but real goodness could not be found in any mere man. He loved his riches, and did not know the Son of God, and hence he went away. This led the Lord to say "That a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven" (ver. 23). It must be borne in mind that what is impossible with men is possible with God. Peter answers, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" Little enough had they left behind to follow Christ. Would it not have been better to have dwelt upon the honor to them in being called to follow Him? Nevertheless, the Lord, in His goodness, tells them that they would, indeed, be rewarded; nor they only, but that "every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life," adding these words, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

E. R. W.

(To be continued.)

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

(Concluded.)

THERE follows in chapter xx. another parable of the kingdom of heaven, in which it is likened to “an householder which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, agreeing with each one for a penny a day. At the third hour he went out and saw others standing idle in the market place, and said Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you, and they went their way. Again at the sixth and ninth hour he did likewise. At the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard : and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. When even was come the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, Call the labourers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour they received every man a penny. But when the first came they supposed that they should have received more ; and they likewise received every man a penny.” Dissatisfied, they murmured, “ saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong : didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is and go thy way ; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is

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thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen."

What a light this throws upon the subject of labour and its reward. The householder gave to each his due, but reserved to himself the right to determine what that reward should be. He would do what he would with his own. It was his undoubted right. Who could complain if he received all that was promised? Who would not be delighted to receive far more than he had reason to expect? It must be noticed that it was only to those hired early in the morning that the arrangement was made to give a penny a day for their work. At the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours all was left to the householder, the promise being, "Whatsoever is right I will give you." Happy those who love the King well enough to toil on, leaving all to Him, having perfect confidence in His wisdom, justice and generosity.

The next parable of the kingdom of heaven we shall find in chapter xxii., which is preceded by that of the householder who had planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. That takes us down to the death of His Son. Judgment is there announced, and the chief priests and Pharisees perceive its application is intended for them.

Then follows another parable of the kingdom of heaven, likened in this instance "unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son." How sharp the contrast! The murder of the son—that was what the husbandmen had done. The marriage of the son—that is the great business of the king. A great feast was prepared for the occasion and there were to be numerous guests, who were bidden. And who were they? "Beginning at Jerusalem" tells us they were the Jews. Already they had crucified the Son, and now they made light of this wonderful grace, and so they

would not come, but spitefully entreated some of the king's servants and slew them. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans fulfils ver. 7. "Then said the king to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests." Those said to be good were not invited on that ground any more than those said to be bad were in consequence of that to be excluded. Neither goodness nor badness was in question, but willingness to accept the king's gracious invitation. But if goodness, in the one case, gave no title to be present, and badness, in the other, was no ground for being shut out, there was one thing at least absolutely indispensable. So we read, " And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth " (vers. 11-13). Solemn, deeply solemn words are these.

To present oneself at the marriage feast without a wedding garment is to be completely out of harmony with the occasion. It displays no real love either to the king or his son ; and practically says : Anything of my own is quite good enough. What impudence ! What folly ! But some may ask, What does the wedding garment signify ? Without attempting to define with precision what it is, we can at least say it is something vital ; for he who has it not will not only be excluded from the feast, but be included in

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hopeless misery, indicated in those solemn words—darkness—weeping and gnashing of teeth. Without the new birth we certainly could not be present, and without a righteousness of God's providing we could not stand before Him.

In chap. xxiv., another parable of the kingdom of heaven is found, in which it is likened unto ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom. It opens up with a striking word—"Then," which clearly points to some definite period. It is a striking characteristic of this dispensation that souls truly converted are said to wait for God's Son from heaven (see Thes. i. 10). This parable, however, appears to us to be dealing with the state of things towards the end. Chapter xxiv. gives us the Lord's answer to the disciples' questions, three in number—(1) When shall these things be? (2) and, What shall be the sign of Thy coming? (3) and of the end of the world? In verse 42, having finished His answer, He gives a word of exhortation, "Watch, therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh," adding, "Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord shall make ruler of His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." The faithful servant looks after his Master's household during His absence, and waits for His return; whilst the evil servant says in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. Hence he quarrels with his fellow servants, and goes in for self indulgence. "But that servant's Lord will come on a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." How deeply solemn! May it speak to all our hearts and consciences. To serve Him is our

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duty. To wait for Him is equally so. Both should be a real delight.

But what has been the history of God's people during this dispensation, as regards this waiting and watching? The answer is, They all went to sleep. It was not that all Christian work had ceased; but this one striking and most definite characteristic was gone. All were asleep as to this hope—this watching and waiting for the bridegroom. We know well it has been so; and by God's grace we can say that there has been a call, a cry: "Go ye out to meet Him," and hearts have answered to that cry. We must not expect to find the Church's hope exactly here, for the parable is of the Kingdom and not of the Church; and the marriage spoken of here takes place on earth. The wise virgins are not said to be the bride either. But we are in the kingdom, and it is our bounden duty, as well as our happy privilege, to be waiting for Christ, and not as to affection merely, but with that practical readiness indicated for us in Luke xii. 35, 36, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He shall return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately." Real souls are reached and get ready, whilst those who were but mere professors are unmasked. The bridegroom comes. Those that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Solemn thought! Never would that door open again to those unready ones. They may call, and call aloud, but all in vain. No answer they receive, save those dreadful words, "I know you not." May we heed the warning with which this parable closes, "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (ver. 13).

The parable of the talents which follows, is not a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, although it is said to be so in the A.V., but a reference to the R.V. will shew that it is not. The truth it contains deals with those in the kingdom. May it be ours to profit by it. Here we close our little meditation on this interesting subject. Many are the imperfections doubtless, but to many it may prove helpful with God's blessing.

E.R.W.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—VI.

(Chap. iv. 1-16.)

At the commencement of the last chapter the Lord's suffering servant introduced himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. And again assuming that title he proceeds to exhort the saints, beseeching them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. All that has preceded this sets forth the magnitude of that vocation. They ranged under Christ and were likewise members of His body as we have already seen. Favoured indeed they were.

But privilege imposes responsibility, and consequently the Apostle desired the practical exhibition of the fruits of grace. To this end the word of exhortation is given, and note it is exhortation not prayer, reminding them of the spirit in which they were to act as they walked worthily, allowing nothing derogatory to their calling to show itself in them. With the flesh in each one ever ready to snatch the opportunity afforded it to act there was the need for tenderest consideration and care.

The mention of lowliness and meekness teaches about the mind that should possess them ; and as this first portion of the verse was obeyed, so would the latter part not be required. “With *all* lowliness and meekness” wrote the Apostle, and where would be the sensitiveness about self, where the call for longsuffering if these virtues were prominently in display in each saint? Longsuffering and forbearance were to be shown, and let us not forget that these are not called into exercise when all things are going smoothly and consistently, but when the cantankerousness of the flesh, when our fads, foibles and failures are persistently and openly present. Then comes the moment not to run away from, but to consider one another in love. Mutual forbearance tends to bind together as with a three-fold cord which is not easily broken. Patience is not a quiet acquiescence in what is wicked, though it be the first sign of an Apostle, for there is a time for all things—a time to exhort and a time to act.

Forbearing one another is the fruit of grace when true spiritual affection is the spring of it. Cold, formal duty effects very little, repelling rather than attracting ; but the love that bears all things, hopes all things, and seeks the good of our neighbour to edification works wonders in knitting hearts together. Oh, for more attention to this word.

Earnestness also is required, for diligence has to be used in “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (ver. 3). Paul here refers to something already *formed*, or it could not be called “the unity,” and which has to be *kept*. At Pentecost the Holy Ghost descended and believers were baptized into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13). Then it was that this unity was formed ; and now all are exhorted to keep it, not to make or to break it, which clearly is impossible. To merely own the existence of such a unity

would not be obediently heeding the apostolic injunction. More than that was necessary, even the seeking to give practical expression to the truth; and since it was to be *in the bond of peace* we observe that it must be to the outward manifestation of the oneness that should be shown by all believers that the Apostle makes reference. The exhortation is not to keep the bond of peace, but “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” With a constant proneness ever present to take umbrage at the slightest offence, and so to get apart in heart and ways from each other, we surely can perceive the point in the part of the verse that instructs about how it was to be done. For such a disposition the corrective is the bond of peace which is formed by the practical observance of ver. 2.

Let us remember that this unity was formed apart from human agency and exists, yes, though there be not one saint striving to own it, or seeking to express the blessed fact.

This unity then is divine, and comprehends all believers of this present dispensation; so we next read of the three-fold relationship known by each, commencing with “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling.” One body there is. Human systems and organizations in practice deny this, for they each professedly embrace only a portion of the members of this body. Verse 4 can only comprise those that have been the subjects of the operation of God’s Holy Spirit, and so it may be called the inner circle, which, be it remembered, is formed of every Christian—not one it excluded, and with it there is linked the “one hope,” which hope is inseparable from the possession of Christ.

But likewise there is the confession of Christ as Lord, as there is also the knowledge of the one God and Father, who,

though above all necessarily and through all, yet dwells in each believer. One Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father—blessed facts! all tending to strengthen each in “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” One Spirit that works, one Lord confessed, one God and Father owned, are the weighty truths presented by the Apostle to knit them together in closest bonds.

Having been instructed about the “one body,” we are next made acquainted with the unceasing care of Christ for that body, ministered, indeed, through those who are members of it, but yet flowing from Him. Will He ever fail to concern Himself about His body? Nay; for fullest provision He has made that there might be continuous growth, comfort, and edification. How could He be unmindful of that which He had obtained at such a cost (chap. v. 25; Matt. xiii. 46), and is so dear to Him. Paul was well aware that this was so; and surely none was better fitted to give such sweet revelations than the one who had heard the voice from the glory asking, “Why persecutest thou Me?” (Acts ix. 4)—Christ thus identifying Himself with those who were being persecuted.

To each one grace is given, and this just at it pleases Him; for as Head He is sovereign and bestows as He wills. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Each, then, has an individual place for which he is fitted by Christ, a wondrous fact that rules out all human qualifications absolutely. Education and culture will not make any the happy possessors of this grace. It is the *gift* of grace that flows down from an ascended Christ.

For from on high these gifts come, from Him who is the triumphant Victor, and these are, as it were, the visible trophies of His glorious victory over the enemy and all that

blocked the way to man being fully blessed. For as Man it is that Christ receives these gifts. "All power is given unto Me" (Matt. xxiii. 18); the Lord declared ere His ascension had taken place; but He goes up "far above all heavens that He might fill all things" (ver. 10), thus manifesting how perfect His conquest is. On earth He overcame, and through death, we read, He annulled the power of him that had the power of death (Heb. ii.), so we can understand how that "when He ascended He led captivity captive," and from glory He ministers that which He has obtained.

But explanation follows, and to what surprising sights are we directed. Up to the highest heights—above all heavens—He has gone, but not before He had wrought everything necessary for the entire fulfilment of God's counsels. This same One went into the grave—the lowest parts of the earth. There we see Him in humiliation, but now in exaltation; there we behold weakness, but now power; then the tomb was for the moment His resting place, now He sits upon the throne. The grave has been exchanged for glory; He lives who once was dead. "He that descended is the same also that ascended" (ver. 10), and surely the soul must needs find joy in meditating upon Him and exulting in His fulness.

And of this fulness His own receive, for He bestows gifts. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (ver. 11), and a consideration of each class will further bring home to our hearts the sweet truth of His ceaseless care. Apostles and prophets were the channels by which revelations were given and communicated to the Church. Hence in chapter ii. it is stated, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner

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stone.” Many of their communications have an abiding place in Scripture, in fact all of them that contained requisite truths for saints from that time onward.

With the foundation laid and the edifice reared, so to speak, the evangelist is provided to gather in. To those outside he addresses his message, declaring the glad tidings of free salvation through Christ Jesus, and it follows now as in the beginning, that the Lord adds to the Church daily such as are being saved (Acts ii. 47). The exercise of the evangelist's gift, then, is in connection with the body of Christ. A point, this is, that should be remembered. A soul saved is not only delivered from the consequences of its guilt, but is brought also into closest relationship with Christ.

And after the ingathering comes the need of caring for, and teaching those so blessed. Provision is made for this by the gifts of pastors and teachers. The former shepherds those who are Christ's; the latter unfolds the Word that God's mind might be intelligently apprehended and carried out. Can we not say that the pathway of the Master, who was indeed the great Shepherd and the perfect Teacher, gives us to perfection an exemplification of these gifts? With what tender solicitude did He care for His sheep. How patiently He instructed them, though His ways and words were not always, for the time being, appreciated or understood. The pastors raised up by Him He will embue with His Spirit, for they are a part of the gracious manifestation of the love He bears to His own. Teachers He also provides, that His own may not fail through ignorance and lack of instruction. Dependent all are upon Him.

And now we are informed of the purpose to be effected by these gifts. They are “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the edifying of the body of Christ” (ver. 12). Progress and growth, combined with

a real acquaintance with the One who is our Head, our Life, our All, should hence characterize His redeemed ones. The perfecting of the saints still goes on, and in view, too, of mutual help, comfort and edification. Every individual member is contemplated, and let us remark that the gifts are for the saints, and not the assembly to help the gifts; for where do we learn that the assemblies, as we are now sometimes taught, are to put the pastors and teachers on the right path, and show them the perfect way to exercise their Christ-given ability. Can human direction add to what Christ has done? He gives, and saints receive and profit. When that is refused which comes from Him, then He is displaced and spiritual loss follows.

Now His provision is permanent and does not cease when saints fail, but goes on "Till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."

Stability is to be effected likewise. Truth fortifies and gives weight and certainty to those who receive it, guarding all against the workings of the instruments of the adversary, the great imitator, who raises up men to deceive. Children they were not to be, but—and here the work of ministering comes in—they were to speak the truth in love to each other, and so "grow up into Him in all things who is the head, even Christ." Likeness to Christ is aimed at, and grace flows down from Him for this purpose. We read of the *effectual* working of each part. All are first dependent upon Him, and then interdependent upon each other. He fails not, and though, when there is the individual failure to perform the work given to each joint, there must be loss of joy and blessing, yet His love and care is not impaired, neither does He cease to remember the members of

His body. Blessed Lord, we thank Thee that this is so !

And here this section of our musings close, with the desire that every reader in dwelling upon a scripture so positive and precious, and in pondering the truth of Christ's ever present care and concern for His own, may find their hearts responding with praise and thanksgiving.

H.F.

2 CHRONICLES XXIX. 31.

“AND the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings: *and as many as were of a free heart, burnt offerings.*”

In the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, after the Temple had been cleansed and sanctified, and worship had again been restored (for in the reign of Ahaz his father, the doors of the temple had been closed and the lamps put out) according to the commandment of the Lord, we read that the king called the people to come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the Lord. The trumpets had been sounded as they were commanded to be in “the day of their gladness.” The ordinance of Jehovah as to the trumpets was “for ever throughout your generations” (Num. x.). I transcribe from ver. 10 the regulation as to the day of their gladness. “Also in the day of your gladness and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offer-

ings, that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God."

In obedience to the command the congregation "brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a *free heart*, burnt offerings."

It is deeply interesting the way the burnt offering is introduced in the ritual prescribed to Moses in the book of Leviticus. Jehovah there instructs Moses to say to the people, "If any of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, of the herd and of the flock" (chap. i. 2). It was not a sin offering because of sin committed—then they *must* bring an offering, or die under God's hand. But God anticipated that some of His people would desire to bring that which He found His delight in and could receive from their hands. He, in His love for them, makes known what He will accept—a bullock or a lamb, but "without blemish" was an absolute requisite if they were to be burnt on Jehovah's altar.

But in bringing such an offering, while it was not on account of sin committed, yet it was a sinner who brought it. This fact could not in anywise be ignored, but God in His grace provides that even the sinner can thus come to Him, and so it is added, "it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him (ver. 4). No other way could he come. He could not come shutting his eyes to the fact that he was a sinner, but while he knows full well that he is a sinner, he rejoices in the knowledge bestowed on him by God, that as he approaches to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to have laid by the priest on the altar that which had no blemish, that which was perfect in all its *parts*, as well as when seen in the whole, there was the full recognition by God of his sinnership and of the perfection for him of that one sacrifice. How otherwise could he

approach ! Impossible to come near. “ My sins, my sins and the judgment day ” would be the suited language—but his sins had been laid on the head of the scape goat and he was free. His heart was free also in the measure that he had been obedient to the commandments of Jehovah, and therefore he brings a burnt offering, which would all be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour. So now, while there is no attendance at the altar, no offering to be offered ever again, yet there is the divine recognition that we are sinners, and there is before the eye and the heart of God, the abiding value and virtue of that one offering, once offered, which gives liberty to enter into the holiest, and in this liberty we worship God, even the Father, and give thanks in His name. We draw nigh to God. We are exhorted to do so (Heb. x. 22). The Christian’s place is in the holiest, where the fragrance of Christ’s perfections are always present, and with our hearts filled with the Spirit’s testimony to His worth, our lips are moved to sing of Him in God the Father’s ear. How softly we would sing if we remembered to whom we were singing.

It should call for exercise of heart as to how far we are able to say :

“ Before the throne we prostrate fall
And worship Thee O God.”

I would be sorry to hear any one say, “ It does not matter *how* we do it, if our hearts are right.” Does it betoken that the heart is right to speak so ? Read Malachi and see. That Scripture will furnish the true answer.

Surely we have our song of praise and thanksgiving for the wondrous mercy that has visited us and saved us, but more is bestowed on us, the ransomed from hell ! Have we got free hearts—hearts at leisure from ourselves—hearts so bowed by beholding “ the beauty of the Lord,” that we are

lifted beyond the fact that our need as sinners has been met for ever, and we find ourselves in the presence of the Holy One of God who offered Himself without spot to God?

All was perfection in Him. "The flaying and cutting into his pieces," discovered no imperfection. The head, the fat, the inner man as well as the outward man disclosed nothing to prevent all being put on the altar. In the type (Lev. i. 9), "the inwards and the legs" had to be "washed with water"—but in the One who was prefigured in all this, there needed nothing to be done to make him perfect—to fit Him as a sacrifice, "an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord." The fire, divine judgment, that the Holy One of God passed through only discovered His perfection. He said, ere Calvary was reached, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30), and when on the cross, "Thou art holy," although the One He so addressed had forsaken Him (Psalm xxii. 3).

Therefore if we are found in the spirit of those who brought the burnt offering in Hezekiah's day, it will be the perfections of Christ the Son of the Father who gave Himself up to God's will, that will be filling the soul and flowing from the lips—the joy that there is One who in life and in death has fully glorified God.

In ourselves "blemish" is found in all we think, say, or do, but we know the One who was, and is "spotless, undefiled and pure."

Surely this is joy, dear saints of God, that as we have no sweet savour about us, we know Him who has. We have no devotedness, but we know the One who was completely devoted. He said, "I do always the things which please My Father." And again, "Therefore doth My Father love

Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again " (John viii. 29 ; x. 17).

In looking at Christ, delighting in Him in whom God has found His delight, we get "leaving behind our former self and ways." We listen, we hear words entreating us to be gentle, and meek, and lowly. The meekness, the gentleness of Christ, and His lowliness are delighted in, and when delighted in, we are "making it our aim" to be like Him. Thus beholding the glory of the Lord we are changed into His image, and there is produced in us that devotedness to our Lord and Master which is acceptable to God.

Let me notice another lovely point in these days of revival ere I close.

"Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And in the time (margin) when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began . . . and all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded : and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." The burnt offering gave the start to the song—it was the key-note, and in it we find continuance.

The value, the virtue of that "one offering" uniting in Himself the varied realities presented in the burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, and sin offering always abides, and so the song goes on, and to endless ages.

Here below it is broken at the best—it is interrupted and marred by our unjudged flesh, but if filled with the Spirit, who is the only power of praise, all else will be judged and avoided. "They praised Jehovah with the words of David and Asaph the seer." They sang praises with gladness, and in the eternal day David's Lord will sing to Jehovah in the midst of the congregation. O how every eye will rest then and for ever on Him !

D. S.

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON MARY OF BETHANY.

MY DEAR A.,—You remember our little reading some time ago on the first few verses of John xii. I have been thinking so much of the answer H. gave when some one wondered what Mary felt when the disciples so misunderstood her action. H. said, “Oh, I expect Mary was so occupied with Christ she did not *notice* what the disciples said ! ”

I do think that was just it; and is not that what we all need? If only Christ filled our gaze, and occupied our hearts; if only we had just *one* object before us, to please Him and do what He would have us do; we too would scarcely be conscious of others' approval or disapproval. How often have one and another written or spoken of Mary, and yet we never tire of the subject, it is always fresh. I certainly cannot write anything fresh upon it, but I love to dwell on it, and I always want to write to you about what I enjoy myself. It seems to me from the little we get about it that Mary learnt a great deal more of the Lord's mind than even John who leaned on His bosom; at least on the subject of His death. She seems to be the only one who was in communion with His thoughts at that supper. The Lord had over and over again foretold His death, but the disciples had not taken it in. Mary had. It is true we are not told that Mary heard Him say He would have to die; but I think there is little doubt but that when she sat at His feet and heard His word—which no doubt she did on more occasions than that one recorded in Luke x.—He told her that He must die and rise again the third day.

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The very fact of her not being with the other women at the tomb on the resurrection morning, speaks for itself to me. She did not expect to find Him there, I think. The distance was nothing from Bethany, so that did not prevent. Then the Lord says, "She did it for my burial." Some say the Lord interpreted her action thus, and she was merely actuated by a kind of instinct as it were; but I have no doubt she knew quite well what she was doing. Oh, wouldn't you and I like that? To be so in communion with Him as to know just His mind now, and to be just in the current of His thoughts, so that we may be sure of what He approves; then, like Mary, what others say or think, even those we love best, will give us scarcely a passing thought so that *He* may say, "She hath done what she could." Well, we must, like Mary, be more at His feet. And that does not mean dreamy idleness. Martha might have been just as much in communion with the Lord as Mary, and yet have been busy with the supper too, and then she would never have dreamt of interfering with Mary, much less of dictating to the Lord as she did. And there we get another lesson not to interfere with one another. We are so apt to do this. Because another does not work exactly on my lines I am apt to find fault. But we have each our own line of service, and we are each different in temperament because our work is different, and the important thing is for each one to do his or her part in communion with the Master. And instead of finding fault with one another, to see how another has just the *good point I lack*. That is the way we may "each esteem others better than ourselves." If we meddle with one another we shall get the Lord stepping in, as we see Him in Luke x., and putting us right; and well for us if He does. In these days of indifferentism may you and I seek more communion

with Christ so shall we know what He likes and be pleasing to Him. I like that verse of the little hymn—

“ Let me my feebleness recline
On that eternal love of Thine,
And human thoughts forget ;
Child-like attend what Thou wilt say,
Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,
Yet *never* leave thy sweet retreat.”

Yours in Christ,

R.

I cannot do without Thee Lord,
I can without Thine own ;
I do not wish to part from them
Nor crave to be alone ;
But I would know Thee so mine own,
As to rejoice if left alone.

Alone? No, it is not alone,
If Jesus, Lord, with Thee.
Alone too often in a crowd
Without Thy company.
Yes, I can do without Thine own,
Without Thee I should feel alone.

The heavens are opened to my gaze,
And Thou art on the throne,
Radiant and glorious ; what a sight,
And I am, Lord, Thine own.
Soon the whole Church shall be with Thee,
One blest harmonious company.

E. R. W.

FAITH'S TRIUMPH.

(1 Samuel xvii.)

OF the many histories recorded in the Old Testament there is none that excels that of David in interest, and the portion given in this chapter is uniquely full. Here the mind of the child finds much that is attractive to it as it dwells upon the acts of prowess shown ; and here the heart of the saint finds food and refreshing as he beholds a man who, knowing his God, can perform exploits, and witnesses the mighty triumph of faith.

At the close of the preceding chapter David is found in the court of Saul, at the king's special request, and for the purpose of soothing the irritated king by the sweet strains which he could readily produce from his harp. But now, carried forward another stage, we find the youthful musician has again left the precincts of the court and betaken himself to his former occupation of minding his father Jesse's sheep.

How exceedingly interesting are the changes which we see David undergoing, and yet without marring that sweet native simplicity which belonged to him. Just retrace them for a moment. Urgently sent for at the command of the prophet Samuel (ch. xvi. 11), he is fetched from the sheep-cotes to have the holy anointing oil poured upon his head, marking him out as Jehovah's chosen one. Retiring to continue his employ, though we can say surely, not

unconscious of the great dignity that had been conferred upon him, he has again to be fetched from tending the sheep to stand before the king. And then having fulfilled his mission there for the time, he humbly continues to grace the lonely solitudes of the wilderness, still zealously pursuing his allotted avocation.

Simplicity marks those who are truly great. Moral greatness is manifested by humility. Do we desire to see a perfect display of the truths expressed in these two brief statements? A study of David will carry us far in that path, and yet how far short of perfection we shall stop. The pathway of David's greater Son will, however, furnish us with the sight. Conscious of all that pertained to Himself He came down into this world, thus humbling Himself as it were impossible for any other to do. He walked through this scene, and though never leaving the path of faithfulness to God yet bowed before the rejection which man meted to Him. Oh, to be like Him!

Modern notions and manner of living are not conducive to simplicity and reality, but rather lead to affectation and pettiness; and the display of these amongst God's saints is a manifest proof of how deeply we have drunk of the spirit of the world through which, as pilgrims, we have to wend our way. Humility leads to exaltation; pride, in whatsoever form it may possess us, brings debasement and sorrow. The secret of simplicity is to occupy the position we fill with God. This was true of David. May it be true of us.

Our chapter opens with a view of the Philistines gathered to battle against Israel. On opposite banks of the valley of Elah were the opposing forces arranged, and from out of the midst of the army of the Philistines there appeared daily that formidable giant Goliath of Gath to express in daring insolence his bold challenge, desiring a man to come and

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fight with him that they may decide the issue by single combat. "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together," were his words; and as they fell upon the ears of Israel, dismay laid hold of the hearts of both king and people. Consternation was plainly visible upon every face (ver. 11). They were measuring their enemy by themselves, and so necessarily felt their incompetence to meet him.

But "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and soon would He show that the man who counted upon Him in living faith could lay low the strongest and most daring enemy that ever sought a match from amongst the hosts of Israel. So almost abruptly the narrative turns and David is introduced. The youngest son of Jesse, who was now an old man and the father of eight sons, he is found at this critical period in Israel's history quietly keeping his father's sheep. And now desired by his parent to convey some food to his brethren, and to note how they fared, he leaves the sheep with a keeper and hastens to execute the order. Reaching the place of battle just as the armies are put in array, he saluted his brethren. It was an opportune moment, for just then the giant appears and repeats his blasphemous words. David heard him. All the others heard also, and their cheeks blanched, and their hearts trembled with fear. What effect had Goliath's words upon David? If the blood quickened in his pulse it was not caused by fear, but by holy indignation. His attention is called to this terrible opponent, and he is informed of the rewards that King Saul would present to the man that would take away the reproach of Israel. They were sufficient to tempt the bravest to enter upon the task. Yet none dared. But where was Jehovah in this? Neither in the thoughts of king or people. David on hearing the words

of the men asked again, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine?" (ver. 26). Did he desire the rewards? Was he about to risk all to obtain them? Ah, no! His query was one of astonishment, and he evidently stood amazed that such should be at all necessary to tempt a man from Israel to take up the task of vindicating the name of Jehovah, and of hurling back upon his head the unholy words of the giant. For with this question he asks another: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" How differently he views both Goliath of Gath and the host of Israel. They formed the armies of the living God. The Philistine was one of the uncircumcised.

The man of faith is always misunderstood, and the acting of faith rouses the anger and jealousy of those who rely upon the arm of flesh. So David's brother Eliab, that one of whom Samuel had said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him" (ch. xvi. 6), hearing the words of David and doubtless understanding their import, retorts with cold sarcasm, "Why hast thou come down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" In his eyes David was despised, and he attributed pride and curiosity to his presence there. But the fire of faith glowed in David's bosom, and without indulging in any fleshly repartee, but simply asking, "What have I done? Is there not a cause?" he passes on, and asking the same questions of others the tidings eventually reach Saul's ears. His attitude plainly conveyed the intimation that he was willing to join issue with Goliath.

Sent for by the king he is ushered into his presence, and there undertakes to do combat with the enemy. Well might Saul, judging by appearances, think that he was unable to overcome the giant; for to all intents and purposes he was

but a youth. Perhaps so; yet David was not entering upon this seemingly unequal contest thoughtlessly, and he could vindicate his boldness. He rehearsed to Saul the untold story of the lion and the bear. But mark his bearing. It was told, not to win applause, nor with the bombastic confidence of the flesh; but uttered to show where his power lay, and thus to vindicate his readiness to take up the challenge of Goliath. “*This uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.*” And David said, moreover, Jehovah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, *HE* will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine.” This was his confidence; the living God his strength.

How simple is faith unfeigned! It matches the power of the living God against the enemy, and so perceives nothing to fear. And everything but this blessed assurance proves but encumbrances and hindrances. Saul, with good intent, would put him on his armour, and David girded on the sword. But no, he could not trust himself clad in that. Such he had never proved. His reliance was upon his God, and discarding all the means that men would employ he acts after such a fashion that God gets all the honour and glory. Would to God that we always thus relied upon Him. Defeat we should never know. But where we fail is in trusting to Saul's armour—the resources of the flesh.

David threw it off, and going to the valley chose five smooth stones, which he put in his bag, and armed with his sling he approached the Philistine. Did David expect to use the five pebbles? Possibly not; yet to us it is the expression of responsibility in this matter. It was a certainty to him that God would deliver. David does what was necessary on his part, and then, in the energy of his faith,

presses forward to accomplish, by the might of Jehovah, the deliverance of Israel from the thralldom of the strong man. Can we not pause and learn a lesson here? Faith never tends to carelessness or indifference. To a casual observer there appears to be much of both in the acting of the man of faith. But if faith truly realizes what it is to depend, it as truly and simply carries out what it knows to be its proper responsibilities. As we do battle with the adversary we need the sword of the Spirit, and then in faith counting upon God He makes His word effective in vanquishing the enemy.

And now the two opponents draw near to each other. Picture the scene. On the declivities which bound the valley are found the multitudes of both armies watching their champions as they approach the place of battle. Could the Philistines doubt what the issue would be? Not one would contemplate their giant falling before such a stripling. Of enormous stature, terrible in appearance, and clad in armour from head to foot, such was the adversary of David. A youth of a goodly countenance armed with a sling and stones, such was the opponent of this Goliath. Looking with disdain upon the youth he invites him to come forward, promising to give the beasts and fowls a feast (ver. 44). But neither the sight of this ungainly monster or his words caused David to quail. He knew in whom he trusted, and in language that stirs the soul he replies. First speaking of the armour and weapons arrayed against him, he next makes mention of the source of his own strength. Not even in his sling and stones did he trust, but "In the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied." And continuing in words that matched his adversary's for boldness and confidence, he recounts the order of the victory and the results that should

be plainly read as its consequence. He would smite the giant and take his head from him, and would likewise give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines unto the beasts and fowls. The victory was not to be confined to the overthrow of Goliath, for all the earth was to be made acquainted with the fact that there was a *God in Israel* (ver. 46), and that Jehovah saved not *with sword and spear* (ver. 47). Plainly indeed was this demonstrated ere that day closed; for, Jehovah answering the faith of His servant, Goliath is soon found stretched lifeless and headless upon the ground, and the army of Israel is seen in hot pursuit after the Philistines. What a triumph of faith! and surely after this it ought to be patent that there is nothing a man cannot accomplish when he rests in faith upon God. Great are the results achieved when a true heart in simple dependence enters upon the conflict for God. Enemies, however strong, are dispersed, and God gets glory to His name and praise from His people. “The people *that know their God* shall be strong and do exploits.” There is spiritual conflict to be waged now and mighty deeds in this way to be wrought, so that faith is as requisite as ever. God has not changed, and where He is relied upon there victory ensues. For us indeed the “strong man” has been bound, and as David cut off Goliath’s head with his own sword, so the Lord Jesus by going down into death has annulled Satan’s power. Now, in the triumphant language of victory, we can say that even death is ours; for though the grave may close over us yet His voice shall summon us forth, and none will be able to keep us there, blessed be His name!

It has been thought very strange that Saul should have failed to recognize David since he had been of such use to him, and we are informed that Saul “greatly loved him” (ch. xvi. 21). But remembering that David had been before

Saul for a purpose, he was liked for what he did, and when occasion for his services passed away with it also went the affection which it raised. Then again, since he was before Saul, when troubled with an evil spirit, it is quite possible that he took but a passing notice actually of David. The reminder that he was the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, might have quickened the memory of the fickle king, but of this there is no record.

Self-willed people are fickle. Their affection is easily raised, and, like a plant that blooms quickly, it as speedily fades and disappears. Certain it is that there never could have been any affinity between David and Saul, for the latter was as self-willed as the former was dependent; and this would keep their souls as far asunder as the poles. May we seek to emulate the faith of David, and desire grace to shun that which characterised Saul.

H. F.

A MORSEL FOR FAITH.

To be acquainted with the Word of God should be the aim of every true believer in Christ. It is not that every portion can be of equal interest, but of this we are sure that there is no part of the whole volume of inspiration that we can afford to slight or remain altogether ignorant of. Still there are portions here and there so luminous, so exceedingly precious and beautiful, that they appeal most powerfully to the heart of the Christian, and seem to contain a whole mine of spiritual wealth; and one great charm of these

portions is their extreme simplicity. To one of these let us turn.

“For whom He (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them he also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” (Rom. viii. 29, 30.) God, then foreknew each one of His people. We might almost say He would not be God if He had not, and for each He had a definite thought or purpose as to what each one should eventually be. And further, another great and glorious object to be attained in the blessing of each of His foreknown ones, which seems to crown the whole design, is that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, might be the firstborn among the many.

God then foreknew His own. Does this interfere with the free offer of salvation to all? In no wise. We may not be able to reconcile many things, but we are called on to believe and to obey. How many have asked the question, Why did God allow sin to come into the world, with all its attendant misery? We reply, That is entirely His own business. He does not stand at our bar to be judged by such ignorant and feeble creatures as we are. Job did this in his day, and was told by Elihu (chap. xxxiii. 13) that “He giveth not account of any of His matters,” and Job bitterly repented of his folly. Our business is not with what God has not revealed, but with what He has made known to us.

The servant's business is to preach the Gospel to every creature, with all the warmth and love that he feels and enjoys. The blessed God will have each one of His purposed ones, and the first step towards the accomplish-

ment of His purpose is effected by a call, and that call is an effectual one. It attains its end. By it the conscience is reached, and heart-exercise produced. A preacher's voice may be the medium, but the work is God's; and He is not dependent upon any human instrument. It is great grace on God's part to any servant to allow him the privilege of presenting the Gospel to sinners, and where this grace is really felt it always humbles. Are we not foolish in spending our time in counting our converts, as if we were something when we are nothing? We are allowed to rejoice in the progress of this work, but we are far too poor judges as to it, often elated about a case that does not turn out well, and thinking little of another which on the contrary proves to have been the real work of God. Blunderers we are and shall be, but God will have His own. He calls. Paul tells us in Gal. ii. 15, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and *called* me by His grace." No doubt Paul was called to a special work, and was indeed, as he says, separated from his mother's womb. We must distinguish between being a saint by call and an apostle by call. Paul was both, and also the last of whom this is true. But of this we are sure, that God had to do with our conception and birth, and also with all our surrounding circumstances, our upbringing, education, and our whole environment.

Then there comes a moment when each one was called. Would Job have uttered such words as are recorded in chap. iii. 1-15? Yet he was a saint of God, and one of those who are to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Wrong he was, but we cannot throw stones at him. His was, in truth, overwhelming trouble, and God was loving him all the time. Were this life all, many would echo the same sentiments; but, thank God, it is not all. Next we

read, "Whom He called, them He also justified." This we may call the second step. And what a blessed one it is! Guilty before God, ungodly and enemies, witnesses in part to what we each were when God called us by His grace. But He justifies. Who, then, can condemn? There is no superior court, no higher tribunal. Would the enemy accuse? Vain would his accusations prove, for God would not listen. How God can righteously justify we learn from Rom. iii. 24 and v. 9. It is by His grace. This is, then, the source of our justification. He wills to do it, and none can resist His will. But God, on His own account, must needs be consistent. Hence we are told it is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And again, in v. 9, "being justified by His blood." So we may repeat, what has often been asserted, that the grace of God is the source of our justification, and the blood of Christ is the meritorious ground of it. Well may the Apostle Peter write of the "precious blood of Christ." Its value in God's estimation none but He really knows, but we are enwrapt in its preciousness before our God. When we believe, though in ourselves ungodly, a holy, righteous God finds no difficulty in clearing us of every charge. Justified we are, and await with confidence the final step, which completes the fulfilment of ver. 29. Each predestinated one is called, and each called one is justified, and each justified one is glorified. There is no hitch, there can be no possible breakdown, for God is God.

What will it be to be glorified, to bear the image of God's Son, to be one of that glorious company, "His brethren," and to see Him as the pre-eminent One in that vast assembly? Who shall measure His joy in that home-welcome? A welcome so cordial, suited alike to the conferred dignities—God's Sons, Christ's brethren, and His

redeemed—each one of whom with intense delight can say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” And then the joy of God over all! Yes, God’s joy. Explain it we cannot, but delight in it we can and do. May it be ours to do so much more. What an interval there was between our predestination and our being called; and there may be one between our call and our justification, for by believing we obtain justification; and there is an interval between justification and glorification. The latter, we take it, will not be accomplished until the Lord Jesus comes for His saints. Many dear ones have done with earth and are at rest with Christ, and many are on the way. Some of these are drinking of the cup of sorrow; some painfully afflicted; some even bereft of their reason, and languishing in lunatic asylums; but each known by God, who cares for each and all. A little while and all our weaknesses, infirmities, and naughtinesses will be past, and then “For ever with the Lord! Amen, so let it be.”

E. R. W.

POWER AVAILABLE.

THE grace of God appears at once and for ever as the most wondrous theme to engage the hearts and thoughts of redeemed creatures. There are depths to which He goes reaching after creatures who must needs be ruined and undone to be debtors to Him who “by grace saves.” There are shades and innumerable varieties and phases in the history of His people, witnessing that service rendered to God, to the saints, and to poor ruined men, has been and

is being wrought through His abounding grace, Some have had distributed to them suited grace in affliction, or under martyrdom, which has carried sufferers in triumph into His presence, bringing glory to the Giver of grace, and showing how superior He is to all that has come in through sin.

The longer we are in the path leading to Him and home and rest, reviewing His matchless ways with poor halting ones, how surprising it is that slowness of heart to believe is what so broadly characterises us. Intuitively self and self-sufficiency cling to us, even pursuing us after we have confessed Him, and when desiring to serve Him. If in place of self-confidence we all have awakened in us a due sense of His grace being sufficient, no limit can be put upon what may be accomplished. Praise also will be eternally secured to Him, and deliverance from spiritual pride, vain show and hypocrisy will be effected. May our hearts be established in grace, and growth in the knowledge of Him and His blest ways be deepened.

Timothy was exhorted to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Oh! how much of suffering, of patience, of wisdom, meekness, and freedom from a contentious spirit, but in a manner commendable to His grace, to present the truth to such as had neglected to maintain that intense love which is the soul's support and health at all times, are implied in the exhortation. When we think of meek and faithful Moses, whose career was so marked as a servant of His, yet unadvisedly uttering unsuited words which God had not put in his mouth, on occasions of such trial as he experienced, how plainly has our God written a precious volume for our learning and admonition. What long-suffering and what patience on His part to put the truth gently and graciously, saying to His own who had fallen into evil, "This is the way, walk ye in it." We see in this

exhortation to Timothy—the Holy Ghost using Paul to give it—one who before had been strengthened by grants of unfailing grace. What exercises, worthy of the name, had this servant been passed through, until uppermost in his soul was the truth of how matters stood in relation to God and to Christ. He does not reason out how he had been served after hazarding his life in proclaiming the gospel of God's grace, and planting a standard in an enemy's country. He did not break out into chiding, and murmur because his love was ardent and met with such feeble response. We view him—no stoic—for he felt hunger and need of clothing, he required temporal things for his body; but he pursues a path, not to rebuke his children, but to instruct them; and to prove his devotion to his Master was no hasty utterance, but a blessed reality. We need to draw closer and cultivate acquaintance with such servants of our blessed Lord. His confidence was not in the flesh. His trust was in God, who raises the dead. The God of glory will answer that trust and crown that toiler, who worked mightily through grace; and likewise all who love his appearing will He take occasion to give suited expression to.

But is it so, that we can strengthen the hands of fellow toilers as the Apostle was led to do in the case of Timothy? We may not, surely, mock with words, pious words they may be, His needy, pressed, and often perplexed servants. This honoured toiler associating the name of Timothy, a young and weakly one, with him, now enshrined in records of His ways of grace with men upon pages imperishable, but witnesses again what His grace can do.

Circumstances do arise when trials in connection with what so intimately concerns Him, His people and doctrine, will be all too much for us if not strengthened, supported, and enabled to do a valiant part to His praise.

Now mark what the Apostle of the Gentiles can say, linking Timothy with him, as he addresses saints at Philippi, so beautifully drawing our hearts to contemplate much unfolded in chapter ii. of Him, which has recently been brought before us in these pages. But he goes on, "Those things, which *ye* have both *learned*, and *received*, and *heard*, and *seen in me*, *do* : and the God of peace shall be with you . . . Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have *learned* in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I *know* both how to be abased, and I *know* how to abound : everywhere and in all things I am *instructed* both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. "*I can do all things through Christ*, which strengtheneth me." What words are these? The power and truth of them—have we learned? What confidence, and what boast is found here ; but how qualified the language—"through Christ." Blessed, indeed, the writing and the pupil when pointed out as "taught of God."

What exercises were his, when an Apostle who walked not according to the truth of the gospel, was withstood to the face and blamed. (Gal. ii. 11-21.) The grace of God was not to be frustrated. It is as steady and firm as the throne of God, and needs no puny hand of man to steady it. We shall be found stable and fruitful the more we are grounded in it. Another pain for the Apostle was to view a province he had worked flooded with Judaising teachers, who, with pernicious doctrines, threatened to swamp the unestablished Galatians. Then his part was to work afresh to form Christ in them, by means of ministry to enlighten and establish them and us.

View this servant toiling and entreating, warning and persuading, with tears, amidst sorrows, sufferings, persecutions—things noticeable in him, but all unpalatable to man—

waiting for tidings of the Corinthians, for he had sent Titus to put them in mind of his ways, and by means of the truth again correcting so much that went to the very foundation of our faith.

The scene of man's sin was, and is, the scene of God's activity in grace. The very suggestion of putting a premium upon wickedness was promptly met by, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

Again, the unrestrained Cretians were to have salvation brought them, and not simply to express that they were pardoned and reconciled rebels to God, but to be exhibitions of what He can perform; for by pattern and by speech was Titus to accompany his ministry; and exhortation was to be heard by those once slaves in deep degradation, "that they may *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

To this end God's Word has been preserved, and is addressed to us. He has ordered our thoughts and set the object for our hearts (Col. iii. 1, 2, Phil. iv. 8), and given us, for the brief interval of our waiting for Him, that which is according to the teaching of grace: "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

A lack of sobriety we are painfully aware exists, and it is still more prominently to be brought before us. We are not now thinking of inebriate or of glutton, but of our need of the teaching and exhortation our gracious God puts to us "to live soberly, righteously and godly." It is not an exhortation to live without life. Alas! we may read of some who live delicately, being dead while living. But how blessed and full of purpose is that life which is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in its design is to

bring up all to His stature, is not to be held as a kind of high caste in society, for the lowly are for the most part in its embrace. How marked the grace that calls "unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Having no gold ring, or good apparel, or home or certain dwelling here, is not a disqualifying point—oh, how gracious and approachable is He! and all fitness to pursue the path, and to serve Him and His, as we look for Him, He supplies out of those exhaustless stores of grace. May our delight intensify in being debtors to Him for grace, and may we know better the meaning of "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," as also the holy boasting, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

W. B.

LETTER ON REST. No. 3.

MY DEAR A.—

You still find difficulties as to this question of the enjoyment of rest of soul. You say it is all very well when it is trouble that is not caused by our own wrong-doing, but so much trouble we often bring on ourselves. What then are we to do when the trouble is the result of our own carelessness, or worse still of our own wilfulness? Well, even then, we may enjoy rest and peace. Of course there must be self-judgment and full confession of the failure, and entire submission to the will of God, putting oneself, as it were, entirely in His hand. And we who know Him can do this

with perfect confidence ; for even though we know we must reap as we have sown, yet even our very failures are made to work for our good. Very wonderful and blessed it is ! Oh, the wondrous grace of our God, which out of our very failures can bring blessing to our souls and glory to His name ! We can be in *no* circumstances where we may not be in the enjoyment of that perfect peace and rest of heart which is ours if we only take the yoke of Christ and learn of Him ; only if, as you say, we have brought ourselves into circumstances of trial and perplexity there must first be confession of our failure ; and then, leaving all results with God, be quite content to wait His time for relief, bowing to His will entirely. You get a beautiful instance of this in Eli ; he bows to God's will when it is judgment to himself for unfaithfulness, and says : "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." To me this is very beautiful, and one who knows God can understand it.

Again, let me say, I am persuaded all our unrest and dissatisfaction comes from wanting our own way, and this is often the case, even in things of God. There we are so apt to be deceived, because we naturally think it is God's work, and it is right it should be done, and surely this or that must be His will, forgetting that He sees the end from the beginning, and knows how best to carry out His purposes. As some one has said, writing of that beautiful eleventh chapter of Matthew : "It is here, even in the midst of this rejection, that He"—the Lord Jesus—"says, 'All things are delivered to Me of My Father,' while yet despised and doubted, He calls us to share His peace in the kingdom which is not in creature blessings, but in the Holy Ghost. This is indeed a kingdom to live in the will of God ; to understand that will ; to be content with it ; to lose *all self-will, even in good* ; to be glad when self-strength fails ;

when all self-glorying is utterly put from us ; and yet to joy in God, in that His will is done, with an unfeigned ‘ Even so, Father.’ ”

In this case we might say it must be God’s will that the people where Jesus had done His mighty works should have received Him, and surely it was not His will that John should doubt Him. But the blessed Lord *at that time* rejoiced in spirit and said, “ Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” But you say, “ We are not like the Lord.” True, indeed, but He says, “ Learn of Me.” And it is not learnt in a day. But if the Lord sees we are in earnest to learn of Him, He just sends the very trials necessary to teach us this practically, and we are apt to kick against them and so are slow to learn the lesson. But He will have it learnt, and brings us back to it again and again till it is learnt. Like a horse trainer when he wants a horse to jump a difficult fence, the horse, perhaps, shies at it at first, so he takes him round the field a bit, and gradually brings him again to the point ; he still shirks it, but the master has patience, and in time it is done. Our Master has infinite patience ; and hard as we find the learning, we are glad in the end that He had His way. And then He gets the praise and the glory. Each fresh trial come through brings a fresh hymn of praise ; as some one has put it, a fresh string to the instrument.

Well, dear friend, I hope I have made myself clear, I fear my letter is too long. Let me know if you have any other difficulties.

Yours in Christ,

R.

**“STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF
THE LORD.”**

(Exodus xiv. 13.)

STAND still and see (though round thee
The way seems hedged about)
How from life's tangled mazes,
His hand shall lead thee out.

Stand still and wait ; the next step
Is hidden from thy sight ;
But all is known to Jesus,
Darkness to Him is light.

Stand still beloved, He leadeth,
And His way is the best ;
Perplexity and sadness,
Soon endeth in His rest.

Stand still, fear not, trust only
His great love, deep and true,
That thinks, and cares, and watches,
Each moment over you.

Stand, ready to obey Him,
Whate'er the order given ;
Soon shall His love reward thee
With endless rest in heaven.

Stand fast and watch, He cometh,
Descending in the air ;
Watch for a few more moments,
Then thou shalt meet Him there.

A. S.

THE WILL OF GOD.

PAUL's ceaseless prayer for the saints at Colosse, as told to them in his Epistle to them (chap. i., ver. 9-10) was, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in (or by) the knowledge of God." Let us add to this those words of our Lord found in John vii. 17, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." From this verse in John we learn that the key to knowing what is of God is the disposition to do His will. "*He shall know*" is emphatic. The exercised soul in that day found a Babel of voices, and nearly all agreed that what Jesus said and did was wrong. How could he be certain, in the face of so many conflicting opinions? Age, position, the well-known leaders of the people, were against the teaching of Jesus.

Still, absolute certainty could be gained, and any soul, however despised, that was simply set on doing God's will, would not be left in ignorance. Doing God's will is what all should be doing. What about our own wills? These must be laid aside, and ere certainty can be gained by any soul there must be the mind made up, that come what will, be it suffering, misunderstanding, rejection, isolation, or what not, God's will must and shall be done.

But where shall God's will be found recorded? In His holy Word. All, all is there that God desires to find us doing. Acquaintance with that Word is absolutely necessary; and only in so far as we understand the Word can we

be sure that we are walking in the right path and doing the right thing. The true soul will need to take heed to Paul's exhortation to Timothy, as to rightly dividing (or cutting in a straight line) the Word of truth. Where will is at work the Word may be handled deceitfully. Where pride fills the heart a pedestal may be erected on which to display our own fancied excellence to the disparagement of others. Where a system has to be sustained, honest dealing with Scripture all round there cannot be, unless indeed there be great ignorance. Want of exercise of soul before God accounts for much, and want of thoroughness for more still.

God's will, although found in the Word, is not so set forth that it can be learnt as easily as the ten commandments. "Wisdom and spiritual understanding" are indispensable, and the knowledge of God. The saint must have his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Some would seem to expect to find a code of rules so simple and so clear that no exercise would be required, no wisdom and understanding be called for. God would not thus treat His people. He desires that they should grow in the knowledge of Him ; and, as it has often been remarked, the knowledge of God is formative. In proportion as God is truly known the light of what He is falls on everything around, and the saint is thus enabled to form a true and holy judgment on questions and things, even when no plain statement can be found in the sacred Scriptures. We need hardly say that where plain statements are found they must be obeyed. Fathers are given definite instructions how to train their children, and masters how to treat their servants, whilst mothers and mistresses can find none. Can these, therefore, claim that they are free to do as they please ? Certainly not, we reply. God's mind, as to how children are to be trained, is given ; and His mind, as to how servants are to be treated, is also ;

and that is enough. Inference, reason, sound logic, proclaim that mothers and mistresses must carry out the mind of God. But that is not literality. To claim it would shew a desire to evade a plain duty.

God has given instructions to women about their attire, but none to men. Are men, therefore, free to dress as they please? Certainly not. Men have not the same danger as women, and should not need so much instruction on that head; but God's mind is clear. But are the directions to women so minute that no spiritual judgment is required? We reply, No. Gold, pearls, costly array, are forbidden; but nothing in the nature of a livery is enjoined, only that "which becometh women professing godliness with good works." (1 Tim. ii. 10.) Each is left to exercise her discretion in the matter, and she will therefore shew in her attire what to her mind is becoming godliness. It is evident that there will be great differences among Christian women in the matter of dress. If there is growth in the knowledge of God, it will manifest itself in increasing neatness and modesty. The world will be allowed to enjoy its fashions as it pleases. Other and higher ornaments are desired, even that of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

We have shewn that we must not look for definite teaching on every subject; but principles we shall find, and these are to be applied, when called for, to any and every thing for which no plain statement can be found. The man in John ix. had but little light, and knew very little of Jesus, but he had a principle. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners,; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth" (ver. 31). He applied it, stuck to it, and came to a conclusion that Jesus was of God. All the arguings of the Pharisees were in vain, and well was

he rewarded. Cast out by those in authority, who doubtless thought that God's word was with them, he was sought by Jesus. Cast out by man, he was found by the Son of God, and granted light, even a revelation of Himself to his soul, so that he worshipped Him. This man inferred, reasoned, and argued logically, and he was right; his premises were true, and his conclusion was fully vindicated.

God has His will for His saints to-day, not only for their individual life, in the domestic sphere, and in the commercial sphere, but in that of the Church. It is God's assembly and God's dwelling-place. It is also the body of Christ, and will be His bride in the future. As God's assembly she is said to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Error thus must not be written upon her, nor must she support it. In God's assembly things must be ordered according to His mind, and a wicked person must be dealt with. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. v. 13). We have no exhaustive list of what constitutes a wicked person. A few are named. A murderer is not mentioned. Room, then, is left for spiritual judgment to be exercised. A single sin would not in many cases justify exclusion. The offender must have rightly the character of being wicked. Why exclusion? God commands it. It is offensive to Him. Moreover, it defiles. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" Purge out therefore. Self-interest of the highest kind demands it.

It is quite true that this instruction is given definitely to the assembly at Corinth, and they obeyed it; and we have no instance recorded of any assembly defying the Lord's authority and refusing to act as directed. We have the general and complete failure foretold, and we know that what is rightly termed Church truth was lost for ages. God, in mercy, recovered much for His people in the last

century, and saints were led to gather together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, owning, too, that all believers form the body of Christ. The wicked man at Corinth was expelled from the assembly there. Was he cut off from the body of Christ? No. That truth was not touched by it. The cutting off of one individual or of many in complicity with evil leaves the body of Christ untouched. They are simply declared unfit for the fellowship of the saints of God upon the earth. But, says someone, you have no Scripture that warrants your excluding whole companies of God's people. Quite true. We have Scripture that says a little leaven leaveneth the whole. Purge out therefore. What we require from such objectors is plain statements from the New Testament to warrant our believing that what was defiling at Corinth would not be defiling still if conveyed to Ephesus or to any other assembly. A wicked individual is to be put out; but, according to this unholy theory, a leavened and disobedient assembly is not.

Put this before any godly soul, however simple, and they would be shocked. A wicked man put out, but a defiled company kept in! So true is this that it requires a lengthened period of mental torture, a special education (but not from above) to blind the spiritual vision to the acceptance of so false and unholy a theory. God is light, refutes it. Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever, condemns it. Ask me not to prove that we must not have fellowship with unrighteousness. On the face of it it is a lie. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" It is said we must get back to original principles. He who says so admits that he has lost them, or perhaps never had them. What is this, but ignore the past, cancel all, begin afresh? And how long before trouble would come again?

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And what then? Begin again, and again? No, no, this will not do. Let those who have supported unrighteousness by all means acknowledge their sin, then let us all cast ourselves upon God's goodness and mercy; but hold fast the Word of the Holy and the True, awaiting His coming again.

Let the true character of sin be understood, and we may learn from Nature (and she is not a bad teacher) that there can be no coming and going between a house with a dreadful infectious disease in it and those that have not. There is no quarrel with persons, it is with the disease; and it is cruel not to bow to sanitary regulations, and thus endanger the health and lives of others.

E. R. W.

**NOTES OF A MEETING AT QUEEN'S ROAD READING,
MAY 1st, 1901.**

(Afternoon.)

Mr. C. E. STUART.—We have been singing about the Lord, and I will just look into His Word about Him. Mark vi. 30-52. We get here the ministry of Christ to His disciples and to the multitude. He thinks of all, not one could say he was forgotten, all got what they wanted. And though not here, He is the same, His heart is unchanged. He ministers still to His own now and how much more because members of His body. So close to Him, so precious. We get in Isaiah liii., "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Think of all He passed through here, all the suffering at the hands of man, and then forsaken of God; but He will be satisfied.

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We get in this interesting portion I have read the ministry of Christ first to His disciples. He had sent them to preach, and they came to tell Him what they had done, and what they had taught. He had told them what to teach—"the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They came to give account to their Lord. Now He ministers to them. "Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." The Master thought of His disciples, He knew the need of His people. We are not in the same circumstances as they were, but surely He ministers to His own still; and if in need of rest, He can take them apart still. And He thinks of His servants in their bodily needs. How it speaks of His heart. They did not ask for it. He is not above thinking of the need of His people.

I daresay they all enjoyed the voyage. We do not read of a storm on this occasion. But the people followed, they outwent them, and when the Lord came out of the vessel He saw the people. He did not say it is not the time, come again to-morrow. If people had need of Christ, He did not turn from them. And He is unchanged, though still in glory. He saw their condition. He was their Shepherd, though He had not yet taken that place. He thought of their need of instruction, and began to teach them many things.

Now I turn to Matthew. It is interesting to turn to the different Gospels to see the different accounts (Matt. xiv. 14). In Mark we get He teaches, in Matthew He healed their sick. Mark presents Him as Teacher, Matthew as Messiah "He healed their sick." A few words, but how expressive! If I want to get it fully, I turn to Luke ix. Luke combines the two, the teaching and the healing; and more than that, he tells the character of the teaching—the kingdom of God. We get the full display of grace. There is a very interesting

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account of His healing the multitude in Matt. xv., just before feeding the four thousand ; the 30th verse shows the character of the healing. Those few verses are so graphic we can picture it all. The maimed made whole, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk. Wonderful sights ! All the fruit of the power of Christ. But to return to our chapter. The disciples would have sent the multitude away, to shift for themselves ; not so the Lord, that is not His way. "They need not depart, give *ye* them to eat." We get another account of this scene in John vi. 9. It seems the disciples had not carried anything with them. Andrew says "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes." Just what the Lord could use to meet the need of the five thousand. How often we have found the Lord has come in to meet our circumstances. But before He distributed He gave thanks to God. He was going to provide the food, but He remembered His Father in heaven ; and surely, if we partake of refreshment by the way, we should own God in it, and give thanks to God from whence it comes.

What a day that was of the ministry of Christ. But this is not all. He Himself would send the multitude away ; He would not let Peter do it. Straightway He constrained them to get into the ship and go to the other side. When all were fed, when all had had their need met, not till then did He send them away. Then He departed to pray. Always on earth He took the path of dependence. And when even was come the ship was in the midst of the sea. He was on the mountain. The night was dark, but it was not dark to Him. They did not see Him, but He saw them ; and in His own time He went to them, and then there was a great calm.

Well, it was the ministry of Christ that was on my mind.

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He thought of His disciples, He thought of the multitude ; no one could say I got nothing, not one could say I did not get from Him what would suit my need this day. He is now on high, and He sees all His disciples' need, and can minister to them still. I can say I know He is on high and He sees His people still. He did not forget His disciples after they had been working for Him, but said come apart and rest awhile. What a word for us ! We have each different trials and troubles, but in His own blessed way He ministers to each heart what that heart needs.

(Evening.)

Mr. W. SCOTT.—I would like to read a few verses. 1 Rom. vi. 6. Then Eph. iv. 20-24. It says of Enoch, in the fifth of Genesis, that he walked with God. That fifth of Genesis is a very important chapter. All sound chronologists go to that chapter. We have been hearing of God's care for His people. In that chapter we get a number of quickened souls, and the Spirit of God telling how long they lived, another illustration of God's gracious care and tenderness over His people. It is not so in the fourth chapter—they are not the Lord's people.

That is a beautiful remark about Enoch, he walked with God. It is twice mentioned. There is not a great deal said about him, nothing remarkable. But it is a great thing to walk with God. Can it be said of us ? Yes, in Heb. xi. we read that "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." The man was conscious that his life as a whole was pleasing to God.

Our brother read the ninth verse of the fifth chapter of 2nd Corinthians. It is curious, but that verse was running in my mind in connection with the fifth of Genesis. The Apostle does not say *I* labour, but *we*. It should be

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every day the endeavour of each one to please the Lord. I don't think there is anything worth living for but that. We don't *do* enough; but there is such a thing as labouring and missing the prize, for if we do not order our ways according to the Word of God, we shall not get the reward. I feel it is necessary to have our state corresponding to the literality of Scripture.

There are a great many mistakes made as to the "old man" in Romans vi. We are told the old man is dead, &c. It not only contradicts Scripture, but fact. At death or the coming of Christ we and the old man quit company, but not till then. The old man is said to be crucified; that does not mean death, but judicial action. The blessed God expresses His detestation of the old man, and we must not expect anything good from it. We must reckon as God reckons. The old man and the person are quite distinct. The person is born of God, not the nature. Neither God, man, nor angel can improve that, it is incapable of improvement.

In Ephesians we are told we have put off the old man, and put on the new. That is how it should be read in Colossians. When? At the new birth; then the old life goes, with all its characteristics. What is the new man that is put on? The life as seen in Jesus. "As the truth is in Jesus." I never see that quoted correctly; most say "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is the truth as expressed in Jesus in His life here. We cannot do the things that Jesus did—give sight to the blind, raise the dead, &c.—but this life, the spotless holy life is to be manifested in us. The principle which governed Jesus here should govern us. The increased need of this is what is pressing on my heart now.

Many of our assemblies are dwindling down. The only lever, the only thing to help souls is a walk according to

Jesus. There is so much selfishness characterizing us. How has it been with us since a year ago? Have we got more gentle, more meek, more like our Master, putting on the moral likeness of Jesus? It must be in before it can come out. Turn to Gal. v. 19: "The works of the flesh are manifest." Pass to verse 22: "The fruit of the Spirit." That is often misquoted. It is not *fruits*. Not this fruit displayed in one believer, and that in another, but these all to be worked out in a practical way in each. Are we growing in likeness to Christ? May God make us all more like His dear Son, that He may find something on the earth that answers to His mind.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—VII.

(Chap. iv. 17-32.)

WHEN God communicates truth to the saint it is given that it might have a practical effect on the soul, delivering from evil and fashioning each after the pattern of the Man that now sits at His right hand. And in the portion of the epistle upon which we now enter, the Apostle expressly states, emphatically testifying to this very end, that practice was to be in conformity with the truth made known to them. God graciously gives that which delights the heart, but the effect of it is not to stop there. The conscience is also to be reached and enlightened, and woe to any of us who read God's Word without allowing it to search us through and through. Those who tremble at His Word are in favour with God, and receive stores of sustaining grace from on high. He gives grace to the humble.

As already remarked our epistle contains most wondrous unfoldings, and such called for a decided walk in unison therewith. From amongst the nations God had gathered them out, and what characterised the Gentiles was once true of them (chap. ii.). It was to be true of them no longer. Previously well content to be in ignorance, they had in their self-complacency followed the bent of their minds. Pride puffed them up, and they failed to discern their real condition. And in the vanity of their minds they walked with the understanding darkened; for that which could give them light—the Word—had not been received. “The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple” (Psalm cxix., 130), and unless the light of that Word shines in the darkness in all its density remains. Enlightenment might be sought through other means, both then and now, yet such only conduces to bring out more prominently that vanity, ignorance and hardness are the fruits of a nature opposed to God.

Where there is the living link with the God of grace there will be the manifestation of the life received. Feeble its expression might be, yet nevertheless life must make its presence felt and its activity seen. Those whose understandings are darkened are said to be “*alienated from the life of God.*” Nothing that would express God was seen in their lives; and unblushingly they acted in their wickedness having entirely lost that sensitiveness which flows from possessing a knowledge of right and wrong. The conscience was seared as with hot irons. How dire the condition expressed in the words “*past feeling.*” An almost inconceivable state, and yet one common to those who wilfully walk in paths of sin. How very far God’s intelligent creature, man, is from Him! Long ago it was stated that the heart of man was desperately wicked (Jer. xvii., 9), the

depths of which are, however, known to Him that searches the heart. Is this true now ?

Of the "other Gentiles" Paul is writing, "among whom," he had declared, "we also had our conversation in times past" (chap, ii., 3). We must not, therefore, suppose that this description is only applicable to the Gentiles of that day. The cloak of civilisation might hide the hideousness of the sins then openly practised, but let us not be deceived. God does not use flattery. The depths of the human heart, we again repeat, are fully known to Him (Matt. xv., 19), and His pictures of its hidden recesses are true ones. But He works in grace, and all who now believe on the Lord Jesus are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet, i., 4), and are now indeed "a new creation in Christ Jesus."

But their walk was no longer to be after the fashion of their former days. "Ye have not so learned Christ." A commanding object and example had been put before them, even One now in the glory, but once a Man amongst men, the perfect expression of the invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son. . . . He hath declared Him" (Jno. i., 18). Nowhere but in the pathway of that Son can we behold the perfect manifestation of the Father. Amidst scorn and abuse, rejection and trial, He wended His way, ever completing the works which His Father gave Him to do. Retrace and ponder His words and works and therein behold "*truth as in Jesus.*"

And we can note the change of names. Of *Christ* Paul first speaks. Though they had never known Him upon earth they had by faith gazed upon Christ in glory. Instruction followed, and to *Jesus*, whose life in all its details was for God, they were pointed. "And were taught in Him *even as truth is in Jesus.*" He is the perfect Example for those who have put off the old man and have put on the new.

We do well to rid our minds of hazy notions about Scriptural terms, and to seek by the teaching of the Holy Spirit to be clear and definite both in our understanding and use of them. Mystical meanings help no one; and the clearer we see things the more effective will the Word of God be to us, and the more helpful we shall be to one another.

Now of the old man and the new man we read: and it is predicted of the saints that they put off the one and put on the other (vers. 22, 24; Col. iii., 9, 10). What are we to understand by these terms? Is the *old man* a term that is in itself a description of an unconverted man, and the *new man* descriptive of the saint? How then could it be definitely stated that the old man has been put off? Do we change our persons at conversion? Surely not; though what once marked us is to mark us no longer. And why? When unconverted all display the characteristics of the nature inherited from Adam, which is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" but after conversion the fruits of that nature which we have of God, and "is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth," manifest themselves in our words and ways. Saints, then, are indwelt by two natures, and the one we lose at death or the rapture, the other we possess for eternity. And since this is true it has consequently to be practically shown by reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God, and yielding our members as instruments of righteousness unto God that we have concerning the former manner of life put off the old man.

But the possession of a nature does not of itself give power. There has to be the renewing of the mind, which supposes the powerful energy of the Holy Ghost, and infers learning from and application of the Word. How many lapses into worldliness, and breakdowns in the path of

testimony there have been through lack of being renewed in the spirit of the mind, by acquainting ourselves with the Scriptures. What momentous consequences are brought about by our being made partakers of the divine nature; for only that which is of God flows from the new man. So a suited line of conduct for those of whom what is here stated is true is set forth, based upon the stupendous fact that there has indeed been the putting on of that which is after God created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Think of it. Ponder it well.

And where does the Spirit commence this exhortation. "Wherefore putting away lying speak every man truth with his neighbour." Attempts at deception were to cease. Everything false either in word or in act was to disappear. They were bound by a tie stronger than any natural link, being "members one of another" (ver. 25), and hence truth was to prevail in all their dealings. What sorrows saints would have been saved had this exhortation always been heeded. Little actions are often fruitful in producing great effects as well in an evil way as in good. So the false word, the little act, has often caused the flesh to flare up with the result that a rich harvest of trouble has been reaped. How helpful, then, to grasp in the soul the expressive truth mentioned, "*Ye are members one of another.*" Care and thoughtful interest such a word should awaken and ever keep alive. It will preserve from allowing a harsh spirit to dominate us, and will lead to the cultivation of that spirit of meekness and gentleness which is of such value in God's eyes.

Proceeding we next have a reference to righteous indignation. It is not always possible to view the actings of evil unmoved, neither would it be right so to do. Could the blessed Lord contemplate the unbounded hatred of the

hypocritical Pharisees which they showed in seeking to hinder Him from acting in mercy to needy creatures (Mark iii., 10) and not be angry? Impossible we must say. Deception is always practised for a purpose, and often the victim has to pass through untold pain. Might we not, ought we not to be righteously indignant? Indeed, yes; but what guards we require. Limits are set to the endurance of this anger, lest originating with good it ends in sin. How soon it may degenerate into what is merely fleshly, if allowed to rankle in the breast. So it must cease before sunset. To-day's wrath carried into the morrow becomes malice; and then with the flesh in activity there is room for Satan to work and create almost irreparable breaches. Righteous anger he does not love, for it displays a detestation of what he often instigates; but malice provides him with an abundance of room. This must not be. He must be effectually excluded. To be angry and sin not, the anger must be confined to the abhorrence of the unrighteous or unauthorised act. The Lord Jesus was *moved with indignation* against the disciples (Mark x., 14) when they endeavoured to keep the little ones from being brought to Him. Who had given them permission to rebuke the mothers as they sought a blessing upon their children from the Master? How He viewed their action is shown by His taking them and laying His hands upon them (Matt. xix., 15). But did He turn from His wayward disciples! Oh, no! A very brief space elapsed ere He is heard telling them that when He sat upon His throne in the regeneration they should also sit upon thrones with Him. With their act the Lord was much displeased, yet from them He did not turn.

Now if this anger continues the person who commits it becomes the object of it, evil is met with evil, and who shall

say where the stream thus started will end? Many, many, may be defiled. When we are found listening to the voice of the adversary we are on the road to sorrow. The father of liars, he has from the commencement of time been instilling lies into the hearts of men. But, blessed be God, His Son was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jno. iii., 8), and in the heart that hears and believes His words confidence in God is begotten. The Creator who was pictured to the creature as a withholder of good (Gen. iii.) has denied the report, as it were, by becoming a Giver. "For God so loved . . . that He gave His only begotten Son. Surely, then, we must *"give no place to the devil."*

And the stealer must steal no more. Labouring with his own hands—not appropriating what others had laboured for—he would have wherewith he could communicate to others in need. Such is Christianity. He who had once been a thief is numbered with the saints of God—Christ died for the ungodly—and the suitable line of conduct for him to pursue is set before him. The thief becoming a receiver of grace, is to be a channel of good to others.

The next word instructs us that only what tends to edify should proceed from the lips of saints. Foolishness is hid in the heart, and what is corrupt flows from thence; but Solomon declared that whilst life and death are in the power of the tongue, the wise are concerned with what makes for the latter; for "the tongue of the just is as choice silver" (Prov. x., 20; xviii., 21). "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (iv., 29). How wise to stay the word that is useless and bad ere it is yet uttered. Corrupt speech is the agent used by Satan to spread discord, and to stop the workings of the Holy Spirit. Better to be silent than the servants of sin.

But what are seasonable utterances? "That which is

good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Here there is room for the display of "choice silver." Every word is to be a fruitful word, edifying abidingly; and when this is the result the effect reaches heaven, for the edified heart pours out a strain of praise in unison with the mind of God. "A word spoken in due season how good it is." It is like the stone which, striking the centre of the pond, makes its influence felt to the utmost limits of the water. Good words ministering grace are as the gentle action of the rain upon the little rootlets, which, by placing food at their disposal causes both reviving and growth. Shall we not then covet to edify? This will be the object of those whose hearts glow with the fervency of His love.

And another important point is now introduced. The Holy Spirit ever abides with us, for by Him we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Blessed fact! unaltered notwithstanding the truth that perilous times have come. But His power is only known when He is ungrieved, and hence the exhortation to "grieve not *the Holy Spirit of God*." When evil is active how impossible for Him to act as though all was right. He does not depart, but His power is withheld with consequent loss of blessing and joy. His presence in us supplies a mighty incentive to holiness; and an ever-present recognition of how near God has thus come to us would aid in forming our lives, begetting self-judgment, and prostrating us in worshipful adoration before Him.

Is the *old man* dead and gone? Let Scripture answer. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you," and there was not to be a lingering trace of malice remaining. All these things are the fruits of the flesh and since God the Holy Ghost speaks purposely, this word should prove that the flesh is

still within us. The fruit of the Spirit, however, is to be visibly in display as kindness, tenderness, and love are shown towards one another. Love may look for love in return, and those who have been so loved and forgiven their many trespasses ought surely to find it natural to love and forgive. The grace received from God, who in Christ hath forgiven us, is to be the pattern of our dealing one with another—" *Even as God in Christ has forgiven you.*" What creatures are we to need such hortatory words. We are slow to renounce our selfish ways, and oft dwell upon trifles that to notice should be a shame to us. We want to be sensitive about sin (there must be no lowering of that standard), but very tender-hearted; for those to whom grace has been vouchsafed must likewise bestow upon others.

May all these words become increasingly real to us; and as with opened ears and heart we seek to tread the path obediently, so may we give back to Him, who has not only made known unto us His acts but also His ways, the answer such revelations call for.

H. F.

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER.

PEOPLE would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will as one might get a receipt for anything, but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul.

Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which it is not His will that we should be found at all; if conscience were in real healthful activity its first effect would be to make us quit them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we

should like, nevertheless, to enjoy the consolation of God's direction in a path which ourselves have chosen.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen, that God, in His love, may not always at once reveal His will to us, that we may feel our dependence, particularly where the individual has a tendency to act according to his own will. However, "if thine eye be single, thine whole body shall be full of light;" whence it is certain that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single.

You will say, that is poor consolation. I answer, It is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to *walk with God*—not, so to speak, for those who would avoid trouble in learning His will objectively, but whose desire is to walk with God. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." It is always the same principle. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." You cannot withdraw yourself from this moral law of Christianity. . . .

It is then the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our own spiritual state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences; and we should then be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you seek how you may discover the will of God without that, you are *seeking evil*; and it is what we see every day.

J. N. D.

THE LAST WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS ON THE CROSS.

THE last words of those we love are especially precious. They tell us of their thoughts at the close of life, when the voice is about to be hushed in death. Few are so callous, so unconcerned as not to value their remembrance.

Now, if the utterance of a fellow-creature on the point of departure is precious to those who remain, surely the last words of the Lord on the cross will not be without deep interest for those who are in truth His disciples. We would, then, invite the reader's attention to the different sayings as given us in the Gospels of Matthew, of John, and of Luke. We name them in this order, since Luke it is who gives us, and he only, the *very last* utterance of the blessed Saviour in the moment of expiring. And we mention just these three because Mark agrees in this matter with his brother evangelist Matthew.

To turn to Matthew. He gives us the darkest picture of all, in that he records words of the chief priests and scribes and elders, nowhere else preserved from oblivion—"He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 43). They had just challenged Him to make good His claim to be the Christ by coming down from the cross (42). Mark, too, has recorded this challenge (Mark xv. 31, 32). Of course, that evidenced the enmity and the hardness of their hearts as they thus taunted One in mortal agony. There is a time, and there are circumstances, in which men's voices are wont to be hushed. The spectacle of

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a human creature—and they viewed the Lord only as such—dying in public, crucified on a cross, would to most be enough to induce silence on the spectators. The thieves were not, it would seem, taunted or derided. No one mocked them when helpless as affixed to their cross.

But not content with deriding the Lord, that very class which professed acquaintance with the sacred writings—the scribes, unconsciously, it may have been—fulfilled the prophetic Word, as foretold in Psalm xxii. 8. And the words of that Psalm not only betokened the bitterness of spirit of those who could use them, but really demonstrated whom they were reviling, even the theme of prophecy—the Lamb of God. Surely many of them would now wish that forty-third verse of Matthew's Gospel had never been written. But there it stands a witness, as we shall presently see, to their everlasting shame.

Now, in the Gospel of Matthew, as well in that of Mark, we have no word that fell from the Lord's lips after He had witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that He was King of the Jews (Matt. xxvii. 11), till that awful cry burst forth from Him, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (46). On the way to Golgotha He had addressed the weeping women. When nailed to the cross He had audibly prayed for His murderers. When petitioned by the penitent thief in that short but effectual prayer, "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom," He had at once responded, promising him more than he asked. All this, related only by Luke, is passed over by Matthew, and also by Mark, and the first and last utterance from the cross, as given by these two evangelists, is that which we have already quoted. It was spoken in Aramaic.

May be, when the chief priests, scribes, and elders heard

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that cry of the Lord, and if they heard it, they must have understood its meaning, it but confirmed them in their opposition to Him. "Forsaken of God!" "Why, He owns it. He openly confesses it," they might have said. The Son of God He cannot be. Would God forsake His Son? All, too, within the reach of His voice must have heard it. John, the Virgin, Salome, and Mary Magdalene must have been aware of it. The thieves likewise must have been conscious of it. The soldier guard were aware of an utterance, but in a language they did not understand. The Lord had spoken. About that there was no mistake. Soon afterwards He gave up His life, and as far as Matthew and Mark are concerned, we have no further intelligible expression from His lips.

Dark was the scene as pictured by them. They, and they alone, tell us of that utterance, the last intelligible words, which they were divinely directed to record. If those had really been the last words, sad indeed would it have been for man? What hope could any have cherished, that atonement for sinners could have been effected by Christ? But we who live after the resurrection, and who possess the Gospel by Luke, whilst those words of the Lord, "My God, My God," etc., tell indeed of the greatness of His sorrow, as far as human language can convey it, they witness also to us of His love, obedience, and devotedness to His Father's will. Nor is that all. By them are we reminded of His grace and love, who could willingly be made sin for us, that we who believe on Him might become the righteousness of God in Him. How much did it cost Him, that preservation from everlasting perdition should be ours?

We turn next to John's Gospel. The Lord's last words, as mentioned by John, how different! Cloud and darkness

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overhang [the closing scene as depicted by Matthew and Mark. No cloud, no darkness do we detect in the account by the son of Zebedee. Care for His mother's future on earth, and concern for the fulfilment of the prophetic word, these occupied His thoughts when on the cross, as John alone has recounted. Scripture had spoken of His sufferings when crucified, all that it foretold must be accomplished. And now, on the cross, just one verse of a Psalm (lxix. 21) waited its fulfilment. He would not die till that, too, had its accomplishment, so said, "I thirst." The vinegar put to His lips by one of the soldiers was enough, and receiving it, He said, "It is finished." Nothing remained unfulfilled to which He was to stoop before expiring. "It is finished" are His last words in the Gospel of John, "And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost" (John xix. 28, 30).

Do we read of that utterance just as a fact in history? Has it not instruction for us? If the Lord would be concerned for the fulfilment of God's Word at such a moment, what assurance it may impart to us, that not one word of our God shall fall to the ground.

Here believers may rest. Whatever may be the experience of the way, how great, too, so-ever, may be the efforts of the enemy to defeat the purposes of God, all will be in vain. "The Word of our God shall stand for ever," so wrote Isaiah (xl. 8). "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever," so declared Peter (1 Peter i. 25). And the Lord Himself has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away" (Mark xiii. 31). He did not die till Psalm lxix. 21 received its fulfilment.

Harrassed, troubled, tried believer, here is solid ground for the feet. Not one word of God shall pass unfulfilled. All that He has promised His people He will infallibly

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perform. That account of the crucifixion by John has in it comfort and encouragement for all who need it. Would anyone delude himself with the false hope of escaping the judgment of God without believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? A word in John iii. 36 settles that question now and for ever, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Born into this world a child of wrath (Ephes. ii. 3) that wrath will continue, under those circumstances, to rest on him. God's Word will not fail.

We turn now to the Gospel by Luke, and read there of the *actual* last words of the Lord ere He died: "Father," are the words, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). His voice was then silent. It was silent in death. Did any of the Pharisees or scribes, who had taunted Him and challenged Him as Son of God to come down from the cross—did any of them hear those closing words of His life on earth? Had they flattered themselves that the cry given in Matthew justified their rejection of the Lord? Must not that last utterance, as recorded by Luke, have taken away all confidence in their judgment of Him? Forsaken of God He had been. He owned it. But relationship to His Father changed not. What He had asserted in life, that He had affirmed with His latest breath. He was the Father's Son; His last accents proclaimed it.

Now, these different sayings are those of the Son of God. And as He is the light of the world, do they not shed a light on Him, who then was dying? The words recorded by Matthew speak of depth of sufferings known only in their fullness to Him. The last sayings in John come to us as an assurance of the certain fulfilment of God's Word. In the midst of a scene where change is so characteristic, that

which changes not we can trust to—the living and abiding Word of God. And the closing words of His life given in Luke confirm the belief to all who need it, as to the truth of His Person, that He was, that He is, the Son of God.

C. E. S.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—VIII.

(Chap. v. 1-21.)

CONSTANTLY we want old truths restated, the old story retold. And there is peculiar sweetness in realizing anew the latent power, we may call it, hid in a well-known truth, and in being made acquainted with the fact that, though never perceived before, yet familiar portions oft prove surprisingly full of that which frees our souls from the clogs of earth and lifts us heavenward. Surely we need not wonder. His Word contains inexhaustless stores of treasures, and the diligent soul is made fat thereby. Often with ears dull and eyes dim we approach this wonderful treasury, and without one semblance of interest expect to draw forth some of its precious contents. The promise is that he that seeks shall find, and to such its hidden beauties are disclosed. Unquestioning obedience is required from every seeker, and the soul that seeks obtains the power to render it.

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord taught His disciples about the spirit in which they were to act towards others, ending with the precious desire that they might, by so acting, be the children of their Father. All their acts were to savour of grace, as does His who, in the beneficence of His heart, lavishly pours His blessings upon just and unjust.

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"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," not a perfection of being but of action, shown in displaying grace towards those hostile and enemies. And in our Scripture the same thing comes out prominently. "*Be ye therefore followers (or imitators) of God as dear children.*" This naturally connects with what has gone before, for as we have received so must we bestow. The acts of the children are to be based upon the model set them by their father; and as in natural things the little one in all simplicity copies its father, so are we to imitate the "Father of spirits," who is indeed our God. And how familiar all His own are with the grace that flows from Him; for all have been, and are, the objects of Divine mercy and compassion.

God and Christ are both brought before us as providing us with examples of what is suitable for us to copy. Forgiveness God has granted; "to walk in love" will be to follow in the footsteps of Christ. So, then, every action is to be a reflex of a Divine one; and no offence or cause of stumbling will proceed from those whose ways are controlled by love. To walk in love is surely to carry Christ with us wherever we go, seeking, as He did, the wealth of others. We measure love by what it will do, and how poorly, when tested by this standard, do we realize that we have obeyed the Apostolic injunction. But how measure this—"As Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Do we seek a worth in others ere bestowing love? Let us remember that His love was set upon us apart from any worthiness. We, all ruined and undone, were the needy ones, deserving death, judgment, and condemnation. He was the worthy One, on His side was the love, immeasurable indeed, for He loved *us*. To God, who alone could

appreciate the deep perfections of the Son of His love, He offered Himself ; and that sacrifice, as none before, ascended as a sweet-smelling savour. Other sacrifices may have pointed to this, but how vast the difference between the shadow and the substance. In His death there were unfathomable depths, only to be sounded by the blessed God, whose will He came to do. Christ's love, in its purity and greatness, with the motive that moved Him to lay down His life in absolute obedience, furnish the measure of devotedness proper to all who are the children of the Father. Yes, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John iii. 16).

Turning from the glorious standard thus brought forward, the Apostle once more exhorts against the allowance of the flesh either in walk or talk. Consistency is required in both. Now, we are not to be governed by human ethics, but in keeping with the dignity conferred upon us by God. We are "saints by calling" (Rom. i.), and "as becometh saints" we are to act. More is required of a peer of the realm than from a meaner subject ; and saints are *heirs* of His kingdom from which every form of evil is to be excluded. Power likewise comes from being occupied with good, and in being simple towards evil. Those things that speak of the depravity of the flesh are not to be *named* amongst saints. What is there elevating or edifying in such conversation ?

But not alone against so-called great sins are we warned. In this descending scale the Apostle reaches foolish talking and jesting which, he says, "are not convenient." Excuse is often found for buffoonery and the pleasantries of the flesh, but as to the value of such we can here bring in the testimony of the Preacher, that great seeker after happiness on earth, for he tells us that "sorrow is better than

laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Eccles. vii. 3). And does not our own individual experience bear this out?

But shall we seek justification for these inconvenient allowances by the plea that we are yet on earth? Truly we are on earth, and by our frail bodies yet linked with a groaning creation, but yet wrought by God for greater things than earth can supply. Solomon and Paul are in accord. The former spoke for those on earth, and by wisdom he had searched all out; the latter speaks to those destined for heaven. Jestings ill befits the saint of God, and often proves to be one of the little foxes that spoil the vine of communion (Songs ii. 15); and let us not forget that little things excused and pandered too often take away the keenness of the spiritual appetite, and like a stream that begins with a mere bubble but expands as it wends its way seaward, so begins downgrade, which eventually ends in the saint of God losing his identity as such in the whirling mazes of the world. But thanksgiving lifts the heart to God, and is ever seasonable, right, and befitting.

No one, then, must seek to palliate what God's Word condemns. There must, rather, be the challenging of the heart, lest, through indifference, we fail to walk "*as becometh saints*," and in keeping with the purity of the kingdom of Christ and God. The unclean and covetous have no inheritance in that kingdom. Vain talkers would seek to nullify the force of this Apostolic teaching; yet, spite of their words, the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience for these very things (ver. 6). Solemn, solemn words that should cause serious reflection in every soul. Deceivers attempt by subtlety to show the foolishness of being over-sensitive about wrongdoing, but deception will out, and the consequence here put forward will be the awful

issue for those who practice iniquity. The Christian's path is one of holy separation.

How excellent a reason is now furnished by Paul that the saints should have no part with the disobedient; for, whilst they "were sometimes darkness," a statement descriptive of their past condition, they are now "*light in the Lord*," and hence it is incumbent upon all that they should walk as children of light (ver. 8). A weighty responsibility this, and of necessity fruit would be openly seen. But how great is the contrast between the unbridled lust of man, which works sorrow upon sorrow, and the fruit of the light. Evil works in the dark, and secretly, but "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth," making for blessing not destruction, manifesting that which is according to the character of God, and acting consistent with the truth. And also being "*light in the Lord*," there is the ability to prove what is acceptable unto Him; and this is done as each is found obeying the exhortation to walk as children of the light. His desires we can enter into; what is evil has to be rejected and reproofed. A position of entire separation from the unfruitful works of darkness has to be taken up, and reproof thus administered. Silence must be maintained about the "things that are done of them in secret" (ver. 12).

Now light makes manifest or discovers. It is its character so to do. Much that looks clean in the dim twilight is seen to be far from that when under the searching beams of the mid-day sun. Often an act, that considered by itself, seems right, is found to be wrong when under the scrutiny of the light. And what rich consolation there is in this. We need not study the snares and pitfalls of which this sin-stricken world is full to escape them. Light makes all things manifest for us.

But this is inseparable from the spiritual condition of each of God's children. Of what use is light to one asleep? In such a condition he is as good as dead, and this is practically true where the conscience is so dulled that there is no power to discern good and evil. How forcibly, then, the exhortation comes in, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." When darkness covers the earth, and gross darkens the people, He is to shine upon Israel as their light and the glory of Jehovah (Isa. lx. 1, 2). That awaits its fulfilment, but most blessedly does the Apostle apply it here. Christ is indeed the light of the soul; and when, in the energy imparted by faith and grace, we arise and seek, light is communicated from on high. Christ shines on us. And awaking from this spiritual lethargy the light that discovers is active within, and the desire to please Him becomes pre-eminent. Knowing His will, delight would be found in doing it. And Divine wisdom is to characterize the doings of the saints, as they walk with all carefulness, not as unwise but wise. Discerning evil, and then being occupied with it, is to act as though devoid of understanding; and this should never be. The days are evil, and the need for the exercise of spiritual wisdom and intelligence increases daily. Opportunities must be seized and used for Him, for once let slip they may never again occur. The path of service narrows—the will of the Lord remains. We have to serve the Lord Christ, and precious is the privilege granted us to do so. To use up opportunities for Him will meet with His approval by and by, and blessed is the fruition of such service now. We are oft listless and cold, but God's antidote for such is Christ. Did we but really know Him then service would be joyful; for "knowing is loving, and loving is doing," as a little one said, who sought to embrace every occasion to

express his love in act, though feeling the grip of poverty and pain. But we have not to go beyond what His will expresses. Let love abound yet more and more truly, but in knowledge and in all discernment (Phil. i. 9). Yes, "understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Power to perform that will is not to be found in any human lever, but in being "*filled* with the Spirit." Men might betake themselves to their wine to increase their mental activity, and in doing so run to excess. This savours not of God; it does not glorify the Christ who died to deliver us from our sins. It is a human expedient that ends in riot. It is not intellectual power that is required, but the activity of the heart's affections when under the control of the Spirit of God; for when *filled* with the Spirit the whole being is energized by Him, and is directly under His gracious influence. And He directs to Christ—"He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John xvi. 14).

And what then? Joy reigns supreme. Heavenly notes will be struck in the heart in harmony with the tunes to be presently sung in His presence; and in a world of sin and sorrow, where joy might well be absent, heart responds to heart, animated by the same theme to tell "in psalm, and hymns, and spiritual songs" one to another, of the worth of the One they call Lord and Master. Free from distraction melody is made in the heart to the Lord, and thanksgiving ascends to God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for thus is it clothed with His acceptability. The joy of the ransomed is incomparable. They can sing, but not the song of the fool; for all things they are to give thanks, both as saints and as children, knowing that all His will is love. Submission one to another is likewise enjoined, "*in the fear of Christ.*" Where this is done there will be

the absence of anything lordly or magisterial, and on the other hand with conscience in healthful activity, submission will be a pleasure, not an irksome duty. God commands it; in the fear of Christ it has to be rendered.

Does all this appeal to our hearts; or is it a fantasy, a dream, without any deep meaning to our souls? Precious truths, sublime in their simplicity, have passed before us in just skimming the surface of this letter. May God, in His infinite grace, make each truth very real to us. Oh, to read them as though never read before!

H. F.

CHRIST IN THE PSALMS.

WE might ask, what have we got in these breathings of the Spirit of God? Rather, perhaps, in a large sense, what have we not got in them? For how many passions of the renewed mind, how many acts of divine discipline and their corresponding experiences in the believer, has the Spirit of God here anticipated? And how largely has He traced the ways of the heart of Jesus! His cries, and tears, and praises, His solitary hours, His troubles from man, and His consolations in God? All these are felt here in their depth and power. What was passing in His soul when He was silent as to man, led as a lamb to the slaughter? What they who then surrounded Him did not hear, we listen to in this wondrous book. His thoughts of men, His worship of God, with all the incense of His various and perfect affections, are understood here. The New Testament tells us that He prayed and sung, but this book gives us His prayers and songs themselves.

And beside this—the whole mystery of Jesus, from the womb to the throne of glory, is rehearsed here in its joys and sorrows. We trace it as far back as “the volume of the book.” We read Him surrendering Himself before the foundation of the world. The deep silence of eternity is broken to our ear by those words—“Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” And from thence we see Him onward to the eternity before Him. Taking up in part flesh and blood; hanging in infancy on His mother’s breast; in His life of shame, and grief, and poverty; and in His last sorrows, the treason of His companions, the lying of the false witnesses, the deriding of enemies, the spear, and the nails, and the vinegar, and above all the forsaking of God. This is all heard and felt here.

And then we follow Him in His joys and songs in resurrection, and witness His ascension and His welcome and honours in heaven. And at last we watch His return from thence to the judgment of the nations, and to His glorious headship of Israel and the whole earth. All this is told out in this volume, not merely as it were with pen and ink, but in living lines, in fragments of the heart which this book has gathered up.

J. G. B.

JOHN XIII.

IN chap. xii. the Lord closes His relations with the world for the present, to resume them again in another character, even that of Judge, which He intimates at ver. 48. “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath One that judgeth him: the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

The chapter at present before us takes up symbolically one distinct character of the Lord's service to His own after His decease for them had been accomplished. He is no more in the world, but ere He retires visibly from them He sets before them, under the action of washing their feet, what He desired to do to them in order that they might have part *with Him*.

The key to the service is found in the words of ver. 3. "He was come from God, and went to God." He was going back to Him who sent Him, but not simply as the Eternal Son—the only begotten Son—but as the first begotten of the dead—the Head of a new and righteous race—the children whom God had given Him. He knew Him from whom He came and to whom He went, He knew the circle into which He would introduce those who were heirs of God, and joint heirs with Himself. He would have them in suitable condition to have part with Him on high.

I do not understand the service presented to us in this chapter to be the same as Priesthood. That refers to the infirmities of His people. (Heb. iv. 15.) They are in weakness, and He bears them as on eagles' wings. He, as the High Priest, carries them and cheers them in their sorrows. Neither does it present Him to us as the Advocate. That service He performs when we sin. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1).

In this chapter "He poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." A service, He intimates to Peter, as being needful in order to his "having part with Him."

The water, we learn, refers to the Word. The Word is that by which we learn His mind. We learn what occupies

Him. We learn the love of the Father. We come by it to know God. As we receive His Word into our hearts it judges what is unsuitable to God, and to the holy place where He dwells, and to which He means to bring us. The gracious Lord comes down to our weakness, and helps us daily. But there is no weakness with Him, and the service here presented to us is in order to our having part *with Him*. He would fit us for our home, of which He speaks in the following chapter. We are not at home yet. We have got a full title to be there, but He would prepare *us* for it, as well as prepare *it* for us. The latter was prepared. As soon as He returned to the Father, the place was ready; but, while there are exceptions, generally there is an educating process for us; often because of attachment to earth, the process is short. I remember one who was about to leave the suffering body. He had been successful in business. He was pleased often to mention how he came to town with a "spade and pick" on his shoulder, but after a fair number of years had passed he amassed a goodly portion. Sitting in his arm-chair gasping for breath, he said, in words that showed he had learned the worthlessness of all earthly riches, "The world!" He dismissed it with a motion of his hand, which indicated how empty he had found it to be.

We know often the sustaining Word He ministers to us in times of weakness and trial, and the restoration He grants to us when we have wandered. But I submit the service in our chapter is an education. He would give us, which makes us practically ready to enjoy what He has to give when in the Father's house. He would assimilate us by this service to the presence of His God and our God, His Father and our Father.

In this light I apprehend the exhortation that we should

render the same service to one another as He bestows upon us, does not consist in pointing out when one has sinned. If we have received the service from our Lord and Master, our service to one another must have the same character. We must truly know what it is to receive such a service from Him. Do we allow Him to do it, or do we, like Peter make objection (ver. 8)?

The requisite for our ability thus to serve one another rests on our keeping in fellowship with our Master's thoughts—they must be dwelling in us. We will discern time and place if the Word is dwelling richly in our own souls. I do not think pointing out, in however tender and loving a manner, the failures and departures from the truth of our brethren is what is meant in this chapter (ver. 15), but the word falling from our lips—*the Word of Christ* ministered in public or in private in such a way that unknown to us, by *it*, in the secret of the soul to whom it comes, the want of correspondence to the Lord Jesus, is learned—and whatever in actions, associations, or manner of life is so learned to be unsuitable to *the Lord*, is therefore abandoned.

It is easy to denounce actions, but difficult to *serve* those who are Christ's, in His Spirit *with that presentation of Himself which will sanctify the soul to His name*. This is part of service to His name. Will the soul complain of being called to serve Him? "I am among you as one that serveth." "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," are the words of our perfect Example. "Love delights to serve," let us remember, and if we covet to be like Him, who so humbled Himself as to take notice of our defects as well as our sins, and provide the remedy, we will study Him and seek to act and walk as He walked.

D. S.

FRAGMENTS.

BUT those who fight the Lord's battle must be contented to be in no respect accounted of; they must expect to be in no wise encouraged by the prospect of human praise. And, if you make an exception, "that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world will say," beware of this, for you *may turn them into a world*, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation; and you will be neither benefited by them, nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive—so long as you are conscious as to how they will think of you. All such motives are poison to you, and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God—and because such a time may be needful for you, I beseech you, be prepared for a time when you shall be as persons unknown, even to those that know God. It is not the fact, that all that see the face of the Lord, do see each other—it is not the fact that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension that the Christian must be contented to labour under. He must suspect even his brethren to see him through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy, and their cheers of approbation.

The man of God must walk *alone* with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth. And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man within us, to fall back upon human countenances, and human sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it brotherly love when we are just resting on the earthly sympathy of a brother worm. You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice that you are not alone, *because the Father is with you*, that you may give

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true glory to God. Oh, I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been, through the flesh, accessible to the praise of man, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow creatures, everyone of whom he knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, peaceful and happy in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand and misconceive. Here was the victory of Jesus.

What have I to do down here? To learn to know God better and to serve Him. Entire surrender of all one *is*, is what I covet,—surrender to God and to His Word. To be an imitator of God as a dear child,—Christ Himself my Ensample; that is my calling. I have Divine life; I would walk in it, and offer up all that I am and all that I have to God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He claims me; and to meet His claim is my bounden duty and my highest privilege.

One, in view of that bright morning when the Lord Himself shall come, writes, “Then shall He, who was once brought amid the dust of death, make the very dust to praise the Lord; and with almighty power, according to the glory that is in Him, pour contempt upon him that had the power of death, rifling his prison cells, and turning the wickedness of Satan, and the weakness of man, to the glory of God and of heaven.”

How cheering to know God as a Father, in the midst of all the confusion around.

The Apostle's sorrows and trials, besides being his present honour as conformity to the sufferings of his Master as a servant now, were also the school of his own soul for eternity.

Our business it is to treasure up the Word; it is the Spirit's to bring it forth out of the storehouse and to apply it. Have you renewed your strength to-day out of God's Word? How know you what fiery darts Satan may aim at you? Or what will be needed to quench them? One little text, held as *God's own Word*, is oft a panoply against infidelity in the day of battle.

THOU dost not ask for worthy saints,
 Sinners Thou called'st solely,
 Whose root lay deep in bitterness,
 In birth and life unholy.

I durst not cry—I've done my best,
 And so prepare to meet Thee,
 'Twas Thou didst bare Thy loving breast,
 'Twas then I flew to greet Thee.

Then Satan raged, and bade me own
 Thy Word was all a fable;
 From him I turned, to Thee alone—
Thee who alone art able—

Doubt to dissolve, in blaze of day,
 The seeds of life to nourish;
 To scare the invader from his prey,
 And bid the soul to flourish,

Sunday, April 13th, 1862.

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—IX.

(Chap. v. 23—vi. 9.)

Is it not an immense privilege to truly realize that God has expressed His mind for all, none are left without instructions. What He accounts suitable is recorded in His Word. Very diverse would the opinions be of what is right and becoming in the creature if each one was left to sketch it out; and it is a horrible thing to be found doing that which is right in one's own eyes, apart from the communicated will of God. Man, with a perverted will seeks the way, not that is right, but that best suits his natural inclinations. What a mercy deliverance from this is, and such is wrought for us as we hear and obey the living Word of the living God. "To the law and to the testimony," wrote the prophet for his day, "if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20). Principles are being spread to-day which are rapidly sapping the very foundations upon which even human institutions are alone securely based. The enemy is at work seeking to undermine the authority of God's Word. It is at that the blow is aimed; for it is by means of the Scriptures that God ministers comfort and blessing to His creatures; and insidiously as an angel of light Satan works to usurp its authority over heart and conscience.

Now the principle of submission is exceedingly obnoxious to the natural man. Indeed, with the cry of equality in the air, it is regarded as antiquated and inconsistent with liberty and progress. But *God* has given to each a sphere to fill, and harmony reigns only where each is respectively found

occupying it. So after stating the general principle of submission one to another, Paul proceeds to develop it with regard to the different relationships we may find ourselves in whilst pilgrims here. And he speaks first to those who are placed in positions of subjection—wives, children, servants; and how important to learn that conduct befitting these spheres is not dependent upon the way those over us use their authority, but is to flow from simple obedience, in all lowliness and meekness, to God's Word. A husband may be neglectful, a father exacting, or a master unjust, yet still the word spoken to each remains in all its force. Justification for certain wayward conduct is often sought in the fact that others have not been what they ought to have been; but to be disobedient because someone else has been so, is to add folly to sin. Do two wrongs make a right? Rather, breaches are only widened thereby. Wherein is the remedy? *Doing God's will.* "Thy Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against Thee," shows where His will is to be found, coupled with the holy desire to be free from transgressing it. To those in authority God does not neglect to speak, but we can only hear each for ourselves severally.

And from the teaching in the portion before us we are instructed afresh that the sanctity of the marriage tie is upheld in all its pristine beauty. It is God's institution for His creatures on earth, and though since the Fall an element has been introduced which makes for strife and discord, yet how great a mercy it is that it remains with the Creator's sanction still. Happy they, we are taught indeed, who, having grace given them so to do, are enabled to live superior to the claims of nature, free from the responsibilities of the relationship to serve the Lord undistractedly (Matt. xix. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 7, 32, 38). But the institution

remains, for it was not set aside when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden in Eden; but the coming in of lawlessness made the need for the exhortations here given imperative; and in this day of grace when light is abundantly vouchsafed, we are taught that the sweetness and helpfulness of the concord proper to the wedded state can only be known and enjoyed as hearty, willing obedience is rendered to the Divine will. Then, with heart knit to heart, and as heirs together of the grace of life, communion with, and service for the Lord is carried on unitedly; the sorrows that might follow marriage are borne together and thus divided, and the joys of two consecrated lives, so blended that the twain become one, are surely multiplied. Is this Utopian—an ideal only? Plainly not, for the road to it is now pointed out. May we traverse it.

There is an order in nature that is of God, and in that order the man is the head of the woman (1 Cor. xi.). Consequently, submission is becoming in the woman; love and care are to flow from the man; and here, whilst the opportunity is embraced to convey teaching about Christ and the Church, he illustrates the lesson he seeks to inculcate by referring to the submission of the Church to Christ, and His wondrous care in nourishing and cherishing it. Then, first addressing the wives, they are enjoined to render allegiance to their husbands: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." Is this a difficulty? "*As unto the Lord*" should immediately dispel it; for if by disposition prone to the very opposite, the wisdom of God directs to where peace and quietude are to be enjoyed. Acting in self-will brings painful ruminations, husbands may be embittered (Col. iii. 19), affections estranged, too, and what flowed from pure affection might lapse into cold duty. Bring in the Lord, and the barren formality of merely doing what is

right gives place to the geniality and warmth of loving to do and agreeing with God's will. "Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (ver. 24). Sometimes the enquiry is raised as to how far the wife ought to be submissive? Here is the answer, here the measure of submission required, namely, the subject of the Church to Christ. This is absolute, perfect, precious, for what can exceed it. She, who is to shine in His likeness, will find His will her boundless delight. No wayward wishes, no thoughts of self then, but her heart beating in perfect unison with His.

But passing on, the suitable word for the husbands next comes before us, and every word of God is good, and should be precious to us. Now, again, the measure of devotion is stated, for none are left to imagine whether or not they are exceeding what God would have them bestow. "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the Church*, and gave Himself for it." What Christ has done and is doing, sets forth the standard erected by God, the example He brings before the husbands. Christ, then, loved the Church, and to obtain it gave Himself. What a mystery of love! Being precious to Him, for He discerned her worth, as the parable of the Pearl of great Price (Matt. xiii.) teaches, He lavishes untold affection upon her, and, ere the bridal day arrives, is working to make her meet to be His associate in glory. Throughout the Millennium and the eternal ages she has to reflect His glory and beauty. So the "pearl" must be polished, and hence, having obtained it, we read that He sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the Word. Her perfection is anticipated, and when presented to Himself it will be as "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," but holy and without blemish (ver. 27). To reflect His glory will be her eternal

employ. It is His work to make her transparent that she might perfectly do this.

“ O God, with great delight
Thy wondrous thought we see,
Upon His throne, in glory bright,
The bride of Christ shall be.”

What care He unsparingly lavishes upon her! And the application comes, “So ought men to love their wives.” A part of himself, nourishing and cherishing her is to be the natural outcome of this, “for no man ever yet hated his own flesh.” Individually we are members of His body. Will *He* ever cease to care for us? To ask the question is to answer it, and it is to convey a lesson to our hearts. The wife is part of the husband—“they two shall be one flesh”—and blessed it surely is when they are both animated by the same spirit, and are one in purpose, aim, and object. Alas! often low in our thoughts, God’s order is subverted, His Word disobeyed, and sorrow abounds in consequence.

Paul states, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” The fulness of blessing connected with the relationship we have been considering is seen in the intimacy that exists between Christ and the Church; and from it we learn what *may be* true of husband and wife. However, to such heights we fail to rise, so once again the exhortation sounds forth that husbands are to *love* their wives *as themselves*; and wives to see that they reverence, or fear, their husbands. True joy and service is found in acting according to these Divine instructions. Difficulty does not absolve from obedience, for He hears in a time accepted, and succours in the day of salvation, and that day is *now*. Help is ever rendered to those who seek it. God help us to live this out, for so will the contentions

of a wife and the forgetfulness of a husband cease, and the doctrines of our God be adorned.

And now we come to the home circle, and still hear our God graciously instructing children, and fathers likewise. This circle is to be one of happy freedom, intercourse, and peace, alas! marred, we know, too often by the activity of self-will in various ways; and the hearth that should know the fulness and freshness of love at home is conversant with the discordant sounds of strife and confusion. Tears dim the eyes, whilst the heart sighs over the result of disobedience. But we reap as we sow, and the remedy for this is, as already said, in obeying God's Word.

In this utterance (chap. vi. 1—3) the whole family is contemplated, and all the children are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord. No excuse can be found for not doing this—"for this is right." There is parental authority which must be obeyed (would to God it was exercised more), and "disobedient to parent" is one of the signs of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 2). Is this sign discernible now? *Honour* must likewise be rendered to father and mother. That God values the observance of this is attested by the fact that a promise was attached to the command. Death was the penalty for cursing father or mother (Matt. xv. 4); long life the reward for honouring them. Prosperity attends those who observe these words. Children, do you desire a bright Christian career? Then let these doctrines (vers. 1—3) be meditated on continually, and so shall piety commence at home, and God's blessing, distilling as the dew, crown your days.

Home, we would repeat, should be a haven of refuge for its occupants, a shelter from much of the abounding evil of the day. But fathers are often foolish, and by hasty word and action cause their children's wills to break out in rebellion. Provocation to evil must not come from them.

“Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” A divinely given tact is required, and suitable food and instruction ministered to the little ones. What a beautiful picture is here brought before us. It is the Christian’s home, with children obedient and rendering honour to the parents; and the father, rightly ruling, is seen expending much thought and care upon all, earnestly seeking to rear them up *in the nurture* of the Lord. Where this is so, the earthly careers of the children are not thought of to the exclusion of their spiritual welfare. Young Timothy from a child had known the Holy Scriptures, and whether by father or by mother, he had been nurtured aright. How fully he was equipped to go forward.

Then, “In the admonition of the Lord” 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 the 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 speak the Scriptures, 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. “Bring them up in the *nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord.” Our God is the God of *all* grace, and in His sovereign ways there are abundant mercy and unspeakable wisdom. To Him be praise that it is so.

We next pass to the business sphere. "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh." Bond-servants are here addressed, but the application of the teaching is plain. All who occupy subordinate positions are to be obedient, and as Christ is followed it will be rendered promptly and cheerfully. "*With fear and trembling*" too, lest, failing, reproach should fall upon the name of the One they love. And, being servants of Christ, the earthly masters are lost sight of, and "*unto Christ*" lifts every detail of service above the base motives of a time-server, and sheds a little halo of glory round so called acts of drudgery.

"Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that, and the action fine."

To realize that the eye of our Master is upon us should stimulate to earnestness, and as it becomes our delight to please Him, we shall be found "doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord and not to men" (ver. 7). What an elevation this places all our daily toil on. He is interested in the way we perform it, and will surely render to all a due reward. Our Master is not forgetful, and whether to bond or free, for He is no respecter of persons, will He render again the good thing performed. Happy are we if we know the power of this in a practical way.

Masters in like manner are to act with perfect justice towards their servants. They have a Master in heaven, and the remembrance of this should exercise a pure restraining influence, and keep them from threatening. And now, in closing, we may quote the words of our Lord and Master, uttered by Him for us all, when He set His disciples an example of humility, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17).

H. F.

LETTER TO A FRIEND ON SPIRITUAL CONFLICT.

MY DEAR A.,

You are not quite clear as to what is meant by our portion in the heavenlies, and the conflict spoken of in Ephesians.

A few of us were having a little talk about it lately. We saw that Ephesians answers to the book of Joshua in the Old Testament. As you know, Canaan is often taken as typical of our heavenly home, and the river Jordan as death of the body. *Jordan is* a type of death, but *our death with Christ*, which separates us from this present scene and the flesh (see Gal. vi. 14, Rom. vi. 1-11).

Canaan was a scene of constant warfare. There will certainly not be any fighting, either if we should be "absent from the body and present with the Lord," or when we shall be caught up to be for ever with Him in our bodies of glory. But there is a conflict (Eph. vi. 10-17) in connection with our portion in the heavenlies which answers, I believe, to the conflict in Canaan. I used to be very puzzled as to the meaning of Ephesian truth. I had a very vague idea as to what the spiritual blessings spoken of there are, and as to the conflict, too. But we have only to look at the context. We get the blessings in the first three chapters, and then in the rest of the epistle the behaviour that should characterize those to whom so much is given; and the armour needed to fight the enemies who would hinder our enjoyment of our possessions, and our walking worthy of such a vocation.

One thing we want to be very clear about to start with, that we really belong to the Lord, or we can never take possession of the first bit of the inheritance. The Israelites could have had no confidence at all but for God's Own Word to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread

upon, that have I given you." But then, believing the Word was not enough unless they acted up to it, and actually took possession. So the first blessing that I get is "redemption by blood, the forgiveness of sins." How many who are undoubtedly born again have not got full possession of that first blessing, to say nothing of all that follow. And then, how many others are content with the knowledge of sins forgiven, and do not go on to enjoy the rest of their inheritance. I have often heard it said, "Oh, all that is too deep for me; I like simplicity. Ephesian truth is too high for me." What is this but spiritual laziness? If we are set on taking possession of what God has given us we shall find all the power of the enemy arrayed against us, as one of our hymns puts it—

" Before, behind, around,
They set their fierce array,
To fight and force me from the ground
Along life's narrow way."

And we do not like the conflict. I am sure, too, if one may speak for another, we often do not realize that it is the enemy who is opposing, for he is wily, and we give in instead of overcoming. Well, we are exhorted to put on the *whole armour* of God that we may be able to withstand the *wiles* of the Devil. If my loins are not girt with truth—and I must *know* the Word of God for that—I shall get turned aside by some wile of Satan, and lose my breastplate of righteousness, perhaps—for I take it the righteousness here is *practical* righteousness—and then my shield will be down, and Satan can easily get his fiery darts in, tempting me to believe either that I am not a child of God at all, or that God does not care for me specially, does not concern Himself about *me*, or that He is not so good as His Word says, or perhaps something worse still.

Letter to a Friend.

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Notice, we are first commanded to "be strong in the Lord and the power of His might." Have you noticed how often the Lord told Joshua to be strong and of good courage? *Self-confidence* will not do; that will soon floor us. But we have all resource in Him. "The Lord shall fight for you." Then we can take our stand. "Stand, therefore." We must never turn our backs on the foe, for there is no armour provided for the back. But, alas for the practice, if it does not correspond with the theory! "The loins girt about with truth." We want the whole truth of God to keep us from defilement, and to guide us in our service. The girdle was used to keep the flowing garment from getting soiled, and I think in Exodus xii. 11, and Luke xii. 35, we get the thought of one on a journey, not taking his ease or settling down. Then in John xiii. 4, we get *service*. We want the girdle of truth to keep us from defilement or settling down here, and also for our service.

As I said before, we must *know* the truth for this. In Joshua i. 8, we get "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night." We must be familiar with the Word before we can meditate on it. The lack of knowledge of the Word is the chief reason, I believe, of the little progress made in our spiritual possessions. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness." This is upright walk, so that the enemy may not have an advantage over me because of a bad conscience. As a brother lately told us, we must be beforehand with Satan, and the moment we sin, confess the sin, and judge ourselves—then we shall keep a good conscience (1 John i. 9). "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Christ has made peace by the blood of His Cross, and God is preaching peace. I have received His Word, and I have peace with God. Not only so, but I

am in a world of unrest, and it is my privilege to be in the enjoyment of the legacy of peace my Lord left His disciples, and which only true disciples can enjoy (John xiv. 27). In Col. iii. 15 we get, "Let the peace of Christ *rule in your hearts.*" The Word is umpire, decides everything. No matter what the disturbing elements around me, that calm, unruffled peace is my portion. As to how much we know of it is a question we can each best answer for ourselves. But do you see the connection with our text? This should characterize our *walk*. Then, above all, the shield of faith. Absolute, unreasoning, childlike faith in the living God, which will answer any doubts or insinuations the enemy may suggest. Then I can hold up my head, for I have a helmet—Salvation. I take it this is not only present but future salvation, as we get in 1 Thes. v. 8, "for a helmet the *hope of salvation.*" I am looking for my Saviour from heaven to complete the work begun, when I shall get full salvation of body, soul, and spirit. Then, "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." What an example we get in the blessed Lord Himself as to the use of the sword. He met every temptation by the simple Word of God.

Well, I have only given you a few suggestions for you to follow out fully. I fear I have made my letter too long. We must not forget *we* have no power for all this. We are only conquerors through Him that loveth us. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

I should like to say a word on what follows as to prayer, but must reserve it for another time if the Lord will.

Yours in Christ,

R.

FRAGMENT.

How remarkable is it, and singularly characteristic of our low condition, that one seldom sees a soul occupied with the present current or course of our Lord's mind. Something in reference to *itself* marks every enquiry or engagement. Little wonder, then, that our condition should be so low and our testimony so powerless.

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY A SUNSET ON THE SAVOY MOUNTAINS.

HAVE we not seen at close of day
 The varied lights that then will play
 On Savoy's range, reflecting bright
 The parting beams of solar light.
 Yet is not all the range's side
 Illumined thus, for far and wide
 O'er valleys, crevices, and plain
 Cold sullenness appears to reign.
 'Tis only here and there the peaks,
 Or crests reflect the golden streaks.
 Thus in the world, though day by day
 Mercies and blessings on the way
 Be thickly strewn unasked, unsought,
 How few there are who give one thought,
 And thankfully the knee will bend
 To Christ, the Lord, the sinner's Friend,
 Faintly reflecting back by praise
 The heavenly Sun's effulgent rays.

Ouchy, Feb., 1852.

C. E. S.

" WITHIN THE VEIL."

" WITHIN the veil," e'en we as saints have entered,
Into the stillness of the Home of God ;
That Holy Temple where the Son for ever
Is centralized, by myriad hosts adored.

" Within the veil " the soul at rest, and fitted
To enter there. The Lamb's most precious blood
Before and on the Throne for ever speaking ;
For ever satisfied the claims of God.

" Within the veil," O soul, that inner chamber
Where Christ awaits unveiled to greet " His own,"
In silence to reveal that bliss unfathomed—
His mighty untold love—its depth unknown.

" Within the veil," in fellowship unhindered,
To learn God's mind within that " secret place " ;
All thirst is stilled, the soul drinks deep for ever
Of that exhaustless tide—His wondrous grace.

O Heart of God whose depth remains unfathomed !
O matchless love, that stooped *so low* in grace !
Low do we bow in heart and soul before Thee,
And worship Thee within Thy Holy Place.

A. S.

ERRATA.

In September number, page 176, line 28 from top, should read : " our chapter is an education He would give us," etc. Also at page 178, line 19 from top should read : " to labour under. He must expect," etc.

“ A VOICE ”

TO THE SAINTS OF GOD.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

It is becoming more manifest continually that the enemy of souls is putting forth great efforts around us to allure away the young and the unstable from CHRIST and the WORD of God. Many and varied are the ways and means used, sometimes one thing and then another, but his object is always the same, to *oppose* God and *destroy* souls.

The WORD of God has been from the beginning an object of attack by the enemy. It is now. Men who profess to be Christ's servants and teachers of the Word, would have men to study the Bible “like any other ancient history.” The Bible, they say, “is a *collection of writings*, not so much A Book; and the binding of these books together has been, to a large extent, the result of accident, and in some cases of bigotry.” And they want us “to cut ourselves free from all and any theory concerning the Bible generally, and to find out what is *in* the Bible, without reading into it what it does not teach, or to set up claims for it which it does not claim for itself.”

Such is the bold declaration and proposition of these teachers, under the pretence of learning, and in a religious garb.

Brethren, Satan could not devise nor desire a better idea to draw away souls into the dark regions of doubt, uncertainty, and infidelity. “Hath God said,” was the Serpent's first approach to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden, and “Ye will not surely die,” soon followed, which was his lie. So

it is now. He proposes *inquiry* to see "what is *in* the Bible," but he will soon turn the truth of God into a lie. It cannot be otherwise, "because there is no truth in him" (John viii. 44).

There were false prophets among the people of old, and false Apostles among the early Christians, and there are among *us* also false teachers (2 Cor. xi. 13; 2 Peter ii. 1). "Swift destruction," "whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not," are the solemn words recorded *against* them.

Much reverence is shown by them who now attack the Bible, and in words they call it "the best of books," "an old, ancient library," "immortal," but to *all* who are not *ignorant* of Satan's devices, his purpose is to do away with it as the *Word of God*. The *authority* for, and *certainty* of, all divine and eternal things are called in question by one in the guise of a friend, to help you "to see what is *in* the Bible." "A Book" is done away with, and "a *collection* of *writings* put together by an accident, and in some cases of bigotry," is offered for your inspection instead. Sad comfort for needy souls this is. Husks, instead of the rich and boundless provision of our Father's house.

THE BIBLE "is to be studied like any other ancient history," they say, which means that the Bible is to be brought to the bar of *human* history. If history does not substantiate what the Bible records as *facts*, history is true, and the Bible false. The Bible is to give way to history! God to man!

No *authority*, no *certainty* is thus written on the first leaf of your Bible, with this qualification, *only* what agrees with history, and human reasoning.

Shaky foundation this is, to rest upon and build for eternity. It is a foundation of sand, and the teaching of

blind guides, who speak not according to the Word (Matt. xv. 14). But let God be true and every man a liar, because our "God that *cannot* lie" hath spoken to us "in His Son" (Titus, i. 2; Heb. i. 1, 2).

By assailing the Bible as an *inspired* book the enemy aims to open the door for men to choose or reject such portions as they think fit, so that chaos, disorder, and wickedness may reign supreme. Divine realities will then soon lose their power and worth. Man's construction will be put on the weightiest and most precious thing which it contains. The Christ of God as a DIVINE person, will *only* be Jesus, the *good* carpenter of Nazareth. His CROSS will only be the tragic end of a fairy tale. HEAVEN and HELL will be myths. ETERNAL things will only be dreams of the enthusiast, and all *certainty* will be gone.

Child of God, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. xi. 3). But let us, who believe, "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6).

We are instructed "not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God," to "prove *all* things; hold fast that which is good," and "to the law and the testimony" we are directed to *test* these things; "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. viii. 20). How true and precious this is. Let the rays of the sun come into a dark room, and it will reveal at once its state. So also, let the light of God's WORD fall on men's ideas and teachings, and at once they are made manifest whence they are. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light" (Ps. cxix. 130).

Let us now turn to the Holy Scriptures to "hear what God the Lord will speak" concerning His own Word (Ps. lxxxv. 8).

"ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God," is the plain, distinct, and emphatic statement of the Bible (2 Tim. iii. 15). Inspiration therefore is *claimed* by God for *all* Scripture, Old and New Testaments alike. Inspiration means, *literally*, God breathed. We read in Genesis ii. 7, that "God breathed" into the nostrils of the man whom He formed out of the dust of the ground, "the breath of life." In that light we can see that the *whole* Scriptures are as much the production of God as *life* is.

Many persons have been used by God in writing the Bible, but *all* of them were under the *guidance* and *control* of the SPIRIT of God. Every *subject*, *sentence*, and *word* of their writings were *given* them by the HOLY GHOST. "The Lord *gave* the Word: great was the company of those that published it" (Ps. lxxviii. 11). God hath revealed unto us, "the things" which He hath prepared for them that love Him, "not in *words* which *man's* wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 13.) Holy men of God *spake* as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost," and "the ministers of Christ," and "stewards of the mysteries of God," spake in *words* which the Holy Ghost taught them (2 Peter i. 21; 1 Cor. ii. 13). Thus, the unerring wisdom of God is seen in the production of this divinely given Book. No chance, no accident in any of God's ways; and men's ways and actions are over-ruled by Him, to fulfil His own purposes (Gen. xxxvii. 28; Psalm cv. 17).

ALL that is written then is a *correct* and *infallible* record of what took place, and "what holy men spake: and is written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

What God said or did, or what righteous men said or did, or what wicked men said or did, or what the Devil said or

did, are written down exactly as it was said or done, and where it took place. Even the *peculiar* and *strange* things which God wrought at the beginning, and in ancient days, and which no *human* reasoning can understand nor comprehend apart from faith, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost, are written down. Yet, "they are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge;" and "Wisdom is justified of her children" (Prov. viii. 9; Matt. xi. 19).

The history of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Flood, the Confusion of Tongues, the Call of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the selling of Joseph, the life of Moses, the plagues of Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, the wilderness journey, the promised land occupied, etc., are *all facts* which took place in the very *exact* and *minute* way recorded.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners *spake* in time past unto the fathers *by* the prophets;" "For the prophecy came not in old time by the *will* of man: but holy men of God *spake* as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost" (Heb. i. 1; 2 Peter i. 21). "Thus saith the Lord," "The Lord *spake* unto me," "Hear ye the words of the Lord," were some of the solemn words of introduction by the prophets unto the people. And what the prophets *spake* then came to be spoken of as "the words of God." "Men trembled at the words of the God of Israel." Others "rebelled against the words of God" (1 Chron. xxv. 5; Ezra ix. 4; Ps. cvii. 11). So the words of the prophets were "the words of God" coming to us in a divinely given form, so that we can receive their words as of *absolute authority* for our souls as the WORD OF GOD. They ought to be, to the saints of God, an end of all controversies among us, and binding on the conscience.

Jeremiah spake from the mouth of the Lord (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12; Jer. xxxvii. 17). Isaiah says, "Seek ye out of the *Book* of the Lord, and read" (Isaiah xxxiv. 16). The angel Gabriel calls them "The Scriptures of truth" (Dan. x. 21). The Lord said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures . . . and they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39). On the resurrection day He expounded unto two of His disciples, from the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself, beginning at Moses and *all* the prophets; and what was *written* in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, to another company (Luke xxiv. 27, 44). He read the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth, defeated the Devil in the wilderness by, "It is written," and during His public ministry the Scriptures were constantly used by Himself, so that He could say "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17).

He spake of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, and made quotations from them, and so set to His seal that they are true. Surely these are *unerring* and *infallible* testimonies of the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as the WORD OF GOD (Matt. xii. 40; xxiv, 38; Luke, iv., 26).

Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, and the angel Gabriel are witnesses accredited in the courts of heaven. And above and beyond all are the words of our Lord, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. ix. 5).

Child of God, wilt thou *ignore* the testimony of the holy men of God, or *disbelieve* the words of our Lord, and *despise* the Scriptures which He believed in? God forbid.

(*To be continued.*)

“ A VOICE ”

TO THE SAINTS OF GOD.

BELoved BRETHREN,

Again, the Jews as a nation believed the Scriptures to be the Word of God. They were read in their synagogue every Sabbath day (Acts xiii. 15 ; xv. 21). When Herod the king demanded of the chief priests and scribes where Christ should be born, they did answer with *authority* and *certainly*, “ In Bethlehem of Judea,” because it was “ written ” by the prophet Micah. And continually they were referring to Moses and the prophets, although these Scriptures bore testimony *for* God, and *against* their unbelief. The Sadducees erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, and the scribes and Pharisees were making “ the commandments of God of none effect by their tradition ” (Matt. xxii. 29 ; xv. 1, 9).

Stephen made his noble defence before the Council from the histories of Scriptures, and said, “ God spake on this wise,” etc. (Acts vii. 6) ; “ It is contained in the Scripture,” and “ This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,” and “ This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled,” were Peter’s *authority* and *belief* in them (Acts i. 16 ; ii. 16 ; 1 Peter ii. 6). “ Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain ? ” and “ To this agree the words of the prophets ; as it is written,” and “ According to Scripture,” and “ The Scripture was fulfilled,” was James’s also (Acts xv. 15 ; James ii. 8, 23 ; iv. 5). King Agrippa believed the Scriptures, although not a Christian then (Acts xxvi. 27, 28). The eunuch read them, and Philip preached unto him Jesus,

from "the same Scripture" (Acts viii. 32, 35). Paul reasoned and persuaded the Jews concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, and he believed ALL things that were WRITTEN in them (Acts xxviii. 23; xxiv. 14). Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Jude, also, abound in quotations and references from Old Testament Scriptures. Beloved brethren, these are clouds of witnesses worthy to be accredited by us. They are God's witnesses and speak the words of truth and soberness.

Again, Israel on their return from captivity ordered the service of God; "as it is *written* in *the Book* of Moses" (Ezra vi. 18). Ezra read "the Book" of the law in the hearing of Israel, and he prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it (Neh. viii. 3; Ezra vii. 10). Nehemiah reminded God of His Word written in the law (Neh. i. 8). "THE BOOK" of the law was found in the days of king Josiah, and was read before him, and he *believed* what was written, and humbled himself, rent his clothes, and wept. God was pleased with the king's humiliation, that blessing and not wrath would be to him in his days (2 Kings xxii. 8, 20). Daniel in Babylon read "THE BOOKS," that gave him understanding as to the duration of the captivity, "even seventy years," "whereof the *Word* of the LORD *came* to Jeremiah the prophet" (Dan. ix. 2). David in his dying charge to Solomon, his son, said, "Be thou strong, and show thyself a man," by doing God's will, "as it is WRITTEN in the law of Moses" (1 Kings ii. 1, 3). Hezekiah ordered the passover "as it was written" (2 Chron. xxx. 5, 12), and God, through the prophet Malachi, reminded Israel "of the law of Moses," His servant (Mal. iv. 4, 6).

Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Hezekiah, Daniel, and Malachi are worthies who *believed*, *enjoyed*, and *lived* the WORD OF GOD. Their faith let us follow.

Again, in the New Testament, the Old Testament furnished the proofs whence the believers, both speakers and writers, affirmed ALL things which the Gospel of the Grace of God, consequent on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, introduced. Corroborative evidence is *numerous* also in the Epistles of Paul, Peter, James, Hebrews, and Jude of the *historical* facts of Old Testament records. The Creation, Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Call of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the deliverance from Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, the fall of Jericho, &c., are mentioned. Cain, Core, Balaam, with their wicked ways, are quoted as a warning. And Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the Prophets, are mentioned as men and women of faith. The writers *believed* the histories recorded of them in the Scriptures, and *witnessed* also of their reality. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

The Scriptures are called by Stephen "the lively oracles" (Acts vii. 38), and in Hebrews "the oracles of God" (Heb. v. 12), and if any man speaks, he is instructed to speak as "the oracles of God" (1 Peter iv. 11).

Timothy *knew* the Holy Scriptures from a child; Apollos was "*mighty* in the Scriptures;" the Bereans "*searched* the Scriptures daily," and the Colossians were exhorted to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. iii. 16). The Thessalonians *received* the "Word of God" which was spoken to them by Paul and others, not as the word of *men*, but as it is in truth, "the WORD OF GOD" (1 Thes. ii. 13), and "to God, and to the *Word* of His grace," Paul commended the Ephesian elders (Acts xx. 32). To the Corinthians he said, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things

that I write unto you are the *commandments* of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37), distinguishing previously between, "I speak," "I command," "my judgment," and the commandments of the Lord, although believing that *his* judgment was according to "the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. vii. 6, 10, 12, 25, 40). A blessing is spoken of concerning him "whose delight is in the law of the Lord:" and who meditate in it "day and night" (Ps. i. 2). To the Psalmist, God's Word was "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105). He rejoiced in it (ver. 162), wanted God to order his steps in it (ver. 133), and it was sweeter than honey to his mouth (ver. 103).

"The Word of the Lord is *true* from the beginning" (ver. 160), "*aright*," "*very pure*," and "for ever *settled* in heaven" (Ps. xxxiii. 4; cxix. 140, 89). The Scriptures *must* needs be fulfilled, and cannot be broken (John x. 35; Acts xvii. 2, 11). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away," saith our Lord. What a comfort to the believer, but dismay and terror to the wicked in a coming day.

Both Old and New Testaments stand or fall together. They are what the Wisdom of God gave us. To give up God's Word is to give up Himself. God and His Word are joined together. His eternal power and Godhead are known by creation (Rom. i. 19, 20), but His Love and GRACE only by His own revelation in His Word. God's heart of love has been revealed to lost sinners by the death of "His only begotten Son," who is the centre of all God's counsels, the Alpha and Omega of both Old and New Testaments. Abraham saw His day (John viii. 56). Moses wrote of Him (John v. 46), Isaiah spake of Him (John xii. 41), David in Spirit called Him Lord (Matt. xxii. 42, 43),

and the Holy Scriptures will enable us to “*grow*” in the knowledge of Him, as we are exhorted to do (2 Peter iii. 18).

There are in the Epistles of Paul “some things hard to be understood,” but, sad to say, “which they that are *unlearned* and *unstable*, *wrest*, as they do also the *other* Scriptures, unto their own damnation” (2 Peter iii. 15, 16). A solemn woe is pronounced on any who will *add* unto, or take *away* from the WORDS of “the Book” of this prophecy (Deut. iv. 12 ; xii. 32 ; Rev. xxii. 18, 19). A woe was also pronounced on some for “taking away the key of knowledge” (Luke xi. 52), and “whoso despiseth the Word shall be destroyed” (Prov. xiii. 13). This reminds us that our God is not *only* a God of love, but also “a consuming fire” (Heb. xii. 29).

Child of God, such are some of the Bible’s own testimonies as to its AUTHOR, AUTHORITY, WORTH, and USE. It has been tried. “The Word of God is quick, and powerful,” &c. (Heb. iv. 12). It is the incorruptible seed, whereby we were “born again” (1 Peter i. 23). It giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps. cxix. 130), it makes us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. iii. 15), and it is able to build us up (Acts xx. 32). God hath pledged His Word, that “to this man will I look, even to him that is *poor*, and of a *contrite* spirit, and *trembleth* at MY WORD” (Is. lxvi. 2).

Child of God, wilt thou follow the counsels of teachers who are undermining the ROCK on which you build for eternity, and falsifying the CHART which directs your way safely to the haven of rest, and taking away the COMPASS which points you to the “MORNING STAR?” God forbid. “Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good.”

Some already have imbibed the *false* doctrine, and have fallen into the snare of the Devil. Repent, ye misguided ones, and deliver yourselves like a bird from the hand of the

fowler. Others say, "It is nothing to me," but Scripture *plainly* teaches that it is possible to be *partakers* of *others'* "evil deeds," and partakers of *other* men's sins" (2 John 10, 11; 1 Tim. v. 22; Jos. vii. 11).

Others are vexed and grieved on account of the Bible being *attacked* by those who are *paid* to teach them, but know not what to do, nor where to turn. Give not your ear, your presence, your time, nor your money to encourage and embolden those men that teach; nor to uphold the systems which acknowledge such God dishonouring, and soul destroying doctrine. "Take heed *what* ye hear," are the solemn words of our Lord.

We are to "purge ourselves from these," to "shun profane and vain babblings," and to "depart from iniquity;" "but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii. 16, 22).

Brethren, close not your ears, harden not your hearts to what "God hath said" (Heb. xiii. 5). Be warned, "God is not mocked." Be exhorted, "Put on the whole armour of God," and His Word is the "Sword" of the Spirit (Eph. vi. 10, 17). Use this "Sword," wield it in faith, and down comes the strongholds of Satan. The "Sword of the Lord and of Gideon," triumphed in days of old against great odds. Our God is the same to-day, His Word quick and powerful, and it abideth for ever. The church in Philadelphia had a little strength, kept the Lord's Word, and did not deny His name (Rev. iii. 7, 8). May we do the same, with increasing strength, and cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Amen.

J. M. E.

WITH CHRIST.

To depart and to be with Christ is far better (Phil. i. 23). Every true soul will echo this. But of whom can it be true, and when ?

Who gave expression to that thought ? It was "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). Notorious had been his career. Most public had been his acts. Haling men and women, and casting them into prison ; punishing Christians oft in every synagogue ; persecuting that way even unto death ; and when saints were put to death, giving his voice against them ; compelling, too, the unstable to blaspheme ; what a career had his been ! Open hostility to the Lord and to His saints he had displayed ; and standing by, and consenting unto Stephen's death, he had kept watch over the raiment of those who were stoning that faithful witness for Christ. If ever a man deserved punishment surely Saul of Tarsus did. But, converted by the Lord on his way to Damascus, he was destined to take up, and carry on the testimony to the Saviour, in which Stephen, through his death, could no longer have part. And now he, who had once thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, the Nazoræan, desired to depart and to be with Him. Divine grace meted out to him could permit that, and confiding in the love of God he desired to be with Christ.

But when could that be effected ? In a moment, if he died, it would take place, and absent from the body he would be present with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8). To bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. xv. 49), he would have to wait, and he still waits ; for that depends on the resurrection of his

body. But to be present with the Lord is a favour, a blessing he has known and enjoyed since the Roman executioner struck off his head at that spot outside Rome, known as *Tre Fontane*. By the decree of Nero he was cut off from earth to be immediately launched into the presence of Christ. Utterly ignorant was that heathen emperor of that which he was doing for Paul, opening the Apostle's way to be with the Saviour. What was true of Paul is true of all departed saints. Of such, we can say with confidence, they are present with the Lord.

The joy, the bliss of an unclothed saint none of us can understand. Scripture has not described it. But it must far surpass anything that can be known in this world. For Paul, who undoubtedly had the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 5), and who could speak from experience of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, tells us that to depart and be with Christ is far better. Yet, whilst we cannot positively describe that bliss, we know negatively something of what it must be. Absent from the body, all the ills that flesh is heir to are for ever behind. The sorrows, trials, vexations, afflictions, sufferings, incident to mortality, can never be experienced again. And from the presence of sin, as disembodied, the individual is free, and that for ever. What ineffable bliss! Is that all? Of the *present* condition of departed saints we have written. What about their future?

On this revelation is not reticent. But here also we enter on a subject of which man, by himself, could assuredly know nothing. Varied as have been the exercises of the human mind on the subject, utterly at sea have been men's expectations about it. The natural man can conceive nothing more, nothing higher, than a continuance of pleasures, or enjoyments in character with life on earth.

Divine revelation sheds a clear and bright light on the future, telling us of the position of the saint in the universe, and also of that wonderful sight which he will surely and constantly behold. His condition and position are made known. With Christ in the unclothed state, the departed one will be with Him when again in his body. Raised on the resurrection morning, and the living saints caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, as kings and priests will they all be seen by the whole court of heaven. And crowned, and on thrones, and with golden vials full of odours, the prayers of saints still in trial on earth, the whole assembled angelic host will see the company of the elders of Rev. iv., v., for the first time all together. In heaven then, a word of 1 Thess. iv. 14, will subsequently be fulfilled. They will come with Christ when He appears to earth coming out of heaven. This necessarily takes us to the description of that event given in Revelation. The Lord coming out of heaven on a white horse, the armies which are in heaven, saints, not angels, are described as coming with Him; seated on white horses, and clothed in fine linen white and clean (xix. 14). A procession this is, a spectacle such as earth has never yet witnessed. The length of it, the breadth of it, who of us can measure; for who of men can say what is the number of that host? All coming out of heaven and forming the train of the Lord Jesus; what a sight will it be! Men on earth often go a long way to see a great sight. What will this be? Apostles, prophets, martyrs, patriarchs, saints, all swelling the train of Him who comes in righteousness to judge and to make war. Who will not value their place in it on that day, whilst ascribing all honour and thanks to God and to His Son.

But more, they will witness the conflict, and attest His victory, when the beast, and false prophet, with the ten

kings of the earth, and all their armies challenging in combat the right of the Lamb to reign, will be signally and completely overthrown (Rev. xvii, 14; xix. 19-21), not one of all that opposing host escaping their justly deserved doom. When before on earth has there been a conflict and a victory like it? Not one, we read, will be left alive to repent of their wickedness, nor to sue for mercy at the hands of the Conqueror. When, too, before has such a weapon been employed wherewith to strike the deadly blow? Earth could not forge it. The sword which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lamb, irresistible as wielded by Him, is one on which, in its exercise, human eyes have never yet rested.

Many, how many then in the train of the Lord have had to feel the power of the enemy stirring up men to oppose God's work. Many, how many, have fallen in that conflict as if partakers in a defeated cause; but they have earned a martyr's crown. What interest will all such surely take in the victory of the Lamb. Nor they only. All in the armies of heaven will rejoice in this victory over the armies on earth. What a prospect, what a future in store for those who will be with Christ!

But more. That battle field may quickly become a feature of the past. The heavenly saints, however, will have an object on which they will *ever* gaze. The Lord's prayer to His Father assures of this, as we read, "Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). To see Him in the glory conferred on Him by the Father as the obedient One is His desire for all His own. To gaze on Him as arrayed in all the tokens of His Father's love will be a joy unspeakable to all those

given to Him by His Father. And being for ever with Him (1 Thes. iv. 17), that will surely ever be before them. What a prospect is this for those now with Christ, and for those who will then be for ever in His presence.

Nor is this all that the unclothed saints in common with us still alive have to expect. There is the Kingdom, entered into now by all the faithful, all such being heirs of it, whilst awaiting its manifestation in power. The day will come when they shall sit with Christ on His throne (Rev. iii. 21), ruling the nations on earth with a rod of iron (ii. 27), reigning not only with Him for a thousand years (xx. 4), but also reigning for ever and ever (xxii. 5).

Such, then, is the prospect before all those with Christ, they and we sharing the hope of His return to make these future things present. Of those now with Christ, absent from the body, their former links with earth we may surely conclude are broken. But as saints there is yet something in common between them and believers still on earth. They share with us the hope of the Lord's return, that we may together bear the image of the heavenly, and enjoy in common and for ever the blessings that our Father has in store for those who believe on His Son. We here need to be kept day by day faithful and true. They resting with Christ are beyond the reach of personal failure. A condition of expectancy is theirs as to the future, and of unalloyed bliss in the present. Truly to depart and to be with Christ *is* far better.

C. E. S.

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE.

IN reading the Old Testament we often come across some figure or history which strikingly illustrates New Testament teaching, shewing most clearly that one Divine mind out-breathed the whole. To a portion of historical Scripture we will presently turn. David, the man after God's own heart, had sat upon the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem; and to him promises in connection with the kingdom had been granted by Jehovah. And in the certainty that these promises would be performed, the aged monarch had worshipped, and had peacefully passed away from earth. Solomon, his son, had since occupied that throne, and to him immense favours had been given. Wisdom, riches, and honour had been lavishly bestowed upon him, and the greatest favour of all was that on two different occasions the Lord had appeared to him. His selection for the throne speaks of great grace; for he was the son of Bathsheba, with whom his father David had so grievously sinned. His elder brothers were passed over, and this son of David by Bathsheba was the chosen of Jehovah to reign over His people Israel, and to build Him an house at Jerusalem.

Beloved of the Lord, gifted with wisdom and understanding above all that were before him, peace in all his borders, and great riches and honour were poured upon him. Who would have expected that his heart would be turned away from Jehovah? Yet so it was. Of the cause we will not now speak, but note the sad fact and pass on. He dies; he passes from earth, and will one day have to give account of himself to God. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, now comes to the throne, and by his folly contributes to the alienation of ten tribes out of the twelve. So they revolt from the house of David and have for their king a man named Jeroboam,

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who had been a servant to Solomon. Was all this mere chance? No; there was direct judgment from God in it on account of the sin of Solomon. Rehoboam would have used force to compel the people to return to their allegiance, but Jehovah forbade it—"This thing is done of Me." The unity of Israel no longer existed in an outward way. God broke it in twain in judgment, and the breach then made will never be healed until David's Greater Son appears, not in humiliation, as we read of Him in the Gospels, but in power and glory, as in Rev. xix., with the armies of heaven following in His train.

In the breach then made, and in those of our own day, there is always the right and the wrong of the quarrel, but of this we may be sure that God would never have suffered it had there not been a cause, hidden it may be from many an eye, but clearly seen by Him. Why should He maintain His people in service, and testimony, and in happy unity together if in their hearts He has lost His true place? To find out what is wrong and set that right would be true wisdom, but the visible unity once lost will never be regained until Jesus comes.

The ten tribes in revolt, perhaps little thought of what disastrous results would ensue for them from the breach then made. Of their wrongs they were fully aware. Why should they endure the tyranny of Rehoboam? No; they would not. They would stand for their rights as free men, and the house of David might go to the wall for aught they cared. But of Jehovah they did not think. How would this breach affect their relations with Him? What of their privileges as worshippers of the only true God? All this was forgotten. From that time each king who sat upon the throne of Israel followed the first, viz., Jeroboam, in placing every obstacle in the way of any who might desire to be still

true to Jehovah. Did not each in his turn see at a glance that he owed his position to the breach that had been made. Hence he must retain his kingship by opposing everything likely to lead the people back to the house of David. To go up to Jerusalem to worship would be the greatest possible danger. To be right with God would soon lead the people as a whole to be right with one another (1 Kings xiii. 26-28). So another god, and another altar, are always kept before the people; and they, for the most part, fall into the snare, giving up the true for the false, sinking down into miserable idolatry.

Still they were the people of the Lord. They might give Him up, but He would not give them up, nor forego His rights to their obedience. Sometimes he dealt in judgment with the king, cutting off his posterity as with Jeroboam, Baasha, and also Ahab; at other times allowing enemies to vex and harass them. In mercy He sent, now and then, a servant to rebuke and to instruct them, so that they might return to Him. This, however, as a people they never did, and in consequence were carried into captivity, and their identity entirely lost to man. But Jehovah, the God of Israel, knows all about them, and loves them for their fathers' sakes, and will, one day, bring them back into the land that He gave to their fathers, united once more with the two tribes, and richly blessed under the peaceful reign of the Son of David. What a comfort that word gives, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29).

Let us now look a little at 1 Kings chap. xxii. Jehoshaphat is the king of Judah, a good man, and the son of a good man, who, in the main, had acted well, and whose reign had exceeded by one year that of any of his predecessors. Upon the throne of Israel sat the wicked Ahab,

“who did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kings xvi. 33). A good and God-fearing man on the one side, and a wicked, idolatrous man on the other side; the former desiring that Jehovah should have His true and proper place, and that the people should be right with Him; the latter determined to shut Him out altogether. What could two such men have in common? Their positions were antagonistic. Their interests and aims were as wide asunder as they well could be. Nevertheless, we read (2 Chron. xviii.), “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab, and after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria.” And we may say with truth, he went down in more ways than one. A wicked man cannot reach the level on which the saint is who walks with God. So, if they are found in association, it is always by the saint going down. When will the lesson be learnt that separation from evil is God’s path for His people, and all their true interests, and unity too, are dependent on their keeping it. There had been frequent wars between Israel and Judah, but this alliance had secured peace. Was it peace with honour? No; but with dishonour. Yet how seductive in appearance all this was. Peace between the two! These kings, with united armies, can now make war upon an outside foe, and seek to recover a lost city. Surely that is a good thing. Division means weakness, unity is strength. How often one hears, “It is time to sink our differences and unite to fight the common foe.” But it will not do. Those who fall into this snare, what is it they effect? Only the weakening of what is right, and the helping on of what is wrong. It is an unholy alliance and no good can come of it. Jehoshaphat’s conscience was uneasy. He would enquire of God. He should have done that before.

Nevertheless, in mercy, Micaiah the prophet foretells the disastrous result of this expedition. Ahab would die.

It was, indeed, a mercy Jehovah granted to His feeble servant, but a mercy he had not faith to act on. Too far committed to be able to extricate himself from his difficult circumstances, he went with Ahab to the war. Dressed in his robes, whilst Ahab disguised himself, the Syrians mistook him for Ahab, and no wonder; and as such he would have been slain but for Jehovah's prompt intervention; for we read, "*And the Lord helped him.*" What mercy to His unfaithful servant! Nor is this all, for we are told "*And God moved them to depart from him*" (2 Chron. xviii. 31). How gracious is our God. He helped the one and moved the others; and all to deliver a man who was where he ought not to have been. But what of Ahab, disguised so that the Syrians should not know him? He had entered into the battle, "And a certain man drew a bow at a venture and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness." God, we may surely say, guided that arrow to the guilty king, and to that part of his body where it could enter and cause his death.

Jehoshaphat returns in peace to Jerusalem. He is met by a prophet of God with a message from God. Great mercy had been shown, but God will not allow such practices to go unrebuked and unjudged. "*Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord*" (Chap. xix. 2). Solemn, awfully solemn! At the same time he is comforted by being told that "good things are found in thee." God had found them, and would not forget them, though His servant had so signally failed.

One wonders what could have induced Jehoshaphat to make affinity with Ahab, seeing that the man's practices and

character must have been known to him. He could not have been ignorant of the famine when, in answer to the prayer of Elijah, rain had been withheld for three and a half years; nor of the splendid service of that distinguished man, who sought to recall Israel to the worship of Jehovah. Fire had come down from heaven in answer to the prayer of Elijah, and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and licked up the water in the trench, which, when the people saw, they shouted, "*Jehovah, He is God.*" All this must have been known to him and more. Nor was he pressed by enemies, for we read, "And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat" (chap. xvii. 10). This alliance was inexcusable, and so are all such. Had Jehoshaphat learnt his lesson? Alas, no! Predisposed to friendships that God could not sanction, yet withal a good man, he twice after this, falls into the same snare.

Ahab being dead, his son Ahaziah ascended the throne of Israel, and reigned but one year. We should have thought that the severe rebuke administered to Jehoshaphat by the prophet would have lingered long in his mind, and found an abiding place in his heart. But it was not so. 2 Chron. xx. 35-37 tells us that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, joined himself with Ahaziah, who did *very wickedly*. Commerce was now the object. Ships were built to get gold (see 1 Kings xxii. 48). But they were broken. And *how*? Probably by a storm. But Jehoshaphat has to learn that it was the Lord who had done it. Another servant of God denounces this union with Ahaziah, and says, "*Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah the Lord hath broken thy works.*" How painstaking is the Lord, and how merciful and gracious, yet withal how severe. Union in worship there could not be. All who desired that in Israel must come up to God's

altar, to God's temple, to God's priest at Jerusalem. To go down to Samaria was out of the question altogether. Those who had departed might return, and would doubtless have been welcomed had they done so, but there could be no going to them, nor even of joining them in making war upon the common enemy, nor in seeking the common wealth. Separation from evil is imperative if we are to enjoy the good that God loves to give; and it is the only way to really help those who may be unfaithful among His people.

Ahaziah dies, and his brother Jehoram sat upon the throne of Israel. Less wicked than his father and his mother, nevertheless we read, "He cleaved to the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Moab rebelled against him, whereupon he sends to ask Jehoshaphat if he would go with him. He answers in just the same way as he had done to Ahab a few years before—"I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses" (2 Kings iii. 7). Dear reader, think of it! A good man says to a wicked one, "I am as thou art." It was not in reality true, but oh! how Jehoshaphat had fallen. "My people as thy people." He had forgotten that the people were Jehovah's, not his. If he reigned it was as permitted by Jehovah, therefore to involve God's people in a strife to which He had not then called them was a dreadful sin. Again his conscience is uneasy, and again he asks if there is here a prophet of Jehovah. But what folly it is to ask the mind of God unless we intend to do it. Elisha, the son of Shaphat was there, so Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and the king of Edom went down to Elisha. But how does the prophet of grace meet them? Addressing Jehoram he says, "Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother." "As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before

whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor see thee." The untruthfulness of the statement, "I am as thou art," was made apparent, and Jehoshaphat must have felt the sternness of the rebuke. Deliverance is once more granted, and thus the goodness of God is strikingly set forth, and we through grace can bow and worship. Oh, to be true and faithful; to be men of God, like Elisha, who, though sent into the midst of Israel with a work to do for God, was nevertheless always morally apart from the evil found there; never in fellowship, yet always seeking their good. Who would not rather be an Elisha than a Jehoshaphat? Grace at last took him home, and we cannot weep to lose such, but rather give thanks. How different when a faithful and devoted servant of God passes away. Then we mourn and weep and deeply feel the blank, and again are comforted by the remembrance that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

E. R. W.

"FORGETTING—PRESS ON."—*Phil. 3.*

ONWARD beloved, forgetting things behind thee—
 The failures, weakness, weariness, and sin,
 And pressing toward the goal that lies before thee
 Strive thou with eagerness the prize to win.
 The prize of that high calling in Christ Jesus;
 High is the mark, but thou may'st yet attain—
 Casting each weight aside, running unfettered,
 His glory and His praise thy life-long aim.

Press toward the mark. What dignity and honour
 Is ours, e'en *here* the sons of God are we ;
 Let us walk worthy of our high vocation,
 Daily more changed into His likeness be.

Belovèd now, we know not what we shall be,
 But this assurance hath He given us here—
 That when we see Him in His radiant beauty
 We shall be like Him, glorious and fair.

Forgetting things behind, be real and earnest,
 In loving service for thy absent Lord ;
 Telling lost souls His love who died to save them,
 In Spirit power from the living Word.

Forgetting things behind, press on to *know* Him.
 Only in Him thy heart shall find true rest ;
 And now He waiteth to reveal unto thee—
 Himself, the while you lean upon His breast.

As the beloved disciple learned to know Him,
 And claimed that nearest place of rest divine ;
 So may He to thy soul reveal His sweetness,
 As leaning there He whispers—"thou art Mine."

Press on—for still the night is dark and stormy,
 Soon shall the morning dawn of cloudless light,
 Then all thy wanderings o'er, the Homeland entered,
 Hope shall be realized, faith lost in sight.

Press on beloved, be ever watchful, prayerful,
 Satan still seeks thy spirit to enthrall—
 With things of earth, strong in God's might resist him,
 And He will make thee conqueror over *all*.

Soon shalt thou stand beside the Mighty Conqueror,
 Hearing His voice ring out a glad "well done."
 The fight well fought, the Master's approbation
 Stamped on thy service, and the prize is won.

A. S

SIMPLE MUSINGS ON EPHESIANS.—X.

(Chap. vi. 10-24.)

WE now enter upon the closing portion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and find that it has for its subject Christian conflict, and provision in view of it. For although even now viewed as "seated in the heavenlies" (ii. 6), yet not being there actually, we have conflict with adverse spiritual powers still ranging in that extensive region. Our *title* to be there we know; our *right* to the enjoyment now of all the spiritual blessings with which we have been blessed we have to maintain. We have to stand. Israel's title to Canaan was plain enough—"The land which I do give unto them" (Josh. i. 2); but their enjoyment of that plenteous land depended upon their holding on their way and dispossessing the enemy then dwelling there.

And in this Christian warfare the arm of flesh can have no place. To the Lord and His almighty power the saints are directed. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." What a refuge is the Lord! What irresistible might is His! Unavailing must every effort be to overthrow the one that is encompassed about with the might of His strength. It is for us; we must use it. Caleb, in his day, was a match for the giants in the land. He met them and laid them low when strong in the strength of Jehovah (Josh. xiv. 12; xv. 14). What a stay for the soul is this; for if there is conflict, dismayed we are not to be. He is strong, and using His strength in the day of battle will be but to prove its all-sufficiency; for not all the combined hosts of the adversary

can ever prove superior to His might. And taking up the language of another we can say, "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles;" for relying in simple faith and dependence upon Him they overcame.

This reminder of strength in Him first was most gracious. And now we pass on to learn that armour has also been provided, defensive for the most part, that, having it *all* on, we "may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (ver. 11). By craftiness the enemy works. By stratagem he would lead the Christian away from Christ and the truth of his heavenly calling, thus to rob him of his joy and ruin his testimony here. The conflict then is real, and the only safeguard is found in having on "the whole armour of God." The enemy is strong indeed, though we fear not his power but his wiles. "For we wrestle not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies." Far above all these our blessed Lord has gone (chap. i. 21); and in His rising from the grave and ascending above all heavens, He made a show of them openly triumphing over them (Col. ii. 15). But conflict with them we are yet to know, for they are not cast out from that sphere and consigned to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41). Christian warfare is not with *blood and flesh*. Of battling with social and political evils in this scene of confusion, and seeking to remedy them, we read not. What conflict has one who does this, save with man?

Our wrestling is with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Principalities and powers are those spiritual beings who, having had strength given to them, but now fallen from their first estate, employ that might in furthering evil, and in seeking to hinder the servants of God from

fulfilling their missions (Daniel x. 13). Their wills are adverse to the will of God, and their influence is exerted to thwart Him who does whatsoever it pleases Him to do.

So the contest is by no means trivial, and such conflict can only have a successful issue when we are clad in God's armour. Let this be noted, for one of human devising will not do. Whatever is of man makes for weakness, but that of God's providing imparts strength, and enables each so clothed to withstand the onslaughts of the enemy; for, like the oak that defies the fierce blasts of the tempest, and is found steadfast still when they have passed, so are we, having overcome, to be still found standing, that is, maintaining the position God has placed us in.

Now let us contemplate the warrior's equipment. And first we have *truth*. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (ver. 14). Strength is connected with the loins, and this is supplied by truth. The one whose ways and doings are controlled by God's Word is practically unassailable. From the path of obedience such an one cannot be moved. In its perfection this is to be seen only in the path of our adorable Lord; and though everywhere perceivable there, yet how clearly does it shine forth in His temptation in the wilderness. "It is written," He says, takes His stand upon it, derives His strength from it, and when the adversary would wilily quote "It is written," He can reply, "It is written *again*;" for Scripture is one whole (Matt. iv. 7). What a subtle wile that was! How simply it was met and defeated! And surely therefrom we are to learn what it is to have the loins girt about with truth. Truly by it we are garrisoned against the assaults of the enemy, and if we fail to array ourselves with this piece of armour we shall certainly go down before his subtility. When it is on, the inmost affections and move-

ments of the heart are controlled, and spiritual joy, communion and liberty is the blessed result.

And truth must be applied and lived out. So we secondly read of the breastplate: "Having on the breastplate of righteousness." This part of the warrior's outfit is what can be seen, and it guards the conscience. Our acts are to be consistent with righteousness. Bad walk robs us of strength, makes us silent before the enemy, and effectually hinders testimony. But the holder of the inestimable blessing, a good conscience, can boldly face the insinuations of the devil. They do not disturb, for there is the positive disproof of them in the becoming conduct. The snare of the devil is set for the inconsistent, and alas! how often do we fall into it, and then set about excusing ourselves, instead of confessing our folly and judging our ways. We must keep the breastplate on.

Truth is to be our strength, righteousness our guard, and peace the characteristic of our walk. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" for not only are our actions to be according to righteousness, but our ways are to be redolent with the sweet fragrance of peace in view of the proclamation of God's Gospel. Peace is one of the pervading elements of the Gospel, and in conformity with it our feet have to be shod. No riding rough-shod over any then; but with that precious element extracted from the Gospel and put upon our feet, the spirit prevailing in all our doings will be an index to the peace that keeps the heart; and what power has Satan over one so governed? "Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven to consume them?" asked the Lord's disciples as they went with Him to Jerusalem, and certain Samaritans rejected Him (Luke ix.). The spirit of peace was absent there, but He who was about to make peace by the blood of His cross,

turned and rebuked them, and meekly continued His journey. How much opposition is disarmed, and how many wiles are exposed when our feet are shod with peace.

Special attention is called to the next piece of armour, the shield. "*Above all,*" says the Apostle, "taking the shield of faith." This cannot be dispensed with. Successful conflict without this is impossible. Why, then, does it not come first? Because in combatting the wiles of the devil *practice* is of first importance. Now, "the shield of faith" is that deeply-rooted sense of the truth that God is altogether for us, which excludes every manner of doubt, and leads to implicit trust in Him. It is simple confidence which nothing that the adversary can suggest will overthrow. But of what avail is this if our ways are crooked, and we thus deny Him? And of what avail, we must also ask, is an upright walk with the heart full of doubts? Above all, then, the shield of faith must be up, and back upon himself will recoil the fiery darts of the wicked one, when they come in contact with this armour. Not one can pierce it. "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" asked the despondent Baptist when his shield was down. Through being occupied with his immediate surroundings the enemy had succeeded in fixing one of his poisonous arrows, and doubt existed where only trust should have been found. Come what will, when the shield of faith is held up triumphantly, we shall, with unwavering trust, permit Him, whom we know to be love, to have His way; and then we shall enjoy the bliss of being unoffended with Him, resting assured that in all the details of His will He doeth all things well.

The helmet also must be donned; for it is good to have the head covered in the day of battle. Certain we are about the issue since "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to

obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. v.). To have on the helmet of salvation is to carry certainty, which imparts boldness, right through the conflict, and thus fully equipped the sword is grasped and we press forward.

Strongholds erected by Satan are cast down by this "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Castles raised in the imagination are demolished by it. Controversies are settled by it to the confusion of the great adversary. Difficulties are removed by it. Error is corrected by it. And so the slaughter goes on, and backward the enemy has to fall, overcome indeed by the Sword of the Spirit. This is the only aggressive weapon provided for us; and when in weakness and feeling our nothingness we wield it, we shall find it as effective now as ever in dispersing the hosts of hell. Carnal weapons are useless, and recourse to them will bring but reproach and shame.

However, we are to know the exhilarating, strengthening flush of victory. Self-confidence does not lead to it, but dependence does, and prayer is the first expression of this. Conflict must be accompanied with a due sense of our feebleness, and then prayer, which is never out of season, will be the outcome. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" brings power; for, as the rhyme quaintly puts it, even

"Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees."

Earnest entreaty before the throne of grace must result in the outpouring of sustaining power; and is it not the fact that lack of praying produces barrenness of soul and a powerless life? How much failure we may trace to this deficiency, for the warfare can only be waged successfully when in dependence upon God, realizing that when we are weak then are we strong.

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And further, there has to be the "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Diligent in watching, earnest in asking, and for all saints, the Apostle would have every one to be. Grace never shuts us up to ourselves, and when our eyes are truly open to the wily ways of the devil many a petition will ascend that each may be kept faithful, and be upheld by almighty power. Are there manifest tokens of weakness revealing themselves? Then let the heart bow in supplication that support might be vouchsafed, for in this way the drooping arms are sustained and victory results. Oh! let us not be diligent in watching for flaws and blotches, but rather, with hearts in touch with the mind of God and knowing something of the preciousness of the saints to Him, for "He takes pleasure in His people," let us unceasingly plead for all. And Paul, the ambassador in bonds, desires that prayer may be offered for him, that with boldness he may proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, speaking as he ought to speak. What an absence of self-confidence! How does truth unite, and grace give us interests in common! Fervent was the great Apostle's love for these Ephesians. It glowed in his bosom, and as proof of it he was sending Tychicus to inform them of his state and doings, and that they might be comforted. Christian affection is reciprocal, and Paul, appreciating the love of the saints, counts upon theirs for himself.

And in closing he commends them to God with the bestowal of "peace and love with faith from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ," as also grace to all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity. How precious must this ministry have been to those saints. How full of Christ it is! It speaks of Him pre-eminently, then of the fulness of Christian blessing, of the unity of Jew and Gentile in one

body, of Christ's care for each of the members of that body, and likewise of the place the Church, that body viewed as His bride, holds in His affection. It also sets out the becoming path for the saint so richly blessed.

And what is this ministry to us now? More than once we have remarked that all truth is to bear practically upon our lives, moulding us after the Christ of God, and causing a pleasing savour to ascend heavenward. And there is no ministry more calculated to produce this than that contained in our Epistle. The study of it will not make us mystics, save to those who will not see that the path of the just is one of unswerving separation from the world and its ways; that the Christian's calling is a heavenly one, and that Christian warfare is entirely apart from politics or social reform—it is not with blood and flesh. But the truth it contains, received into the heart, and then lived out, will make us truly a kind of first-fruits of His creatures, men after God's mind; and it will impart untold joy to our souls, filling us with the power of that sanctification known to Paul when he wrote, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

And now we would just add, in concluding, that if these simple musings have turned any to read afresh this ministry of Christ, if any have been edified by them, then may praise ascend to Him whose judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out.

H. F.

COMPANIONS OF CHRIST.

"God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Heb. i. 9). Such is the statement of Psalm xlv. quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Addressed as the Lord is as God in that Psalm in the words, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre" (Ps. xlv. 6); these words are quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8), and were declared to be spoken of and to the Son. Whilst, then, His divinity is thus affirmed by Him who is competent to declare it, His manhood is also asserted by God in the words with which we have begun this paper. God and Man is the Son by whom God has spoken to us in the end of the days. The mystery of His Person is thus proclaimed, and His manhood definitely taught. "Thy God," writes the Psalmist, the penman of the Holy Ghost (Ps. xlv. 1). "Thy fellows," or companions, he also said. Unequivocal is the testimony that the Son who is God is also man.

A Person differing from all others who ever trod this earth, He, nevertheless, is said to have companions. Who can such be? From what class of creatures, for they must be creatures, can they be culled? Not angels, nor the highest archangels are ranked as His companions. For we read, "He taketh not hold of angels" (ii. 16). What creatures, then, can there be who are viewed as fellows or companions of Christ? If they are not found among the ranks of angels, they must be gathered from the ranks of men. And He who became a Man deigns to have companions from the human family. *From* the human family we have to say, for all men will never be found in that company. Saints of God, and only such, are among the number of the companions of Christ. Wonderfully blessed are and

ever must be such. But how can the Christ, the Holy One of God, as the demon confessed Him (Mark i. 24) in the synagogue, have fellows, or companions, from among the ranks of men? Wonderful is the answer that Scripture gives. To have such a following He had to die. He must suffer. He must make atonement.

And first as to *suffering*. He fills the office of Captain of Salvation. And He is perfectly fitted for that by sufferings—sufferings which stopped not short of death (Heb. ii. 10). David became captain of a band from the time of his sojourn in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1); but many an experience had he to prove in common with his company, ere the full trial of the path was known by him and by them. Vicissitudes surely, unexpected at that time, David passed through with his men, before he and they could rest in peace from fear of Saul. But the Captain of our Salvation passed through all His sufferings to fit Him for that office, ere, as the risen One, He entered on it. For “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (John xii. 24). These were His words. He would therefore have had no companions unless He had first died.

But this leads us on to the second and further thought, that He had to make atonement by His precious blood ere that consummation could be effected. How precious then to Him must His companions ever be, fruit of the travail of His soul. He suffered to have them. They have been redeemed by His precious blood. He “suffered once, the just for the unjust,” writes Peter (1 Peter iii. 18). “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” states the same Apostle (ii. 24).

But how can any be found in that company? God calls them. The Lord speaks to them (John v. 25); and by the Spirit's operation they are born of God (John iii. 5).

When the Lord was upon earth that company began outwardly to be formed, but then in view of His sufferings and death on their behalf. The Apostles were part of it. Having continued with the Lord Jesus Christ in His temptations, He appointed unto them a kingdom, as His Father had appointed unto Him, "that," as He graciously declared, "ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 28-30). In a special relation to Israel will the Apostles ever be, peculiar to them who had companied with the Lord during the time of His ministry among men. Their names and their service will never be forgotten, for in the twelve foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem will be the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 14).

Companions of Christ! Who in a coming day will not value that favour? But who can share in it besides the Apostles? Is that select company limited to twelve in all? Are we here driven to conjecture? What solid comfort could that afford to any really anxious soul? God's Word, however, answers the question definitely, but gives no idea as to the number that will compose the band. We learn of a characteristic of Christ's companions, as we read, Heb. iii. 14, "We are made partakers, or companions, of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." To that Apostolic band of twelve no increase can there ever be. Their number is fixed, and that for ever. If companionship with Christ was limited to them no saint now on earth could have a place amongst "His fellows." Neither Apostles, as Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 4), nor disciples, as Timothy, Titus, or Luke, etc., could ever be in that company. The Epistle to the Hebrews, however, throws open the door to every true child of God till the Lord

returns to reign. What a company will it be. Patriarchs, as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Prophets, as Samuel, and those that came after. Righteous men, as Abel, Job, and others. Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and the faithful in Israel. Martyrs, as Stephen, James the Great, Antipas, and numbers who succeeded them in that saintly band. Confessors, too, of both sexes whilst here. Earnest labourers, as Timothy, Titus, Luke, Apollos, etc. How many, too, their names unknown to fame, and looked on as unfit to live here, will swell the company of those of whom the world was not worthy, all being companions of Christ.

Companions of Christ! How precious to Him! He suffered, as we have said, to be their Captain. He died, too, to redeem them by His precious blood. Is not that enough to do for them? No, we can truthfully and thankfully declare. For now He lives to minister to all of them who are still passing through this scene. Each one He knows by name (John x. 3, 14, 27). They are His sheep. He tends them as a Shepherd. To each one, as needed, He ministers, washing their feet to keep them clean for heaven (John xiii. 8). As the Advocate He takes up their cause with the Father when they have sinned (1 John ii. 1). As the High Priest He ever lives to intercede for them (Heb. vii. 25). And He will come in God's own time to receive them unto Himself, and to introduce them into the Father's House, where He has already prepared their place (John xiv. 1-3).

What is there needful that He has not done, or does, or will not do for His fellows that they should be with Him for ever? "Happy," we may say, applying the language of Psalm cxliv. 15, "are the people that are in such a case." May it be that of each reader of this little paper.

C. E. S.

LIFE AND PROPITIATION.

IN John's first Epistle, chap. iv. 9-10, two things are brought before us as the outcome and manifestation of the love of God. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." Life for us, propitiation for God are the two important truths presented to us in these verses. Life through Him. He is the source for us. This life has been manifested, and its characteristics displayed in Him who came to impart it to us. We read of Him as the Advocate, "Jesus Christ the righteous" (chap. ii. 1), and of Him as High Priest as "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb. vii. 26). Both of these Scriptures speak of what He is now in heaven, but we must bear in mind that He was the same when here on earth. He was righteous. He was also "holy, harmless, undefiled." Blessed fact! Moreover, He laid down His life for us, and thus evidenced His love (chap. iii. 16, R.V.). "Hereby know we the love, because He laid down His life for us."

Righteousness and love are the two proofs that those who profess to believe on Him have eternal life, having been begotten of God. Where these are lacking there this life is not. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him" (chap. ii. 29). "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we *love* the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (iii. 14). Further, "In this

the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (ver. 10); and the 9th verse tells us that the seed of God remaineth in each one who has been begotten of God, so that he cannot sin because of it. Many a true soul has been deeply distressed, thinking, because conscious at times of having sinned, that he or she cannot have been begotten of God. To meet this it has been often taught that the new nature cannot sin. This, however, is quite untenable. *He* that is begotten of God, *not it*, is what is stated, the reference being to the practise of sin. He does not practise sin. It is not characteristic of him.

That a Christian can sin is clear. That he ought not to do so is clear also, or why does the Apostle say, "These things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father" (ii. 1). He ought not to sin, but in point of fact sometimes does so. Sin dwells in each. So it is written, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (i. 8). If a sin is committed by a believer he is responsible for it. He did it, and cannot put it off on the evil nature that is within him, or on the devil, who may have tempted him. A person does wrong, and is responsible, no matter what may have induced him. So he is to confess it, and grace has provided for even this.

"The Advocate is with the Father," "And He is the propitiation for our sins." But propitiation had to be made. Of this we learn in type by the entrance of Aaron into the Holiest with the blood of the sin offering on the great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.). And in the New Testament we learn of the One who became High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. ii. 17). But John does

not treat of the making, but tells us of Jesus Christ the righteous being an Advocate with the Father, and says *He is the propitiation*. Moreover, in chapter iv. 10 we are told that God sent His Son the propitiation for our sins. The latter passage treats of His being sent into the world. Clearly propitiation was not then made; nor could it be without blood. Then He must first die, and must also enter on His High Priestly office ere He could accomplish it. Why, then, does the Apostle say He sent His Son the propitiation for our sins? Chapter v. 6 will throw light upon it, where we read, "This is He that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." He came that life might be ours. He came to die, and He is here presented as clothed with the object of His coming. It is what characterised His coming. Water cleanses; He came to give life, and we are cleansed thereby. By the Word are we born anew. By blood atonement is made. We can understand, then, why it could be said, "God sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." Life for us, propitiation for God, present the double object of His coming; and He is enwrapped as it were with the moral force of this great work. And if in His coming it could be so written of Him, it is easy to understand that now, when all is accomplished, the Apostle can say, "He is the propitiation for our sins." Nor need we make the foolish blunder of thinking that propitiation is a person any more than resurrection is. Life is not a person. It is in the Son, and He imparts it to us. Resurrection is by Him. Propitiation is *made* by Him as High Priest, by His own blood, and now that He is in heaven, He is invested or enwrapped with all the force and value of this accomplished work.

E. R. W.

“CHASTENED.”

;*“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.”*—Heb. xii. 6.

Those He loves He chastens ;
 Ne'er His loving heart,
 Caused His child a sorrow,
 Needless pain or smart.

Hand of love that smiteth !
 Grievous seems the pain ;
 “Afterward ” it yieldeth
 Peace, and lasting gain.

Chastened for His pleasure,
 That His pleasant fruit
 May grow full and riper
 For *His* taste to suit.

Soon the *need* for chastening
 Shall for aye be o'er,
 And we'll rest beside Him
 On yon peaceful shore.

Chastened ! pruned ! and growing
 Master more like Thee,
 Till we meet Thee yonder,
 Grant that we may be.

A. S.

THE DOXOLOGY OF AN INVALID.

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
 Praise Him for sunshine here below,
 Praise Him for countless mercies given,
 And glory soon with Christ in heaven.

M. F. W.